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How to Force-Restart Any Phone, Tablet, or Computer

When the screen is frozen solid and nothing responds, this firmer restart wakes it up — safely

Plain-English tech help from:
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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A force restart is a firmer way to turn off a device whose screen is frozen and ignoring the normal restart — and it never erases your photos, messages, or settings. On an iPhone, quickly tap Volume Up, then Volume Down, then hold the side button until the Apple logo appears. Samsung: hold power and Volume Down together for about seven seconds.

Pixel: hold the power button alone for up to thirty seconds. A frozen computer: hold its power button about ten seconds, then turn it back on. The usual mistake is letting go too early, so keep holding until the logo shows.

If it won't respond at all or keeps freezing, that points to a deeper cause worth a look.

1 The Short Version

A force restart is simply a stronger way to turn a frozen device off and on. When a screen is stuck, black, or ignoring you, the gentle restart menu is out of reach — so you hold a specific combination of buttons that forces the device to shut down and come back fresh.

It feels a little scary the first time because you hold the buttons longer than usual, often through a blank screen, before anything happens. That is normal. It does not erase a single photo, message, or setting — it only clears the freeze.

- Use this only when the normal restart won't work because the screen is frozen.
- You will hold the buttons longer than feels natural — keep holding until the logo appears.
- It is safe: a force restart never erases your data; it only clears the lock-up.
- Each kind of device has its own button combination — find yours below.

TIP

The most common mistake is letting go too soon. On many devices nothing happens for ten, twenty, even thirty seconds — and then the maker's logo appears. Keep holding until you see that logo, then release.

2 First: Are You Sure It's Really Frozen?

Before the firmer move, take ten seconds to be sure the device is truly locked up and not just dim, asleep, or quietly busy. A force restart is safe, but it is worth ruling out the simpler explanations first.

1. Tap the screen once and wait a few seconds — a sleeping device may just need a moment to wake.
2. Press the power or side button once to see if the screen lights up at all.
3. Turn up the brightness if the screen is on but very dark.
4. Look for a spinning circle or an "installing" message — if it is updating, leave it alone and let it finish.
5. If after all that it still ignores every button and tap, it is genuinely frozen — now the force restart is the right move.

WATCH OUT

If the screen shows an update in progress, a progress bar, or the words "do not turn off," do NOT force restart. Interrupting an update is one of the few things that can leave a device genuinely stuck. Give it time — updates can take a surprisingly long while.

3 Force-Restart an iPhone (and Newer iPad)

Modern iPhones — and iPads without a Home button — use a quick three-part sequence rather than a single long press. It catches people out because the first two presses are fast taps, not holds, and only the last one is a hold.

1. Press and quickly release the Volume Up button.
2. Press and quickly release the Volume Down button.
3. Now press and HOLD the side button — keep holding, even past the slider, even through a black screen.
4. Keep holding until the white Apple logo appears (this can take ten seconds or more), then let go.

TIP

Do the two volume taps briskly, one after the other, then go straight to holding the side button. If a "slide to power off" bar appears, ignore it and keep holding — the logo is what you are waiting for.

GOOD TO KNOW

An iPad with a Home button is different: hold the Home button and the top button together until the Apple logo appears. If your iPad has no Home button, use the iPhone sequence above.

4 Force-Restart a Samsung Galaxy Phone or Tablet

Samsung phones and tablets use a two-button hold, and the timing is more forgiving than the iPhone's — you simply hold both buttons together until the screen blinks and restarts.

1. Press and hold the power (side) button and the Volume Down button at the same time.
2. Keep holding both for at least seven seconds — longer is fine.
3. The screen will go black and then the Samsung logo will appear.
4. Release both buttons once you see the logo, and let it start up.

GOOD TO KNOW

On some Samsung models the power button may be set up as a shortcut to the voice assistant, but holding it together with Volume Down still forces the restart. If nothing happens after fifteen seconds, make sure you are truly holding both buttons down together.

