



If Your Phone Is Lost or Stolen Away From Home

A Calm Plan Find, lock or erase your phone and protect what's inside it

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1608** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

1. The Whole Plan in One Glance	5
2. Stay Calm and Think for a Minute	5
3. Is It Lost, or Is It Stolen?	6
4. Find a Borrowed Phone or a Computer	6
5. Finding an iPhone With Find My	6
6. Finding an Android Phone With Find Hub	7
7. Make the Phone Ring to Find It Close By	7
8. Mark As Lost to Lock the Phone	8
9. What Message to Show on the Lock Screen	8
10. Call Your Carrier to Suspend the Line	9
11. Locking the SIM or eSIM	9
12. Why Your Phone Number Is Worth Guarding	10
13. Protect Your Banking and Payment Apps	10
14. Change Your Most Important Passwords	11
15. Turn On the Extra Login Step	11
16. Filing a Police or Theft Report	11
17. Erasing the Phone From Afar	12
18. Do Not Remove the Phone From Your Account	12
19. Having Another Way to Communicate	13
20. Should You Carry a Backup Phone?	13
21. Your Calm Action Plan for the First Hour	14

22. Check That Find My Is Switched On	14
23. Turning On Find My iPhone	15
24. Turning On Find Hub	15
25. A Strong Passcode Is Your First Lock	15
26. Set the Screen to Lock Quickly	16
27. Back Up Before You Leave Home	16
28. Why a Backup Changes Everything	17
29. Know Your Account Logins Before You Go	17
30. Habits That Keep a Phone From Wandering	18
31. Common Places Phones Go Missing	18
32. Your Watch or Tablet Can Help Too	18
33. Watch Out for Fake 'Found Phone' Messages	19
34. Getting Your Phone Back and Unlocking It	19
35. If You Need to Replace the Phone	20
36. Phone Insurance and Theft Protection	20
37. A Lost Phone While Overseas	21
38. Helping a Travel Companion Who Loses Theirs	21
39. A Few Things Not to Do	21
40. Share Locations With a Loved One	22
41. If You Wear an Apple Watch or Android Watch	22
42. Practice the Plan Before You Need It	23
43. Your Before-You-Leave Checklist	23
44. A Phone Is Replaceable; You Are Prepared	24

45. When It Is Worth Calling Me 24

Everyday Cheat Sheet 25

A Picture to Follow Along 26

A Second Look 27

A Note From Bill 27

Your Visit — and My Promise 28

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1. The Whole Plan in One Glance

If you remember only this page, you will still handle a lost phone well.

A missing phone is a problem you can act on, not just worry about. The first move is always to try to find it from another device, then lock it so no stranger can get in, and only erase it if you have given up getting it back. After that, you protect the accounts inside it and tell your carrier.

- Borrow a phone or find a computer and sign in to your account
- iPhone: use the Find My app or icloud.com/find to see it on a map
- Android: use the Find Hub app or android.com/find
- Play a sound in case it is close by, then Mark As Lost to lock it
- Call your carrier to suspend the line so no one can use it
- Erase it only as a last resort, once you are sure it is gone

GOOD TO KNOW

The find-and-lock tools only work if they were switched on before the phone went missing. Turning them on takes two minutes, and this guide shows you how, so do it before your next trip.

FIRST, BREATHE

2. Stay Calm and Think for a Minute

The first thing to do is nothing, for about thirty seconds. A phone that feels stolen is very often just set down. It is on the restaurant table, in the seat pocket, in the other coat, or in the bottom of the bag. Panic makes us overlook the obvious.

Retrace the last few minutes in your mind. Where did you last have it in your hand? Did you use it to pay, to take a photo, to show a boarding pass? Picture that moment, and the phone is often right there.

TIP

Have someone call your number from their phone. If it is nearby and the ringer is on, you will hear it. Even on silent, you may feel or see it light up.

LOST OR STOLEN

3. Is It Lost, or Is It Stolen?

It helps to decide which situation you are in, because it changes how fast you move. A phone left behind in a hotel or a taxi is usually recoverable, and you have a little time. A phone taken from your pocket or table in a crowd is a different matter, and you will want to lock it quickly.

