BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Get Your Photos Off an Old Phone or Computer

Every safe route — cloud, cable, phone-to-phone, flip phones, USB sticks, and prints

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

The easiest rescue for any working smartphone is the cloud: turn on Google Photos (Android or iPhone) or iCloud Photos (iPhone), leave the phone on Wi-Fi, and your pictures copy themselves where any device can reach them — just watch iCloud's small 5GB free limit. Prefer no cloud? Plug the phone into a computer, allow access, and copy the photos from its DCIM folder, like emptying a camera.

To get photos onto a new phone, back the old one up to the cloud and sign in on the new one. Old flip phones are fiddlier — usually their memory card read in a computer, or pictures texted one at a time. Once the photos are safe, copy them to a USB stick or get them printed, and always confirm the copies open before deleting anything.

Then keep automatic backup on so you never face this again.

1 The Short Version

Somewhere — on an old phone in a drawer, a tired computer, maybe a flip phone from years back — there are photos you'd hate to lose. Grandchildren, trips, people no longer with us. Getting them off safely is easier than you'd fear, and this guide walks you through every route in plain English, from the effortless cloud way to the old-fashioned cable way, whatever kind of device they're trapped on.

There's no single 'right' way — the best route depends on what the photos are on and where you want them to end up. We'll start with the easiest method (letting the cloud do the work) and move through cables, phone-to-phone transfers, old flip phones, saving to a USB stick, and even getting prints. Pick the path that matches your situation; you don't need all of them.

- The easy way: Google Photos or iCloud quietly copies your pictures to the cloud, where any device can reach them.

- The cable way: plug the phone into a computer and drag the photos across, like copying from a camera.
- Phone to phone: move pictures straight from an old phone to a new one.
- Old flip phones and very old Androids have their own (slightly fiddlier) routes — covered here.
- Once the photos are safe, you can copy them to a USB stick, get them printed, or simply rest easy they're backed up.

> **TIP**
>
> If the photos are on a working smartphone, the single easiest move is to turn on Google Photos (Android or iPhone) or iCloud Photos (iPhone) and let it copy everything to the cloud automatically. Then they're safe, and reachable from any device, without a cable in sight.

2 First, Decide Where You Want Them to End Up

Before copying anything, it helps to picture the destination, because that points you to the right method. People usually want their photos to land in one (or more) of a few places, and knowing which saves a lot of wandering.

- In the cloud (Google Photos or iCloud): safe, searchable, reachable from any phone or computer — best for everyday peace of mind.
- On a computer: a folder of photo files you own outright, good for keeping or backing up further.
- On a new phone: so your pictures travel with you to your current device.
- On a USB stick or memory card: a physical copy you can hand to family or tuck in a safe place.
- As prints or a photo book: the pictures off the screen and into your hands or on the wall.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can absolutely aim for more than one destination — many people get photos into the cloud first (so they're safe immediately), then copy a set to a USB stick for family, then order prints of the best ones. Getting them off the old device safely is the real goal; where they go next is up to you.

3 The Easy Cloud Way — Google Photos

Google Photos is the gentlest way to rescue pictures off almost any smartphone, Android or iPhone. Once it's on, it quietly copies every photo to your Google account over Wi-Fi, where you can see them on any device by signing in — no cables, no computer skills needed. It's free with a Google account (the pictures share your account's storage space).

1. On the old phone, install the Google Photos app if it isn't already there (most Androids have it built in).
2. Open it and sign in with a Google account — on Android it's usually the account already on the phone.
3. Turn on 'Backup' (often it asks you the first time, or look in the app's settings under your picture).
4. Leave the phone on Wi-Fi, plugged in, and give it time — a large library can take hours to finish copying.
5. On any other phone or computer, open the Google Photos app or go to photos.google.com and sign in to see them all.

TIP

Once backup is finished, you can confirm it worked by signing in to Google Photos on a different device and scrolling through — if your pictures are all there, they're safe in the cloud and reachable forever, regardless of what happens to the old phone. That confirmation is worth doing before you let the old phone go.

4 The Easy Cloud Way — iCloud (iPhone)

If the old phone is an iPhone, iCloud Photos does the same quiet magic within Apple's world: turn it on, and your whole photo library copies to iCloud, reachable on any Apple device or through a web browser. The one thing to watch is storage space, since Apple's free iCloud allowance is small.

1. On the iPhone, open Settings and tap your name at the top, then iCloud, then Photos.
2. Turn on 'Sync this iPhone' (also called iCloud Photos) so your library uploads.
3. Keep the phone on Wi-Fi and charging until it finishes — a big library takes a while.
4. See the photos anywhere by signing in at icloud.com in a web browser, or on another Apple device with the same Apple Account.

WATCH OUT

Apple gives only 5GB of iCloud storage free, and a photo library fills that fast. If you see 'iCloud storage is full,' the photos haven't all copied yet — you'd need to add a little iCloud+ storage (50GB is about a dollar a month in the US) or use the cable method instead, which doesn't cost anything. Don't assume they're safe until the upload has actually completed.