5 Force-Restart a Google Pixel

Google's Pixel phones keep it simple with a single button — but you hold it far longer than usual, which is the part that surprises people. There is no volume button involved.

1. Press and hold the power button by itself.
2. Keep holding — well past the point where a menu might appear — for up to about thirty seconds.
3. When the phone vibrates and the colorful "G" logo appears, release the button.
4. Let it finish starting up before using it.

TIP

If a power menu pops up while you are holding, just keep holding right through it. The force restart happens after that menu, when you have held long enough. Thirty seconds feels like forever — that is normal.

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6 Force-Restart Other Android Phones

Android phones from other makers — Motorola, LG, OnePlus, and the rest — almost all use one of two combinations. If one doesn't work, the other almost certainly will.

- Most common: hold the power button and Volume Down together for ten to twenty seconds until the screen restarts.
- Alternative: hold the power button alone for twenty to thirty seconds.
- If the screen blinks, shows the maker's logo, or vibrates, it worked — let go and let it start.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The exact combination is printed in the little manual that came with the phone, but you rarely need it: try power plus Volume Down first, and the power-button-only hold second. One of the two works on nearly every Android phone made in the last several years.

7 Force-Restart a Frozen Computer

A computer that is completely locked up — the mouse won't move, nothing responds — can be forced off with its own power button. This is the computer equivalent of the phone trick, and just as safe when it is truly frozen.

1. Press and hold the physical power button on the computer (on a laptop, usually above the keyboard or on the side).
2. Keep holding for about ten seconds until the screen goes dark and the machine powers off completely.
3. Wait ten seconds, then press the power button once, normally, to turn it back on.
4. Let it start all the way to the desktop before you begin working again.

WATCH OUT

Only force a computer off when it is genuinely frozen. If you can still move the mouse, use the normal Restart instead, so any open documents get saved. Forcing it off skips that safety step, which is fine in a true freeze but needless otherwise.

8 Force-Restart a Streaming Stick or Box

When a Roku, Fire TV, or Apple TV locks up on a frozen screen and the remote does nothing, the force restart is wonderfully low-tech: you take away its power for a moment.

- Unplug the stick or box from power (pull the USB or power cable, or unplug it from the wall).
- Wait a full ten seconds so it fully powers down.
- Plug it back in and give it a minute or two to start up again.
- If it plugs into the back of the TV, you can also unplug the TV itself for 30 seconds to clear both at once.

TIP

Pulling the power is actually the official "force restart" for most streaming devices — they have no buttons to hold, so unplugging is exactly right, not a workaround. There is no way to harm them by doing it.

9 What to Expect After a Force Restart

The first start-up after a force restart can look a little different, and knowing what is normal keeps you from worrying that something went wrong. Everything settles within a few minutes.

- It may take longer than usual to start the first time — that is the device tidying up after the freeze.

- You may need to enter your passcode or PIN, even if it usually uses your face or fingerprint.
- Apps that were open are closed; just open them again as normal.
- Your photos, messages, contacts, and settings are all exactly where they were.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Being asked for your passcode instead of your face or fingerprint after a restart is a deliberate security feature, not a sign of trouble. Enter the code once and the face or fingerprint unlock goes back to working as before.

10 If It Won't Force-Restart or Freezes Again

A force restart clears a one-off freeze almost every time. If it won't force-restart at all, or if it freezes again soon after, that points to something beyond a passing glitch — a battery that is failing, a device too full to breathe, or a troublesome app.

1. If holding the buttons does nothing, plug the device into its charger and wait fifteen minutes — a fully drained battery can mimic a freeze — then try the force restart again.
2. If it works but freezes again within a day, note which app or screen it freezes on; that is usually the cause.
3. Check whether the device is nearly out of storage space, a common cause of repeated freezing.
4. If freezes keep happening, it is worth having someone look rather than forcing it off again and again.

> **TIP**
>
> A device that needs forcing off more than once in a while is trying to tell you something. Repeated freezing is rarely random — it is usually storage, a specific app, or an aging battery, all of which are findable.