When in doubt, treat it as stolen. Locking a phone that turns out to be merely lost costs you nothing, and it is easy to unlock again once it is back in your hands. The steps in this guide work for both situations.

GOOD TO KNOW

Whether it was lost or stolen, the tools you use are the same. The only real difference is how quickly you lock it and whether you report a theft to the police.

YOU NEED ANOTHER SCREEN

4. Find a Borrowed Phone or a Computer

To find your phone, you need to get onto your account from somewhere else. That can be a travel companion's phone, a hotel's front-desk computer, a library computer, or a tablet in your bag. Any device with a web browser will do.

- A spouse or friend's phone, using a web browser or the matching app
- A hotel business-center or front-desk computer
- A laptop or tablet you brought along
- A library or internet cafe computer in a pinch

TIP

This is exactly why a travel companion with a phone is such a help. Before any trip, make sure at least one person you travel with knows your plan and can lend you their screen.

IPHONE: FIND MY

5. Finding an iPhone With Find My

Apple's tool is called Find My, and it is free and built into every iPhone. You reach it either from the Find My app on another Apple device, or from any web browser by going to icloud.com/find and signing in with your Apple Account.

- 1 On a borrowed iPhone or iPad, open the Find My app and tap Me, then Help a Friend; or in a browser, go to [iCloud.com/find](https://icloud.com/find)
- 2 Sign in with your Apple Account email and password
- 3 Tap the Devices tab and choose your missing iPhone from the list
- 4 Look at the map to see where it is, or where it was last seen
- 5 From here you can play a sound, mark it as lost, or erase it

GOOD TO KNOW

If your iPhone is turned off or out of battery, the map shows its last known spot. Newer iPhones can still be found for a while even when powered down, which is a quiet help.

ANDROID: FIND HUB

6. Finding an Android Phone With Find Hub

Google's tool for Android phones is called Find Hub. It used to be called Find My Device, so you may still see the old name here and there. You reach it from the Find Hub app on another Android phone, or from any browser by going to android.com/find and signing in.

- 1 On a borrowed Android phone, open the Find Hub app; or in a browser, go to android.com/find
- 2 Sign in with the same Google Account that is on your lost phone
- 3 Pick your phone from the list of your devices
- 4 See it on the map, where it is or was last seen
- 5 Choose Play Sound, Secure Device, or Erase Device from the options

GOOD TO KNOW

Find Hub can locate a phone even when it is offline by quietly borrowing the Bluetooth signal of other Android phones nearby. Only you can see the result; it is scrambled so even Google cannot read it.

PLAY A SOUND

7. Make the Phone Ring to Find It Close By

If the map shows your phone is right where you are, or very close, the quickest trick is to make it play a sound. This works even if you had the ringer turned off or set to silent, which is why it is so handy under a car seat or deep in a bag.

- On iPhone, choose Play Sound in Find My; it chirps until you find it
- On Android, choose Play Sound in Find Hub; it rings at full volume for about five minutes

- The sound plays even if the phone was on silent or vibrate
- Follow the sound and you will usually have it in hand in seconds

TIP

Play a sound before you do anything drastic. Many a phone thought to be stolen was simply ringing away under a pile of coats in the next room.

LOCK IT DOWN

8. Mark As Lost to Lock the Phone

If the phone is not within earshot, the next step is to lock it so a stranger cannot get inside. On an iPhone this is called Mark As Lost; on Android it is called Secure Device or Mark As Lost. Either one locks the screen with your passcode and can show a message asking an honest finder to call you.

- 1 Choose Mark As Lost or Secure Device for your phone
- 2 Turn on the lock, which uses your existing passcode or PIN
- 3 Add a short message like 'Lost phone, please call' with a number to reach you
- 4 Use a friend's number, not the lost phone's own number
- 5 Confirm, and the phone locks the next time it has any signal

GOOD TO KNOW

Locking this way also freezes your tap-to-pay wallet. On iPhone, Lost Mode suspends Apple Pay; on Android, Secure Device signs you out and pulls your cards from Google Wallet.

