



Fish Finders, GPS and Boat Electronics Made Simple

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————— An Extended Guide · No. 2048 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

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1. The Whole Idea in One Glance If you read only this page, you will still shop smart. A fish finder uses sound to draw a picture of what is under your boat: how deep the water is, where the bottom drops off, and where the fish are hanging. A GPS, or chartplotter, shows your spot on a map of the lake and remembers the places you want to find again. Most units today do both jobs in one screen, which is called a combo. A fish finder shows depth, bottom, and fish using sound. A chartplotter is a map that knows where your boat is. A combo unit does both on one screen and is what most anglers buy. The big three brands are Garmin, Humminbird, and Lowrance. You can spend a little or a lot; a modest unit catches plenty of fish. GOOD TO KNOW You do not need the fanciest screen to enjoy a day on the water. A simple combo unit shows you the depth and the fish, and that is most of the battle. Start there and add fancier features only if you find you truly want them. THE BASICS

2. What a Fish Finder Actually Is A fish finder sends a little pulse of sound straight down into the water from a part called the transducer, mounted on the bottom of the boat or the trolling motor. The sound bounces off the bottom, off fish, and off weeds, then comes back up. The unit measures how long that takes and draws it on the screen as a picture of what is below you. That is the whole trick. Nothing magic, just sound and timing. The deeper something is, the longer the echo takes to return, and the screen turns all of that into a readout you can glance at while you fish. TIP Think of it as the same idea a bat uses to fly in the dark. Your boat is listening to echoes to understand what it cannot see through the murky water.

THE SCREEN

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3. What Sonar Really Shows You The main screen on most units scrolls from right to left, with the newest readings on the right. The bottom of the lake shows up as a solid line across the screen. The number in the corner is your depth. Fish and bait often look like little arches or dots floating above the bottom. The solid line is the lake bottom The big number is how deep the water is under you Arches and dots above the bottom are often fish or bait A fuzzy layer can be weeds, mud, or a school of baitfish It takes a couple of trips for your eyes to learn the picture, and that is normal. Watch the screen in water you know well first, and the shapes start to make sense. THE THREE JOBS 4. Chartplotter, Fish Finder, or Combo These three words cause most of the confusion in the store, so here they are in plain English. A fish finder is the sonar that shows the bottom and the fish. A chartplotter is the GPS map that shows where you are and lets you save spots. A combo unit rolls both into one screen. Fish finder: sonar only, shows depth and fish Chartplotter: GPS map only, shows your location and saved spots Combo: both in one screen, the usual choice for fishing boats You can split the screen to see the map and the sonar side by side GOOD TO KNOW For almost everyone who fishes a lake, a combo unit is the sensible pick. You get the map and the sonar together, and you are not juggling two screens on a small dash.

BE HONEST

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5. Do You Actually Need All of It?

The most money-saving page in this guide. This is the page I would want a friend to read before spending a dime. The high-end units with live, moving sonar are genuinely impressive, and for a casual angler they are far more than you need. A modest combo unit will show you the depth and the fish and keep you off the shallow rocks, which is most of what matters. Casual lake fishing: a simple combo unit is plenty You fish tournaments or chase suspended fish: fancier features may earn their keep You just want to find the drop-offs and not run aground: basic sonar does it You love gadgets and have the budget: no judgment, enjoy the toys **WATCH OUT** Do not let a salesperson talk you into a thousand-dollar screen for an afternoon of bluegill fishing. The fish do not know what you paid. Buy for how you actually fish. **THE BRANDS** 6. The Big Three Brands Three names make most of the fish finders you will see: Garmin, Humminbird, and Lowrance. All three make good units at every price, from simple to elaborate. None of them is the one true best; they each have fans, and they each have a line of beginner-friendly units worth a look. Garmin: known for easy menus and the **STRIKER** and **ECHOMAP** lines Humminbird: strong imaging, the **HELIX** and simpler **PIRANHA** lines Lowrance: long history in fishing, the **HOOK** line for beginners All three make a dependable starter unit Pick the one whose screen and menus make sense to you in the store, or the one your fishing buddies use so you can lean on them for help. That matters more than any spec on the box.