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11 Keeping the Right Combination Handy

Nobody remembers these button combinations in the moment — and a frozen phone is exactly when you can't look it up on that phone. A little preparation now makes the panic moment painless later.

- Write your device's exact combination on a card and keep it in a drawer or wallet.
- If a spouse or family member has the same kind of phone, note theirs too.
- Print this guide's cheat sheet and keep it where your other tech notes live.
- Remember the rule of thumb: hold the buttons far longer than feels natural, and wait for the logo.

GOOD TO KNOW

I am glad to leave a little card taped inside a cabinet door with the exact steps for your specific devices, so the next freeze is a two-minute fix instead of a worry.

12 Force-Restart a Smart TV or Game Console

Smart TVs and game consoles freeze too, and they have their own firmer restart. For most, the sure method is the same low-tech one as a streaming stick — remove the power for a moment.

- Smart TV: unplug it from the wall, wait a full 30 seconds, and plug it back in. This clears far more than the remote's power button.
- Game console: hold the console's own power button (not the controller's) for about ten seconds until it fully powers off, then turn it on.

- If a console's power button does nothing, unplug it at the wall, wait 30 seconds, and reconnect.
- Give either a couple of minutes to start fully before judging whether it worked.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> A TV's remote power button only puts it to sleep — it keeps the TV's insides running. Unplugging at the wall is the real reset, which is why it clears freezes the remote never can.

13 When the Buttons Themselves Seem Broken

Occasionally the force restart won't work because a button is stuck, broken, or being misread — and then it feels like the device is beyond help when it isn't. A little troubleshooting of the buttons themselves gets you unstuck.

1. Press each button firmly and separately to feel whether any is stuck down or mushy.
2. If a case or cover might be pressing a button, take it off and try again.
3. For an iPhone sequence, make sure you are tapping the volume buttons quickly, not holding them — holding them is the usual reason it fails.
4. If a button is genuinely broken, let the battery run all the way flat; the device will power off on its own, and charging it will start it fresh.

> **TIP**
> Letting the battery drain completely is a last-resort force restart for a device with a broken button — once it dies and you charge it, it starts clean. It is slow, but it works when no button will.

14 A Note on Fear: It Won't Erase Anything

Many people hesitate to force-restart because holding buttons through a black screen feels like it must be doing something drastic. It genuinely isn't. A force restart does exactly what the gentle restart does — it just reaches a device that is too frozen to use the menu.

- Your photos, videos, messages, and contacts are untouched.
- Your apps, logins, and settings all stay exactly as they were.
- Nothing is deleted, reset, or sent anywhere.
- The only change is that the freeze is cleared.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The word that erases things is "reset," and a force restart never uses it. If a screen ever asks you to "erase," "reset," or "restore," that is a different action entirely — stop and check before tapping it.

15 When to Call Bill

A force restart is safe to try yourself, and it clears the great majority of frozen-screen moments. But if your device won't respond to any button combination, keeps freezing again and again, or won't start up at all after a force restart, you do not need to keep wrestling with it.

I come to you, work out why a device keeps locking up — an overloaded storage drive, a failing battery, a particular app — and fix the cause, not just the symptom. And I will leave you with the exact steps for your own devices so a future freeze is nothing to fear.

- No button combination gets any response at all.
- It freezes again within hours or days, over and over.
- It won't start up after a force restart, even on the charger.
- You would simply rather have someone confirm the device is healthy.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this where you'll find it when a screen is frozen — you can't look it up on the frozen phone itself.

My device is…	Force-restart it by…
iPhone / newer iPad	Quick Volume Up, quick Volume Down, then HOLD the side button to the Apple logo
Samsung Galaxy	Hold power + Volume Down together 7+ seconds until the logo
Google Pixel	Hold power alone up to 30 seconds until the "G" logo
Other Android	Hold power + Volume Down (or power alone) 10-30 seconds
A frozen computer	Hold the power button ~10 seconds until it goes dark, then turn on
Streaming stick/box	Unplug the power, wait 10 seconds, plug back in
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

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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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