A NUMBER TO LEAVE

9. What Message to Show on the Lock Screen

When you lock the phone, you get to type a short note that appears on its screen. This is your chance to reach an honest person who found it. Keep it simple, polite, and give a way to reach you that is not the missing phone itself.

- Say plainly that the phone is lost and you would be grateful for its return
- Give a phone number a finder can call, such as a spouse's phone or the hotel
- Do not put your home address on the lock screen
- A hotel front desk number is a safe, neutral place for someone to call

TIP

Many good people want to return a lost phone but have no way to reach the owner. A clear message with a working number turns a lost phone into a returned one more often than you would think.

CALL THE CARRIER

10. Call Your Carrier to Suspend the Line

Your phone company can suspend your line so no one can make calls, send texts, or use data on your number. This matters because a thief could otherwise run up charges or use your number to break into accounts. Keep your account PIN or password handy so you can prove who you are.

- 1 Call your carrier's customer service from a borrowed phone
- 2 Tell them your phone is lost or stolen and ask to suspend the line
- 3 Give your account password or PIN to confirm your identity
- 4 Ask whether they can blacklist the device so it cannot be reused
- 5 Ask how to turn service back on if the phone comes home

WATCH OUT

You can be responsible for charges on your line until you report the phone missing. Suspending the line promptly protects both your bill and your accounts.

SIM AND ESIM

11. Locking the SIM or eSIM

Your phone number lives either on a small plastic chip called a SIM card, or on a built-in digital version called an eSIM. Suspending your line through the carrier is what stops that number from being used, whichever kind you have. You do not have to do anything to the chip itself.

When you get a replacement phone, the carrier will move your number over, either by mailing a new SIM or by setting up a fresh eSIM. Your old number stays yours; only the hardware changes.

GOOD TO KNOW

Suspending the line is what matters, not fishing out a chip. Once the carrier suspends your service, the number is useless to a thief even if they pop the SIM into another phone.

WHY SUSPEND FAST

12. Why Your Phone Number Is Worth Guarding

Your phone number is more valuable than it looks. Many accounts send a text with a code to confirm it is you. If a thief controls your number, they can try to intercept those codes and reset your passwords. That is the real reason to suspend the line quickly.

Suspending the line pulls the rug out from under that trick. Without your working number, the thief cannot catch the text codes, and your accounts stay far safer while you sort everything out.

TIP

If you ever move to a new phone, those same text codes are how you prove it is you. Keeping a note of your important account logins, stored safely at home, makes recovery much smoother.

PROTECT THE BANK

13. Protect Your Banking and Payment Apps

If your phone had a banking app or saved card details, take a few minutes to protect your money. Locking the phone and suspending the line already help a great deal, but a call to your bank adds a layer. Your bank can watch for odd activity or freeze a card for a short time.

- 1 Call your bank and credit-card companies to say your phone is missing
- 2 Ask them to watch for unusual charges or temporarily lock cards
- 3 From a computer, change your online-banking password
- 4 Remove or sign out the lost phone from your bank's app if it offers that
- 5 Keep an eye on your statements over the following days

WATCH OUT

A locked phone keeps most thieves out of your banking app, but it is still worth a call to the bank. They would far rather hear from you early than clean up fraud later.

CHANGE PASSWORDS

14. Change Your Most Important Passwords

From a trusted computer, change the passwords on the handful of accounts that matter most. Start with your email, because email is the master key that can reset everything else. Then move to banking and your Apple or Google account.

- Email first, since it controls password resets for other accounts
- Your Apple Account or Google Account, which guards your phone and photos
- Online banking and any money-transfer apps
- Social media and shopping accounts with a saved card

TIP

A passphrase you can remember, like Sophie-Ravenna-1992, is both strong and easy. Write new passwords down on paper kept at home, not on another device.

TWO-STEP LOGIN

15. Turn On the Extra Login Step

Two-step login, sometimes called two-factor, means a service asks for a second proof when someone tries to sign in from a new device. It is one of the best protections you have, and a good moment to switch it on is while you are already tidying up your accounts.