GARMIN

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7. The Garmin STRIKER Line Garmin's budget-friendly fishing line is called STRIKER. The smaller models, like the Vivid 4-inch, give you clear sonar and a built-in GPS for marking spots without a big bill. Step up to a 7-inch model and you add side imaging, which paints a wider picture out to the sides of the boat. STRIKER Vivid 4: a tidy, affordable starter with GPS for waypoints STRIKER 7sv: bigger screen and side imaging for seeing wider Simple menus that are friendly to first-time users Pairs with Garmin trolling motors and the ActiveCaptain app GOOD TO KNOW The STRIKER line marks your spots with GPS but does not come with detailed lake maps built in. If preloaded maps matter to you, look at the step-up ECHOMAP units instead. LOWRANCE 8. The Lowrance HOOK Line Lowrance has been in the fishing business a long time, and their beginner-friendly line is the HOOK. These units give you solid sonar, easy setup, and GPS, with some models carrying basic lake maps. They are a comfortable choice for someone who wants to turn it on and go. Simple sonar and GPS at a friendly price Some models include basic preloaded maps Auto-tuning so you do not have to fiddle with settings A long reputation among lake and crappie anglers If a friend already runs Lowrance, there is a lot to be said for matching them. You will learn the menus faster and borrow their know-how on the water.

HUMMINBIRD**8. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

9. The Humminbird HELIX and PIRANHA Humminbird is well known for crisp imaging. Their simplest units carry the PIRANHA name, while the HELIX line steps up through bigger screens and sharper down and side imaging. If you like a very detailed picture of structure, Humminbird has a loyal following for a reason. PIRANHA: a plain, affordable sonar for getting started HELIX: a range of sizes with strong down and side imaging Known for a clean, detailed picture of the bottom MEGA imaging on higher models for extra sharp detail TIP Imaging detail looks wonderful in the store. Ask yourself whether you will really study the bottom that closely, or whether you mainly want to know the depth and where the fish are. Both are fine answers. SCREEN SIZE 10. How Big a Screen You Need Screens run from about four inches across up to ten or more. A bigger screen is easier on older eyes and lets you split the view between the map and the sonar. It also costs more and takes up more room on a small dash. Match the screen to your boat and your eyesight. 4 to 5 inch: tidy and affordable, fine for a small boat 7 inch: a comfortable middle ground for most anglers 9 inch and up: easy to read and split, better on bigger boats A brighter screen is far easier to see in direct sun GOOD TO KNOW If your eyes are not what they once were, spend the extra for a 7-inch or larger screen. Squinting at a tiny display all day takes the fun out of fishing.

TRANSDUCER**9. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

11. The Transducer, the Part in the Water The transducer is the small puck that actually makes the sound and listens for the echo. It usually mounts on the back of the boat near the motor, or clamps onto the shaft of a trolling motor. Without it, the screen has nothing to show. It almost always comes in the box with the unit. It is the piece that sends and hears the sound in the water Mounts on the transom or on the trolling motor Must stay in the water and clear of bubbles to work Comes with the unit, so you are not buying it separately **WATCH OUT** The transducer has to sit in clean, smooth water. If it is mounted where the hull churns up bubbles, the screen goes blank or fuzzy at speed. Placement matters more than people expect. **DOWN IMAGING** 12. Down Imaging in Plain English Regular sonar gives you a rough picture. Down imaging is a sharper, more photo-like view of what is directly beneath the boat. It makes brush piles, stumps, and the shape of the bottom much easier to recognize. Many mid-range units include it. A clearer, more detailed look straight down Great for spotting brush, stumps, and bottom shape Found on mid-range and better units Easier for a beginner to read than plain sonar If you are choosing between two units and one adds down imaging for a little more, it is usually worth it. The clearer picture helps your eye learn faster. **SIDE IMAGING** 13. Side Imaging in Plain English Side imaging shoots the sound out to the left and right of the boat instead of straight down. It lets you scan a wide band of lake bottom as you idle along, so you can find a brush pile or a school off to the side without driving right over it. It is a real help on bigger water.