5 The Cable Way — Copy to a Computer

If you'd rather keep the photos as files on your own computer — or you don't want to use the cloud — connecting the phone to a computer with a cable lets you copy them across directly, much like emptying a camera. It costs nothing and gives you a folder of photos you own completely.

1. Connect the phone to the computer with the phone's charging cable (the end that plugs into a computer's USB port).
2. Unlock the phone, and if it asks whether to 'Allow access' or 'Transfer photos,' say yes.

3. On a Windows PC: open File Explorer, find the phone under 'This PC,' open its storage, and look in the 'DCIM' folder — that's where photos live. Select them and copy them to a folder on the computer.
4. On a Mac with an iPhone: open the Photos app (or Image Capture), which offers to import the photos — choose Import All.
5. On a Mac with an Android: install Google's 'Android File Transfer' first, then open the phone's DCIM folder and drag the photos across.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> 'DCIM' is the standard folder name where nearly every phone and camera stores its photos — it's worth remembering, because once you find DCIM you've found the pictures. If you see folders like 'Camera' inside it, that's where your own snapshots are, as opposed to pictures saved from messages or the web.

6 Moving Photos Straight From One Phone to Another

Sometimes you just want the photos on your new phone, directly from the old one. If you're setting up a new phone, the main transfer usually brings photos along with everything else. But if you only want the pictures — say, from a spare old phone — there are simpler ways.

- During a new-phone setup, the standard transfer (Quick Start on iPhone, 'Copy apps & data' on Android) brings photos across automatically.
- To move just photos later, the cloud route is easiest: back the old phone up to Google Photos or iCloud, then sign in on the new phone — the pictures appear.
- For a quick handful, you can share photos to yourself by text, email, or a nearby-share feature (AirDrop between iPhones, Quick Share between Androids).

1. For a whole library, turn on Google Photos (or iCloud) backup on the OLD phone and let it finish.
2. Sign in to the same account's Google Photos (or iCloud) on the NEW phone.
3. Your pictures appear, downloaded as you view them — nothing lost in between.

TIP

Using the cloud to move photos between phones has a quiet bonus: the pictures end up safely backed up as well as on the new phone, so you've protected them and moved them in one go. There are Bill's Home Tech guides on setting up a new phone and on backing up if you'd like the fuller walkthrough.

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.

7 Getting Photos Off an Old Flip Phone

Older flip phones and basic 'feature phones' store photos too, and getting them off is a little more hands-on, since they predate the easy cloud tools. It's still very doable — the pictures are usually on a tiny memory card or in the phone's own small storage. This is also the kind of rescue people most often hand to a professional, because the methods vary so much by phone.

- Look for a memory card: many flip phones use a tiny 'microSD' card. If so, popping it out and reading it in a computer (with a small adapter) is the cleanest route to the photos.
- If there's no card, the photos are in the phone's own memory — a cable to a computer, or sending them to yourself by picture message, may be the only way.
- Some older phones can send a photo by text (picture message) one at a time — slow, but it works for a precious few.
- Bluetooth to a computer is sometimes possible on these phones, though fiddly.

WATCH OUT

Flip phones and very old phones are genuinely the trickiest for this, because every model does it differently and the photos may be few but very precious. This is a job I'm glad to take on — I've pulled photos off all sorts of old phones over the years, and it's deeply satisfying work. If the pictures matter and the method is baffling, don't struggle alone; it's exactly the kind of thing worth a visit.

8 Getting Photos Off a Very Old Android

A very old Android phone that still turns on can give up its photos with the same methods as a newer one, just with older-looking menus. The approach is the same; you're mostly working around dated software.

1. Try the cable-to-computer route first — even old Androids show a DCIM folder when plugged into a PC.
2. If it has a memory card, you can remove it and read it directly in a computer with a card adapter.
3. If Google Photos will install and sign in, let it back up over Wi-Fi — older phones can be slow, so be patient.
4. Check both the phone's own storage and the memory card, as photos may be split between them.

GOOD TO KNOW

Old Androids often store photos in two places — the phone's internal memory and a memory card — so it's worth checking both so you don't leave half your pictures behind. When copying to a computer, you may see two separate storage areas for exactly that reason; look in the DCIM folder of each.

9 Getting Photos Off an Old Computer

Photos don't only hide on phones — plenty are stranded on an old computer, perhaps one that's slowing down or that you're thinking of replacing. Rescuing them is straightforward, and it's wise to do before an aging computer gives you trouble.