The catch worth knowing is that some two-step systems send the code by text to your phone number. If that number is suspended or on a lost phone, you may need another method, such as an email code or an app. This is one more reason to keep a backup way in.

GOOD TO KNOW

When you set up a new phone with your same number restored, the text codes work again. Until then, choose the email-code option if a service offers it.

THE POLICE REPORT

16. Filing a Police or Theft Report

If your phone was stolen, it is worth filing a report with the local police. You may need it for an insurance claim, and it creates an official record. Ask for a copy or a reference number before you leave.

- 1 Find your phone's IMEI number, a serial-like number your carrier or box has
- 2 Report the theft to the local police and give them the IMEI
- 3 Describe where and when it happened, and the phone's make and model
- 4 Ask for a report number or a copy of the report
- 5 Keep that number for your insurance or carrier claim

GOOD TO KNOW

You can see your phone's IMEI number before a trip by dialing star-pound-zero-six-pound on it, or by checking the original box. Jot it down and keep it at home.

THE LAST RESORT

17. Erasing the Phone From Afar

If you have given up hope of getting the phone back, or it held something you truly cannot risk a thief seeing, you can erase it from a distance. This wipes it clean, as if it were brand new. Treat this as a last resort, because it cannot be undone and it ends your ability to track the phone.

- 1 On iPhone, in Find My or icloud.com/find, choose Erase This Device
- 2 On Android, in Find Hub or android.com/find, choose Erase Device
- 3 Confirm, understanding this cannot be reversed
- 4 If the phone is offline, the wipe begins the next time it connects
- 5 Your backups at home are safe; only the phone itself is cleared

WATCH OUT

Erasing is final and it stops the tracking. Try everything else first, because a locked phone is already quite safe and still findable, while an erased one is gone for good.

KEEP ACTIVATION LOCK

18. Do Not Remove the Phone From Your Account

Even after you erase a lost phone, there is one thing not to do in haste: do not remove it from your Find My or Find Hub list. Leaving it there keeps a protection called Activation Lock in place, which means the phone cannot be set up and used by anyone else without your account password.

That lock is what makes a stolen phone nearly worthless to resell. If you remove the phone from your account too soon, you hand the thief a clean, usable device. So leave it listed, even after wiping it.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you have phone insurance with a theft-and-loss plan, do not remove the device from your account until the claim is fully approved. Ask your insurer what they need first.

A BACKUP TO TALK

19. Having Another Way to Communicate

The hardest part of a lost phone on a trip is suddenly having no way to reach anyone. This is why a backup plan matters. A travel companion's phone, a hotel phone, or a cheap spare phone turns a crisis into a manageable afternoon.

- Travel with a spouse or friend who has their own phone
- Keep a short list of key numbers written on paper in your wallet
- Know your hotel's phone number and name so others can reach you
- Consider a simple, inexpensive backup phone for longer trips

TIP

Write down, on an index card, the phone numbers of two family members and your hotel. When your phone is gone, you cannot look up numbers that lived only inside it.

A CHEAP SPARE

20. Should You Carry a Backup Phone?

For a long trip, especially overseas, some travelers tuck an inexpensive spare phone in their bag. It does not need to be fancy. Even an old phone you kept after upgrading can make calls on Wi-Fi and hold a copy of your most important apps.

The spare is your lifeboat. If your main phone goes missing, you can still reach family, pull up a confirmation, or call your bank. You do not need a second phone plan for it; it can work on Wi-Fi alone in a pinch.

GOOD TO KNOW

An old phone kept charged and signed in to your accounts is a fine backup. Keep it in a different bag from your main phone so one mishap does not claim both.

THE FIRST HOUR

21. Your Calm Action Plan for the First Hour

When a phone goes missing, doing the right things in the right order keeps you calm and effective. Here is the whole plan in a single list you can follow top to bottom. None of it requires being a computer person.