GOOD TO KNOW

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Scans a wide path to both sides of the boat Helps you find structure without running over it
Most useful on larger lakes and reservoirs Found on step-up units like the STRIKER 7sv and HELIX models On a small pond you may never need side imaging. On a big reservoir like Berlin Lake, it saves you a lot of aimless driving. Match the feature to the water you fish. LIVE SONAR 14. Live Forward Sonar and the Big Price Tag The newest and priciest feature is live, moving sonar that shows fish swimming in real time, sold under names like Garmin LiveScope, Lowrance ActiveTarget, and Humminbird MEGA Live. It is remarkable to watch a fish move toward your bait. It is also a large added cost and squarely aimed at serious and tournament anglers. Shows fish moving in real time, almost like a video Sold as LiveScope, ActiveTarget, or MEGA Live A big extra cost on top of the main unit
Wonderful for tournaments, overkill for casual fishing WATCH OUT This is the feature that empties wallets. It is genuinely fun, but it is not what puts a casual angler on more fish. Skip it unless you fish hard and often and truly want it. GPS AND SPOTS 15. GPS and Marking Your Spots The GPS side of your unit does two simple, valuable things. It shows where your boat is on the lake, and it lets you drop a marker, called a waypoint, on any good spot you find. The next time out, you can steer straight back to that brush pile or that deep hole you did so well on before.

- 1 When you find a good spot, press the mark or waypoint button
- 2 Give it a short name you will remember, like 'Dock Hole'
- 3 The unit saves the exact location
- 4 Next trip, pick it from your list and follow the arrow back to it

TIP**11. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Marking spots is the feature casual anglers end up loving the most. A handful of saved waypoints turns a big, confusing lake into a few trusted places you know. LAKE MAPS 16. Preloaded Lake Maps Better units come with lake maps already loaded, showing depth lines, ramps, and the shape of the shore. These maps help you find the drop-offs and channels where fish gather without guessing. Not every lake is mapped in detail, and the small reservoirs near home may have less coverage than the big ones. Maps show depth lines, channels, and boat ramps They help you find structure before you even start fishing Coverage varies; big lakes are mapped better than small ponds You can often add better maps on a memory card My lake navigation guide goes deeper on map apps like Navionics for your phone. On the boat, the built-in maps and the phone apps work hand in hand. MAKE YOUR OWN 17. Making Your Own Depth Maps Many units can quietly record the depths as you drive around, building your own detailed map of a favorite lake over time. On a small local reservoir that nobody has mapped well, this feature turns a blank map into a personal chart of every hump and channel you cross. The unit logs depth as you motor around Over a few trips you build a detailed personal map Wonderful for small, poorly mapped local lakes Look for 'contour' or 'mapping' features when you shop GOOD TO KNOW On a lake like Mogadore Reservoir, where you may be limited to a quiet electric motor, slowly building your own depth map over a season is a pleasant way to learn the water.

MOUNTING THE UNIT

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18. Mounting the Unit at the Helm The main unit needs to sit where you can see it easily and reach the buttons, out of the worst of the sun's glare. Most come with a bracket that lets you tilt and swivel the screen. On a small boat, a sturdy, well-placed mount keeps the unit from rattling loose on rough water. Put it where you can see and reach it from your seat Angle it away from direct glare off the water Use the bracket that came with it, mounted to something solid Leave slack in the cables so the screen can tilt TIP A RAM-style mount is a popular, rock-solid way to hold a fish finder on a small boat or kayak. It holds firm in chop and lets you angle the screen just right. MOUNTING TRANSDUCER

19. Mounting the Transducer Getting the transducer placed right is the fussiest part of the whole job, and it is where most screen problems begin. It needs to sit in clean water with its face level and fully submerged, clear of the bubbles that roll off the hull at speed. A little patience here saves a lot of frustration later.

- 1 Pick a spot on the transom away from the prop wash
- 2 Mount it so the face is level and stays underwater at speed
- 3 Keep the cable routed neatly, away from pinch points
- 4 Test on the water and nudge it up or down if the screen blanks at speed WATCH OUT If your screen goes blank the moment you speed up, the transducer is almost always catching air bubbles. Lower it a touch or move it to cleaner water.

