BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Free Up Gmail Storage Before Paying

Find where your space really went and reclaim it — you probably won't need to pay

Plain-English tech help from:

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Google gives each account a shared pot of free storage — commonly 15 GB — split across Gmail, Drive, and Photos together, so a "Gmail full" warning is often really big photos or files. Check one.google.com/storage to see where the space went. Then clear the biggest items: Gmail attachments (search has:attachment larger:10M), empty Spam and Trash, and in Google Photos remove large videos and duplicates. Download anything precious to your own computer first. Most people free up plenty and never need to pay.

1 The Short Version

Google gives every account a set amount of free storage — commonly 15 gigabytes — and here is the part that surprises people: that space is shared across Gmail, Google Drive, and Google Photos all together. So when Gmail warns you are "almost out of space," the culprit is often big photos or files, not your emails at all. Before you pay for more, you can almost always free up plenty.

This guide shows you where your space is actually going and how to reclaim it — clearing large attachments, old photos, and forgotten files — so you likely will not need to pay anything. And if you decide more space is worth it, we will cover that honestly too.

- Your free storage is shared across Gmail, Drive, and Photos — one shared pot.
- The space hogs are usually large photos and files, not everyday emails.
- You can see exactly what is using your space and clear the biggest items first.
- Most people free up plenty and never need to pay — but we cover paying too.

WATCH OUT

Start by finding out where the space actually went before deleting anything. Nine times out of ten the real problem is somewhere other than where the warning made you look.

2 How Google's Free Storage Really Works

The one thing worth understanding clearly: Google does not give Gmail its own separate storage. Instead, your account gets one shared allowance — commonly 15 gigabytes on a free account — and Gmail, Google Drive, and Google Photos all draw from that same pot. A big video in Photos eats the same space a thousand emails would.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is why clearing only your inbox sometimes barely helps — the real weight may be in Photos or Drive. Knowing it is one shared pot tells you where to actually look.

3 See Exactly What Is Using Your Space

Google has a single page that shows how your storage is split between Gmail, Drive, and Photos. This is the honest starting point, so you spend your effort where it counts.

1. In a web browser, go to the Google storage page (search "Google One storage" or visit one.google.com/storage).
2. Sign in if asked.
3. Look at the breakdown showing how much Gmail, Drive, and Photos each use.
4. Whichever is biggest is where you will free the most space.

TIP

Do this on a computer if you can — the storage breakdown and the cleanup tools are clearer and easier to work with on a full screen.

4 Clear Large Email Attachments

If Gmail is the big user, it is almost always a few emails with large attachments — not the sheer number of messages. You can find the heavy ones directly.

1. In Gmail's search box, type: has:attachment larger:10M
2. This shows emails with attachments over 10 megabytes (lower the number to find smaller ones).
3. Save anything you want to keep to your computer first.
4. Select the big ones you don't need and delete them.

GOOD TO KNOW

A single email with a large video or photo attachment can take as much room as hundreds of ordinary messages. Clearing a handful of these often frees a surprising amount of space.

5 Empty Spam and Trash — They Still Count

Mail in your Spam and Trash folders is still using your storage until it is truly cleared. Emptying them is quick, safe, and sometimes frees a lot.

1. Open the Spam folder and choose "Delete all spam messages now."
2. Open the Trash (Bin) folder and choose "Empty Trash now."
3. Both clear automatically after about 30 days, but emptying them now reclaims the space immediately.

WATCH OUT

Emptying Trash is permanent, so glance through it first for anything you deleted by mistake and still want. Once it is emptied, those messages are gone for good.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

6 The Usual Big One: Google Photos

For most people, photos and videos are the largest use of storage by far. A few minutes here frees more than hours spent on email.

1. Open Google Photos (photos.google.com or the app).
2. Look for very large videos and clear duplicates or blurry shots you don't want.
3. Use the built-in tool that finds large items or lets you review and free up space.
4. Empty the Photos trash afterward, since deleted photos linger there too.

TIP

Videos are far larger than photos. Removing a handful of long videos you no longer need often frees more space than deleting thousands of pictures.

7 Clean Up Google Drive

Drive holds documents and any files you have uploaded, and large files there count against the same storage. It is worth a quick sort.

1. Open Google Drive (drive.google.com).
2. Sort your files by size (there is a storage view that lists the largest first).
3. Save and then delete big files you no longer need.

4. Empty the Drive trash to reclaim the space right away.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Old backups, large PDFs, and videos uploaded to Drive are common space hogs people forget about. Sorting by size brings them straight to the top.

8 Bulk-Clear Promotions and Social Mail

Gmail sorts a lot of mail into Promotions and Social categories — newsletters, store offers, notifications. These are usually safe to clear in bulk and add up over the years.