- 1 Pause and retrace your steps; have someone call your number
- 2 Get onto a borrowed phone or computer and open Find My or Find Hub
- 3 Play a sound in case it is nearby
- 4 Mark As Lost to lock it and show a return message
- 5 Call your carrier to suspend the line
- 6 Change your email and banking passwords from a computer
- 7 File a police report if it was stolen
- 8 Erase it only if you have truly given up on recovery

TIP

Keep this list, or a photo of it, somewhere other than your phone. A copy in your wallet or in a travel companion's phone means you have the plan even when your phone does not.

FIND MY ON OR OFF

22. Check That Find My Is Switched On

Everything in this guide depends on one setting being on before the phone goes missing. On an iPhone it is called Find My iPhone, and on Android it is Find Hub, or Find My Device on older phones. If it was off, the phone will not show on the map and you cannot lock or erase it from afar.

The fix is simple and takes two minutes, and it is well worth doing before any trip. Check it the same way you would check you packed your charger.

WATCH OUT

If Find My was never turned on, a lost phone will not appear anywhere. This single setting is the difference between a recoverable phone and a gone one, so confirm it before you leave.

TURN IT ON: IPHONE

23. Turning On Find My iPhone

On an iPhone, this lives in Settings under your name at the top. It takes less than a minute and asks nothing of you afterward; it simply works quietly in the background.

- 1 Open Settings and tap your name at the very top
- 2 Tap Find My
- 3 Tap Find My iPhone and make sure it is switched on
- 4 Also turn on Find My network and Send Last Location
- 5 Back out; you are done, and nothing changes in daily use

GOOD TO KNOW

Send Last Location tells the phone to report where it is just before the battery dies. That one setting has reunited many people with a phone that ran flat in a taxi.

TURN IT ON: ANDROID

24. Turning On Find Hub

On an Android phone, Find Hub is usually on already, but it is worth checking. It lives in Settings, and the exact path varies a little by brand, but it is always under security or your Google account.

- 1 Open Settings and look for Security or Google
- 2 Find the entry for Find Hub, or Find My Device on older phones
- 3 Make sure it is switched on
- 4 Confirm Location is also turned on for the phone
- 5 Sign in to your Google Account if asked

GOOD TO KNOW

For Find Hub to place your phone on a map, the phone's Location setting also needs to be on. The two work together, so check both before a trip.

A GOOD PASSCODE

25. A Strong Passcode Is Your First Lock

The simplest protection of all is a good passcode, set before anything goes wrong. A phone that locks itself and needs a code is a phone a thief cannot easily open. Fingerprint or face unlock add convenience on top, but the code underneath is what matters.

- Use at least a six-digit code, not four, and not 1234 or your birth year
- Turn on fingerprint or face unlock for easy daily use
- A longer code is harder to guess if someone watched you type it
- Never write the code on the phone's case or on a note inside the case

TIP

Pick six digits you will remember but a stranger would not guess, like part of an old phone number. The extra two digits make a real difference against someone trying codes.

AUTO-LOCK

26. Set the Screen to Lock Quickly

Auto-lock is the setting that decides how soon your screen locks itself when you set the phone down. A short time, like thirty seconds or a minute, means a snatched phone locks almost at once, before a thief can dig into it.

It feels a touch inconvenient to unlock more often, but it is a small price for real safety. On a trip, a quick auto-lock is one of the easiest protections to set and forget.

GOOD TO KNOW

On iPhone this is in Settings under Display and Brightness, called Auto-Lock. On Android it is under Display, often called Screen timeout. Set it to a minute or less.

BACK UP FIRST

27. Back Up Before You Leave Home

The sting of a lost phone is mostly about what is inside it: the photos, the contacts, the notes. A backup made before your trip takes that sting away. If the phone is gone, your memories and contacts are safe in the cloud, ready to drop onto a new phone.

- 1 On iPhone, turn on iCloud Backup in Settings under your name, then iCloud
- 2 On Android, turn on Google One backup in Settings under Google, then Backup
- 3 Make sure Photos is set to back up as well
- 4 Let it finish a full backup on Wi-Fi before you travel
- 5 Confirm the date of the last backup so you know it is current

TIP

Plug in on your home Wi-Fi the night before you leave and let the backup run while you sleep. You will travel knowing nothing on the phone is truly irreplaceable.