POWER**13. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

20. Powering the Electronics Your fish finder runs on 12-volt power, the same as the boat's battery. On a small boat you may wire it straight to the battery or to a 12-volt socket. On a bigger boat it ties into the fuse panel. Either way, it draws very little, so it is not a heavy load on the battery. Runs on the boat's 12-volt battery, like most boat gear Draws little power, so it is easy on the battery Can wire to the battery, a 12-volt socket, or the fuse panel Always put a fuse on the wire, close to the battery My 12-volt power guide covers sockets, fuses, and clean wiring in detail. The short version: a fused connection and a tidy cable run keep the unit happy for years. WIRING SAFELY 21. Fuses and Wiring Done Safely Any wire you run to the battery needs a fuse near the battery end. The fuse is a cheap part that blows and cuts the power if something shorts out, protecting the wire and the boat from a fire. It is the one piece of wiring you never skip. A fuse protects the wire if something shorts Put it close to the battery, on the positive wire Use the fuse size the unit's manual calls for Keep connections tight, dry, and away from standing water WATCH OUT Boats sit in water and bounce around all day, so a sloppy wiring job works loose fast. If you are not comfortable with the fuse and the connections, this is a good thing to have done right the first time. TROLLING MOTORS 22. Trolling Motors With GPS Spot-Lock A trolling motor is the small, quiet electric motor on the bow that moves the boat gently while you fish. Many newer ones, from Minn Kota and Garmin among others, have GPS built in. That lets them hold the boat on one spot by themselves, a feature often called spot-lock or anchor, even in a breeze.

GOOD TO KNOW

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A quiet electric motor for moving slowly while fishing GPS models can hold the boat on a spot by themselves Called spot-lock, anchor, or similar names Minn Kota and Garmin Force are common examples Spot-lock is a genuine back-saver. Instead of dropping and pulling an anchor, you press a button and the motor fights the wind to keep you parked over the fish. CONNECTING THEM 23. Connecting a Trolling Motor to Your Electronics If your trolling motor and fish finder are from the same family, they can often talk to each other. The motor can follow a path you draw on the map, steer back to a saved waypoint, or share its GPS with the screen. It is a nice convenience, not a must-have. Matching brands often link the motor and the screen The motor can follow a route or return to a waypoint You can steer the motor from the fish finder on some setups Handy, but a plain motor still catches plenty of fish If you already own a motor of one brand, you do not have to match it. These links are a bonus for folks buying fresh, not a reason to replace gear that works fine. PHONE APPS 24. Phone Apps That Pair With the Unit Most units pair with a free phone app from the same brand, such as Garmin ActiveCaptain. The app lets you update the unit, download maps, and sometimes plan trips or back up your waypoints from your easy chair at home. It is worth setting up once so your saved spots are safe. Free app from the same brand as your unit Updates the software and downloads maps over home Wi-Fi Backs up your saved spots so you never lose them Lets you plan and review from the couch

WATCH OUT**15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Back your waypoints up to the app. Losing a season of hard-won fishing spots to a dead unit is a heartbreak you can avoid with a two-minute setup at home. STEREO 25.

Bluetooth Marine Stereos A marine stereo is built to live with sun, splash, and spray, unlike a car radio. Most pair with your phone over Bluetooth, so you play your own music or a podcast straight from your pocket. It is a simple comfort that makes a long, slow day on the pontoon a lot more pleasant. Built to handle sun and water, unlike a car radio Pairs with your phone over Bluetooth for your own music Easy to add to a pontoon or fishing boat Keep the phone mounted and dry while it plays GOOD TO KNOW A marine stereo and a couple of weatherproof speakers turn a pontoon into a floating porch. Just keep the volume neighborly on a quiet lake like West Branch. PHONE DRY 26. Keeping the Phone Dry and Charged Your phone is doing a lot of this work: playing music, running map apps, pairing with the stereo. So keeping it dry and charged on the water is its own small art. A waterproof case or pouch, a floating lanyard, and a 12-volt charger at the helm keep it safe and alive all day. A waterproof case or floating pouch guards against a splash A floating lanyard means a dropped phone does not sink A 12-volt or USB charger at the helm keeps it topped up A sturdy mount keeps it in view and out of the bilge water My guide on keeping your phone charged and dry on the water covers cases, mounts, and power banks in detail. It pairs naturally with everything in this guide.

NETWORKING

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27. Networking Units Together On a larger boat, people sometimes run two screens, one at the bow and one at the helm, and link them so they share maps and waypoints. This is a nicety for bigger rigs and tournament boats. For a small lake boat with one screen, it is something you can happily ignore. Two linked screens share maps and saved spots Common on bigger boats with a bow and helm station A convenience, not a need, for most lake anglers One well-placed screen serves a small boat fine WATCH OUT Do not let a two-screen setup tempt you before you have lived with one. Most anglers find a single screen in the right spot does everything they want. FIRST SETUP 28. Setting It Up the First Time The first time you power up a new unit, it walks you through a short setup: your language, the units you like, and which lake you are on. Give it a few minutes to find the satellites and settle in. After that first setup, it comes alive quickly every time you flip it on.