1. Find your photos: on Windows look in the 'Pictures' folder; on a Mac, open the Photos app or the Pictures folder.
2. Plug in a USB stick or external drive (covered next chapter) and copy the photo folders onto it.
3. Or, to get them into the cloud, install Google Photos' uploader on the computer, or sign in at photos.google.com and upload the folders.
4. Double-check the copy opened correctly on the new location before deleting anything from the old computer.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Never delete the photos from the old computer until you've confirmed the copies actually open and look right in their new home. Copying can occasionally miss a file or stop partway, so that quick check — opening a few photos from the USB stick or the cloud — is what makes it safe to let the old machine go.

10 Saving Photos to a USB Stick or Drive

A USB stick (also called a flash drive or thumb drive) is a cheap, pocket-sized way to keep a physical copy of your photos — ideal for handing a set to family, or tucking a backup in a drawer. Once your photos are on a computer or in the cloud, copying them to a stick is simple.

1. Get the photos onto a computer first (by cable, or by downloading them from Google Photos or iCloud).
2. Plug a USB stick into the computer — a window usually opens showing the stick as a new drive.

3. Open the folder holding your photos, select them all (Ctrl+A on Windows, Command+A on a Mac), and copy them.
4. Open the USB stick's window and paste the photos in. Wait for the copying to finish completely.
5. Safely remove the stick (eject it) before unplugging, so nothing is lost mid-copy.

> **TIP**
>
> USB sticks are inexpensive, so consider making two — one to keep and one to give to a family member — and label them. A photo stored in three places (the cloud, a computer, and a USB stick) is about as safe as a photo can be, and well worth the few dollars.

11 Getting Your Photos Printed

There's real joy in having photos off the screen and in your hands — on the fridge, in a frame, or in an album. Once your pictures are off the old device, getting prints is easy, and you don't need any technical skill to do it.

- From your phone: apps like the ones from your local pharmacy or a photo service let you pick pictures and order prints to your door or for in-store pickup.
- From a USB stick: take the stick to a pharmacy or store with a photo kiosk, plug it in, and choose your prints right there.
- Photo books: services can turn a set of photos into a bound book — a lovely gift and a durable keepsake.
- In store with help: many pharmacies and stores will help you print from a phone or stick at the counter if you ask.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Prints are more than decoration — they're a form of backup that needs no battery, password, or working device to enjoy. A box of printed photos will outlast any phone or hard drive, which is a comforting thought for the pictures that matter most.

12 Keeping Your Photos Safe From Now On

Having rescued your photos, the last kindness to yourself is making sure they stay safe without you having to think about it. The guiding idea is simple: a photo kept in only one place is a photo at risk. Spread them out a little and you'll never face this scare again.

- Turn on automatic backup on your current phone — Google Photos (Android or iPhone) or iCloud Photos (iPhone) — so new pictures protect themselves.
- Keep a second copy somewhere independent: a USB stick, an external drive, or a second cloud service.
- Print the pictures that matter most — a physical copy survives anything digital.
- Know the account (Google or Apple) your photos back up to, and keep its password written somewhere safe.

> **TIP**
> The gold standard is to have your photos in more than one place — the cloud plus a USB stick, say. Then if a phone dies, a computer fails, or an account is lost, your memories are still safe in another spot. Once automatic backup is on, you've done the hardest part, and it keeps protecting new photos on its own.

13 When to Call Bill

Rescuing photos off an old device is some of the most rewarding help there is, because what's at stake is memories. Many of these routes you can manage yourself with this guide in hand. But a few — coaxing pictures off a baffling old flip phone, reading a memory card, making sure nothing's left behind before an old phone or computer is let go — are far easier, and far less nerve-wracking, with someone beside you who's done it many times.

I come to you here in Portage County, find every photo on the old phone or computer, get them safely into the cloud and onto a USB stick (or both), check that nothing was missed, and set up your current phone so your pictures protect

themselves from now on — and I'm happy to help you order prints of the ones you love most. With 30+ years of professional experience, rescuing photos from old and stubborn devices is work I genuinely enjoy, and no question is too small to ask.

- The photos are on an old flip phone or a very old phone and the method baffles you.
- You want them safely off before letting go of an old phone or computer, with nothing left behind.
- A memory card or old device needs reading and you're not sure how.
- You'd like them both backed up in the cloud and copied to a USB stick, done right.
- You want your current phone set up so your photos back themselves up from now on.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Get the photos somewhere safe first, then copy, print, or protect as you like.

I want to...	Do this...
The easiest rescue (Android or iPhone)	Turn on Google Photos backup; sign in anywhere to see them
The easy way on an iPhone	Settings your name iCloud Photos turn on; watch the 5GB limit
Copy to a computer by cable	Plug in, unlock, allow access, open the DCIM folder, copy the photos
Move photos to a new phone	Back up the old phone to the cloud, sign in on the new one
Rescue a flip phone's photos	Read its memory card in a computer, or send pictures by text one by one
Save to a USB stick	Get photos onto a computer, copy them onto the stick, eject before unplugging
Keep them safe for good	Turn on automatic backup; keep a second copy; print the best ones
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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