WHAT A BACKUP SAVES

28. Why a Backup Changes Everything

It is worth understanding what a backup does, because it reframes the whole worry. A backup is a copy of your phone's contents kept safely in the cloud. The phone is just a piece of glass and metal; the real value is the information, and a backup keeps that safe no matter what happens to the device.

With a good backup, replacing a lost phone becomes almost routine. You buy a new one, sign in with your account, and your photos, contacts, and apps flow back onto it. The loss shrinks to the cost of the hardware.

GOOD TO KNOW

A backup is the difference between losing a phone and losing your memories. The phone can be replaced in an afternoon; years of photos cannot, unless they are backed up.

KNOW YOUR LOGINS

29. Know Your Account Logins Before You Go

To find, lock, or restore your phone, you must be able to sign in to your Apple Account or Google Account from another device. Many people have these accounts but have long forgotten the password, since the phone just stays signed in. Dig it out and confirm it before you travel.

- Know your Apple Account or Google Account email and password
- Know your carrier account PIN or password
- Write them on paper kept at home, not saved on the phone alone
- Test that you can sign in on a computer before the trip

WATCH OUT

The moment your phone is missing is the worst time to discover you cannot remember your account password. Confirm it ahead of time, while the phone is in your hand to help you reset it if needed.

ON THE ROAD

30. Habits That Keep a Phone From Wandering

A little care while traveling prevents most losses in the first place. Crowds, tables, taxis, and seat pockets are where phones slip away. A few simple habits keep yours with you.

- Keep the phone in a front pocket or a zipped bag, not a back pocket
- Do a quick pat-down check whenever you leave a seat or table
- Be extra careful in crowds, on transit, and at busy attractions
- Check the seat pocket and tray before you leave a plane or train

TIP

Make a habit of a three-item check before you stand up anywhere: phone, wallet, keys. A two-second pat saves many a frantic afternoon.

AT THE HOTEL

31. Common Places Phones Go Missing

If your phone does go missing, knowing the usual hiding spots speeds the search. Phones have favorite places to hide, and they are the same ones over and over.

- The bed, slipped between the sheets or under a pillow
- The bathroom counter or the back of the sink shelf
- A coat pocket, especially one you were not wearing
- The car, wedged between or under the seats
- A restaurant table, the chair, or the floor beneath

GOOD TO KNOW

Call the last place you remember having the phone. Hotels, restaurants, and taxi companies turn in found phones more often than people expect, and an honest finder may be waiting for your call.

WATCHES AND TABLETS

32. Your Watch or Tablet Can Help Too

If you wear an Apple Watch or carry an iPad or Android tablet, those can help you find a missing phone. They appear in the same Find My or Find Hub list, and some can ping your phone directly. An Apple Watch can even play a sound on a nearby iPhone with a tap.

It works the other way too. If you lose the watch or tablet instead, your phone can find them. All your devices under one account look out for one another.

TIP

On an Apple Watch, swipe up to the control screen and tap the phone icon to ping your iPhone. If it is nearby, it will chirp and you will walk right to it.

BEWARE THE TRICK

33. Watch Out for Fake 'Found Phone' Messages

After you mark a phone as lost, a thief sometimes tries a trick. You may get a text or email claiming your phone was found, with a link asking you to sign in to see its location. This is a scam meant to steal your account password so they can unlock the phone.

The honest way to check your phone is always through the official Find My or Find Hub, which you reach yourself by going to icloud.com/find or android.com/find. Never sign in through a link that arrives in a message.

WATCH OUT

A real lost-phone system never emails or texts you a link asking for your password. If you get one, do not tap it. Go to the official site yourself and sign in there.

WHEN IT COMES BACK

34. Getting Your Phone Back and Unlocking It

Happily, many lost phones are found and returned. When yours comes home, undoing everything is straightforward. You turn off Lost Mode, call the carrier to turn your line back on, and the phone is yours again.

- 1 Unlock the phone with your passcode as usual
- 2 In Find My or Find Hub, turn off Mark As Lost or Secure Device
- 3 Call your carrier to turn your suspended line back on
- 4 Sign back in to any apps that signed you out
- 5 Change your passwords again if you are unsure who handled the phone

WATCH OUT

If a stranger had the phone for a while, change your important passwords once more to be safe, even though it was locked. A few minutes of caution buys real peace of mind.