- 1 Power it up and follow the on-screen setup questions
- 2 Let it find the GPS satellites, which takes a minute outdoors
- 3 Pick feet, miles per hour, and the display style you prefer
- 4 Set the clock and, if asked, the lake or map you are on
- 5 Pair the phone app so you can update it at home GOOD TO KNOW Do the first setup in the driveway with the boat outside, not at the ramp with a line of trucks behind you. It is far more relaxing to sort out the menus at home.

TUNING

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29. Tuning the Sonar for a Clear Picture Most units have an automatic mode that sets the sonar for you, and for a beginner that is the right place to start. If the picture looks cluttered or faint, a couple of simple adjustments clean it up. You rarely need to touch more than the sensitivity and the depth range. Start in automatic mode and let the unit do the work Turn sensitivity up to see more, down to cut clutter Set the depth range to match the water you are fishing Leave the fancy settings alone until you know the basics TIP If the screen looks like television snow, lower the sensitivity a notch. If it looks empty, raise it. That one dial fixes most complaints about a muddy picture. READING FISH 30. Reading Fish Arches and Bait Fish often show up as arches when the boat passes over them and as simple dots when you are holding still. Tight clouds of small marks are usually baitfish, and bigger fish hang near the bait. Some units can draw little fish symbols instead, which is friendlier for beginners even if it is less precise. Arches appear as you drift over a fish Dots and dashes show when you hold still over them Clouds of tiny marks are usually baitfish Fish symbols mode is simpler to read while you learn Do not chase every mark. Learning where the bait and structure are tells you where the fish will be, which is more useful than counting arches. STRUCTURE 31. Finding Structure and Drop-offs Fish gather where the bottom changes: a sudden drop-off, a hump, a weed edge, or a sunken brush pile. Your unit is at its best helping you find these spots. Idle slowly along and watch the bottom line rise and fall, and mark a waypoint wherever it gets interesting. Watch the bottom line for sudden drops and rises

GOOD TO KNOW

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Weed edges and brush piles hold fish Mark a waypoint at every spot that looks promising Come back and fish the marks you found Spend your first half hour on a new lake just looking at the bottom, not fishing. The spots you mark now become the places you catch fish the rest of the day. TEMP AND SPEED 32. Water Temperature and Speed Many units show the water temperature and your speed across the water. Temperature helps you know when fish move shallow in spring or deep in the heat of summer. Speed matters when you troll a lure and want to keep it moving at just the right pace for the fish you are after. Water temperature hints at where fish will be Cooler spring water pulls fish shallow; summer heat sends them deep Speed helps you troll a lure at the right pace Both show right on the main screen on most units These little numbers are easy to ignore, but they quietly teach you the lake. Over a season you start to connect the temperature to where the fish are biting. OHIO LAKES 33. Using It on Northeast Ohio Lakes Our local waters each ask for a slightly different setup. A quiet reservoir where you are held to an electric motor rewards slow, careful mapping. A big open reservoir rewards side imaging and good GPS so you do not waste the day driving around. Match the gear to the water you fish most. Mogadore Reservoir: quiet water, good for slow mapping with a small motor West Branch, also called Michael J. Kirwan: large and open, where GPS earns its keep Berlin Lake: a big reservoir where side imaging helps you cover water Confirm the current horsepower and motor rules for each with ODNR before you launch

WATCH OUT

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Horsepower and motor rules differ from lake to lake and can change. Always confirm the current ODNR rules for your lake before you put the boat in. A quick check saves a citation.

SMALL BOATS 34. Small Boats, Kayaks and Portable Units You do not need a bass boat to enjoy electronics. Small, portable fish finders run off a little rechargeable battery and clamp onto a kayak or a jon boat. Some even cast out on your fishing line and send a picture to your phone. They keep things light and simple for small craft. Portable units run on a small rechargeable battery. They clamp onto a kayak or jon boat easily. Castable models send sonar to your phone over Bluetooth. Keep it simple and light on a small boat. My kayak and small-boat tech guide covers these little units and the safety gear that goes with them. On a small craft, less really is more.