1. Click the Promotions tab (or search "category:promotions").
2. Select all, and if needed choose "select all conversations that match."
3. Delete them (or archive if you prefer to keep them out of the way).
4. Do the same for Social notifications.

> **WATCH OUT**
> While you are here, unsubscribe from the newsletters you never read so they stop refilling. Our "Unsubscribe Safely" guide shows how to do that without falling for fake unsubscribe links.

9 Keep a Copy, Then Delete

If you are nervous about deleting photos or files, keep your own copy first. Then clearing them from Google is completely worry-free.

- Download precious photos and videos to your computer or an external drive.
- Save important documents to a folder you control.
- Once you have your own copy, deleting the Google version frees the space with nothing lost.

WATCH OUT

If you would like a real backup of your photos onto your own computer or a drive before clearing Google, I can set that up — it is the safest way to free space, because you keep every picture regardless.

10 When Paying Actually Makes Sense

Sometimes paying a little is the sensible choice — if you have a lifetime of photos you want to keep and no interest in sorting them. Google's paid plans (called Google One) start small and cheap, and it is a perfectly reasonable decision.

- The smallest paid plan adds a good amount of space for a low monthly or yearly price.
- It is worth it if you want to keep everything and not spend time clearing.
- You can pay monthly or yearly, and cancel later if your needs change.
- Prices and tiers change, so check the current options on Google's own page before deciding.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is no shame in paying for storage — for many people a few dollars a month to never worry about it is money well spent. The point of this guide is simply that you get to choose, rather than being pushed into it by a warning.

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11 Doing It on a Phone vs a Computer

You can free space on either, but a computer makes the big cleanups much easier.

- On a computer: the storage breakdown, size sorting, and bulk-select are all easier.
- On a phone: the Photos app is handy for clearing videos and photos on the go.
- For a thorough clear-out, start at a computer; use the phone for quick photo tidying.

12 Where the Space Usually Hides

Before you spend time deleting, it helps to know where the weight almost always sits. For most people the order of culprits is remarkably consistent.

Usual culprit	Why it's heavy
Videos in Google Photos	By far the biggest — a few minutes of video dwarfs thousands of emails
Photos in Google Photos	Years of pictures add up quietly
Large email attachments	A handful of big files, not the number of messages
Old files in Drive	Backups, PDFs, and videos you forgot you uploaded
Spam and Trash	Still counts until you empty it

GOOD TO KNOW

Start with Google Photos videos — that is where the biggest, fastest wins almost always are. Clearing a few long videos can free more than an hour spent on email.

13 Clean Up Safely, Without Regret

The worry with freeing storage is deleting something you wanted. A careful order of operations removes that fear entirely.

1. Decide what to clear, but don't delete yet.
2. Download or back up anything precious to your own computer or a drive first.
3. Then delete the items from Google to free the space.
4. Empty the relevant trash (Gmail, Photos, Drive) to reclaim it immediately.
5. Check your storage page again to see how much you freed.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Deleting from Google Photos removes the photo from every device signed into that account, since they share one library. Make sure you have your own copy of anything you truly want before deleting.

14 Common Questions

A few things people often ask about Google storage, answered plainly.

- Why is Gmail full when I barely email? Because the 15 GB is shared — the real weight is usually photos or files.
- Will I lose photos if I don't pay? Not if you free space or back them up to your own computer first.
- Does emptying Trash really help? Yes — Trash still uses storage until it's emptied.
- Is paying a rip-off? No — for many it's a few dollars a month well spent; the point is that you choose.
- If I delete emails, does it free much? A little — big attachments and photos free far more.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The single most freeing fact here is that your free storage is one shared pot. Once you know that, you look in the right place — usually Photos — and the warning clears without a payment.

15 When to Call Bill

A storage warning is stressful — it makes you fear losing photos or being forced to pay. You do not have to sort it out alone, and you certainly should not pay for more space until you have seen what is really using it.

I come to you, show you exactly where your space went, back up the photos and files you want to keep onto your own computer or a drive, clear the space hogs safely, and — only if it then makes sense — help you pick the right plan. Most of the time, we free up plenty and you pay nothing at all.

- You got a "storage full" warning and are not sure what is safe to delete.
- You want your photos backed up before clearing anything.
- You would rather not pay until you have seen what is using the space.
- You want help deciding whether a small paid plan is worth it.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Your 15 GB is shared across Gmail, Drive, and Photos.

I want to...	Do this...
See where space went	Visit one.google.com/storage — see Gmail / Drive / Photos split
Clear big attachments	Gmail search: has:attachment larger:10M save keepers delete
Reclaim space now	Empty the Spam and Trash folders
Free the most space	Google Photos remove large videos and duplicates
Clean up files	Google Drive sort by size delete big ones you don't need
Keep it safe first	Download photos/files to your own computer, then delete
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

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

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

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.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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