SETTING UP A NEW ONE

35. If You Need to Replace the Phone

If the phone is truly gone, setting up a replacement is easier than most people fear, especially if you backed up. You buy a new phone, the carrier restores your number, and you sign in with your same account to pull everything back.

- 1 Get a new phone and have the carrier restore your number to it
- 2 Sign in with your same Apple Account or Google Account
- 3 Choose to restore from your most recent backup
- 4 Let your photos, contacts, and apps download over Wi-Fi
- 5 Reset any passwords you changed so the apps sign in cleanly

GOOD TO KNOW

This is the payoff for backing up. A new phone signed in to your account rebuilds itself to feel just like the old one, often while you have a cup of coffee.

INSURANCE

36. Phone Insurance and Theft Protection

Some people carry phone insurance or a theft-and-loss plan through their carrier or phone maker. If you do, a lost or stolen phone may be partly covered. Know what you have before a trip, and what the plan needs from you to pay a claim.

- Check whether your carrier plan includes theft-and-loss coverage
- A police report number is often required for a theft claim
- You will likely need the phone's IMEI number
- Do not remove the phone from your account until the claim is approved

GOOD TO KNOW

Even a home or travel insurance policy sometimes covers a stolen phone. It is worth a quick call to ask before you buy a replacement out of pocket.

TRAVELING ABROAD

37. A Lost Phone While Overseas

Losing a phone far from home feels worse, but the plan is the same. Find My and Find Hub work worldwide, and you can reach them from any hotel computer or borrowed phone with internet. The main added step is reaching your carrier, which may mean an international call or an online chat.

- The find-and-lock tools work the same in any country
- Reach your carrier by their website or app if calling is hard
- Your embassy or consulate can help if the phone held your travel documents
- A backup phone is especially valuable on an overseas trip

TIP

Before an international trip, note your carrier's number for calls from abroad, often printed as a line that works collect. Keep it on that paper card with your other key numbers.

HELPING A COMPANION

38. Helping a Travel Companion Who Loses Theirs

The same plan works if your spouse or friend loses their phone and you still have yours. Your phone becomes the borrowed screen they need. You can open a web browser, go to the right site, and help them sign in to find their phone.

This is why it helps for travel companions to know a little about each other's phones ahead of time. A calm helper with a working phone is exactly what a flustered person needs in that moment.

TIP

If you travel often with the same person, consider sharing your locations with each other in Find My or Google Maps. Then a missing phone is easier to spot from the start.

WHAT NOT TO DO

39. A Few Things Not to Do

In the rush of a missing phone, people sometimes make it harder on themselves. A short list of what to avoid keeps you on the right path.

- Do not go to the phone's map location yourself to confront a thief; let police handle that

- Do not remove the phone from your account too soon; it keeps the theft lock on
- Do not tap links in messages claiming to have found your phone
- Do not erase the phone until you have truly given up finding it
- Do not panic-buy a replacement before checking your insurance

WATCH OUT

Never go in person to recover a stolen phone from the map location. The map is for the police, not for you. Your safety matters far more than any phone.

FAMILY SHARING

40. Share Locations With a Loved One

There is a gentle head start you can give yourself before any phone ever goes missing. Both iPhones and Android phones let you share your location with a trusted family member, so they can see where your phone is on a map. If yours vanishes, a loved one can help you look right away, from their own phone.

- On iPhone, use Share My Location in the Find My app
- On Android, use location sharing in Google Maps
- Share only with people you trust completely, and only if you wish
- You can turn sharing off again at any time
- This is covered in full in its own guide on location sharing

GOOD TO KNOW

Sharing your location is a choice, never a requirement. If it gives you and your family peace of mind, it is there; if it feels like too much, the tools in this guide work fine without it.

SMARTWATCH HELP

41. If You Wear an Apple Watch or Android Watch

A smartwatch on your wrist is a quiet safeguard against a lost phone, because it is one thing you are far less likely to set down and leave behind. If your phone slips away but your watch is with you, the watch can ping the phone to make it chirp, and on many watches you can still take calls and texts over Wi-Fi.