PONTOONS 35. Pontoon Boat Setups A pontoon is a comfortable fishing and cruising platform, and a modest combo unit suits it well. Mount the screen at the helm where the driver can see it, put the transducer on the back where the water is clean, and add a Bluetooth stereo for the family. Nothing fancy is required. A modest combo unit is a fine fit for a pontoon. Mount the screen at the helm within easy reach. Place the transducer on the transom in clean water. Add a marine stereo for easy, comfortable days.

TIP On a pontoon you often fish and relax in equal measure. A simple depth and fish readout plus some music is usually all the electronics a pontoon day asks for.

BUYING

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36. Buying Without Overbuying Decide how you fish, then buy the simplest unit that covers it, not the biggest one in the store. You can always upgrade later. Prices move around a great deal with sales and new models, so confirm the current price before you commit, and do not be shy about last year's model at a discount. Buy for how you actually fish, not the glossiest display A good starter combo costs far less than the flagship units Prices range widely; always confirm the current price Last season's model at a discount is often a smart buy GOOD TO KNOW Entry combos often run in the low-to-mid hundreds, with flagship and live-sonar setups climbing into the thousands. Start low; you can always grow into more. USED GEAR 37. New vs Used Electronics A used fish finder can be a fair deal, but go in with your eyes open. Make sure the transducer and all the cables come with it, that the screen is bright and unscratched, and that any maps are not locked to the seller's account. A missing transducer turns a bargain into a bother. Confirm the transducer and power cable are included Check the screen for scratches and dim spots in the sun Ask whether map cards transfer to a new owner When in doubt, a new entry unit is worry-free WATCH OUT A used unit with no transducer is only half a purchase, and a matching transducer can cost nearly as much as a new starter combo. Price the whole package before you buy.

UPDATES

21. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

38. Updating the Software and Maps Every so often the maker releases a free update that fixes bugs and sometimes adds features. You do this over the phone app or by loading a file onto a memory card at home. It is worth doing once or twice a season so your unit runs its best.

- 1 Open the brand's phone app over your home Wi-Fi
- 2 Check for a software update for your unit
- 3 Follow the prompts to download and install it
- 4 Update your lake maps at the same time if any are offered GOOD TO KNOW Do updates at home on Wi-Fi, never at the ramp. They can take a while, and you do not want to be waiting on a download with the boat half in the water. WINTER 39. Storing the

Electronics for Winter When the boat goes to bed for an Ohio winter, the electronics deserve a little care. A removable screen is best taken indoors where it is dry and above freezing. Back up your waypoints to the app first, so a cold, dead battery over the winter never costs you your fishing spots. Back up your waypoints to the app before storing. Remove the screen and keep it dry and above freezing. Protect the transducer and coil cables loosely. Charge the boat battery and keep it on a maintainer. My winterizing guide covers batteries, cameras, and electronics for the whole boat. Putting the fish finder away properly means it wakes up ready in the spring. TROUBLESHOOTING 40.

Common Problems and Quick Fixes Most trouble with a fish finder comes down to power, the transducer, or the sensitivity setting, and you can check all three yourself in a couple of minutes. Work through them in order before you decide something is broken, because it usually is not.

- 5 Blank screen: check the fuse and the power connection first

TIP

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- 1 Fuzzy or blank at speed: the transducer is catching bubbles, adjust it
- 2 Too cluttered or too empty: nudge the sensitivity up or down
- 3 No GPS or map: give it a minute outdoors to find satellites
- 4 Still stuck: restart the unit before you assume it has failed. Nine times out of ten it is a loose power wire, a bubbly transducer, or a sensitivity dial turned too far. Check those three before you call anyone. CARE 41. Caring for the Screen and Connectors A fish finder lives a hard life in sun, spray, and bouncing water, but a little care keeps it going for years. Wipe salt and grime off the screen with a soft cloth, keep the connectors clean and dry, and give the whole unit a cover when the boat sits out. Simple habits, long life. Wipe the screen with a soft, damp cloth, not a gritty rag. Keep the plug connectors clean, dry, and tight. Cover the unit when the boat sits in the sun. Check the transducer for weeds and scrapes now and then. GOOD TO KNOW The connectors behind the unit are the part most likely to corrode over the years. A dab of care keeping them clean and dry prevents the random dropouts that drive people crazy. YOUR CHECKLIST 42. Your Boat Electronics Checklist Here is the short version to tuck in the glove box of the boat. If you can check these off, you are set up to find fish and stay off the rocks. Chose a combo unit that matches how I really fish. Picked a screen big enough for my eyes. Transducer mounted in clean water, level and submerged. Power wired with a fuse near the battery. GPS set up and a few waypoints saved. Waypoints backed up to the phone app. Confirmed the current motor and horsepower rules for my lake.

GOOD TO KNOW

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Store the screen indoors and dry for the winter Tape a copy of this list inside a dry hatch. A thirty-second glance before launch keeps every trip smooth and keeps your hard-won fishing spots safe. WHEN TO CALL 43. When It Is Worth Calling Me Plenty of folks can mount a fish finder and figure out the menus on their own. But if you are staring at a wall of models and not sure which one fits your boat, if the wiring and the transducer mounting make you nervous, or if you just want someone to sit beside you and get it all working and your spots backed up before the season, that is exactly what I am here for. I will give you the honest answer, even when the honest answer is that a simple, affordable unit will serve you better than the expensive one. WATCH OUT I can help you pick a unit for how you actually fish, get the screen and transducer mounted and wired safely, and set up the GPS and phone app so your fishing spots are never lost. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042. CHEAT SHEET Everyday Cheat Sheet Keep this page handy. It is the short answer to the questions anglers ask most about boat electronics. A fish finder shows depth and fish with sound; a chartplotter is a GPS map; a combo does both A simple combo unit catches plenty of fish; skip the thousand-dollar live sonar unless you fish hard and often Garmin, Humminbird, and Lowrance all make good starter units, so pick the menus you like Get a screen big enough for your eyes, 7 inch or more if they are not what they were Mount the transducer in clean water, level and submerged, or the screen blanks at speed Save your favorite spots as waypoints and back them up to the phone app Confirm the current motor and horsepower rules for your lake with ODNR before you launch

24. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

Bring the screen indoors for the winter after backing up your spots Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042

HOW I CAN HELP**25. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Your Visit — and My Promise In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included. Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo). GOOD TO KNOW My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated. Call or text (330) 200-8042 · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Which Fish Finder Fits You?

Match the unit to how you really fish.

Simple Combo

Casual lake fishing
Shows depth, fish, and
GPS
Low-to-mid hundreds to
buy

Imaging Combo

Bigger lakes and more
detail
Adds down and side
imaging
A step up in price

Live Sonar

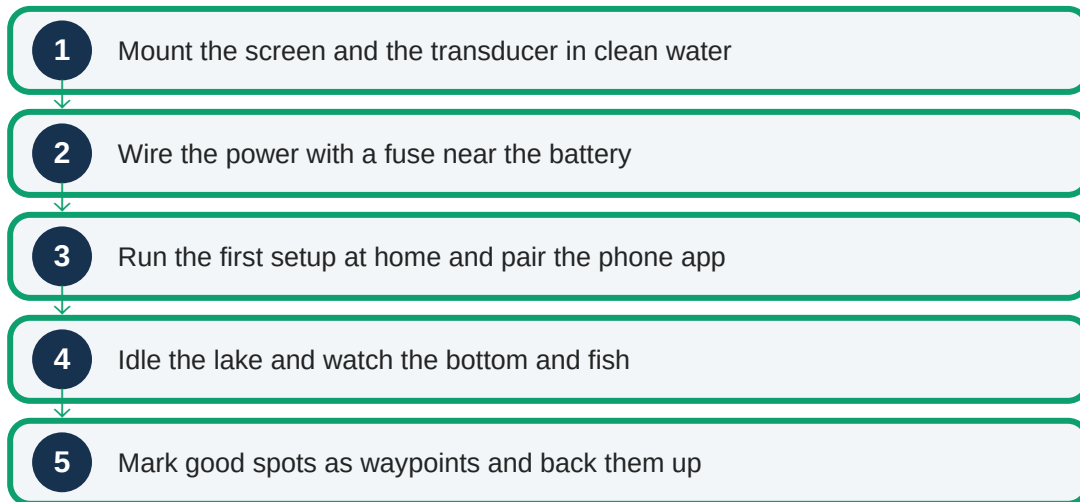
Serious and tournament
anglers
Shows fish moving in
real time
A big added cost, often
overkill

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

From New Box to Finding Fish

A little setup at home, then fish all day.



BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

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