Think of the watch as a second, strapped-on way to reach your world. It will not replace the phone, but in the moments right after a phone goes missing, a watch keeps you connected and helps you hunt the phone down.

WATCH OUT

If you own a smartwatch but have never set up its ping-my-phone button, it is worth learning. It turns 'where did I put my phone' into a two-second chirp across the room.

A CALM MINDSET

42. Practice the Plan Before You Need It

The best time to learn these steps is when nothing is wrong. Sit down at home one quiet afternoon and walk through finding your own phone from a computer or a spouse's phone. Open icloud.com/find or android.com/find, sign in, and watch your phone appear on the map. Play a sound so you hear how it works.

Doing it once, calmly, makes it familiar. Then, if the real moment ever comes, your hands will know the way even while your heart is racing. A plan you have rehearsed is worth far more than one you have only read.

TIP

Make this a yearly habit, perhaps the same day you change your smoke-alarm batteries. A five-minute practice keeps the whole plan fresh and your passwords confirmed.

A PRE-TRIP CHECK

43. Your Before-You-Leave Checklist

Five minutes before a trip spares you a hard afternoon later. Run through this list the day before you travel and you are ready for anything.

- Find My or Find Hub is switched on, and so is Location
- A strong six-digit passcode and quick auto-lock are set
- A full backup finished on Wi-Fi last night
- You know your Apple or Google and carrier account passwords
- Key phone numbers are written on a card in your wallet
- A travel companion or a backup phone is part of your plan

GOOD TO KNOW

Do this calm five-minute check at home, not at the gate. A prepared phone is a problem that stays small even when the phone goes missing.

KEEPING PERSPECTIVE

44. A Phone Is Replaceable; You Are Prepared

It helps to hold the whole thing in perspective. A phone is a tool, and tools can be replaced. With your backup safe, your line suspended, and the device locked, a lost phone is an inconvenience and an expense, not a catastrophe.

The travelers who handle this best are not the most technical ones; they are the ones who set up a few protections ahead of time and then follow the plan calmly. You can be one of them with the steps in this guide.

TIP

Read through the action plan once before your trip so it feels familiar. If the moment ever comes, you will move through it steadily instead of scrambling.

WHEN TO CALL

45. When It Is Worth Calling Me

Setting up Find My, a good passcode, and a backup takes only a few minutes, but it is far easier with someone sitting beside you the first time. If you would like help getting your phone trip-ready, or if your phone has gone missing and you want a calm hand walking you through finding and locking it, that is exactly what I am here for. I am Bill, I have more than thirty years of professional experience, and I serve folks right here in Portage County.

- Call or text Bill at (330) 200-8042
- First in-home visit is a flat \$99, with a 30-day follow-up included
- Remote screen-share help is \$49 if you would rather not have a visit
- My phone and chat helper, Sophie, can answer quick questions any time

TIP

I can get your phone fully trip-ready in one visit: Find My turned on, a strong passcode set, a backup running, and your key numbers written on a card. You leave on your trip with one less thing to worry about.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy on your trip. It is the short version of what to do if your phone goes missing, and how to be ready before it does.

- First: pause, retrace your steps, and have someone call your number
- Get on a borrowed phone or computer: [iCloud.com/find](https://icloud.com/find) for iPhone, android.com/find for Android
- Play a sound if it is close; it rings even on silent
- Mark As Lost to lock it and show a return message with a number to call
- Call your carrier to suspend the line so no one can use your number
- Change your email and banking passwords from a computer
- File a police report if it was stolen; have your IMEI number ready
- Erase it only as a last resort, and do not remove it from your account
- Before any trip: Find My on, strong passcode, quick auto-lock, a fresh backup
- Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Which Tool for Your Phone?

Match the finding tool to the phone you carry.

iPhone

Apple Find My
iCloud.com/find in a
browser
Play, lock or erase

Android

Google Find Hub
android.com/find in a
browser
Play, lock or erase

Any Device

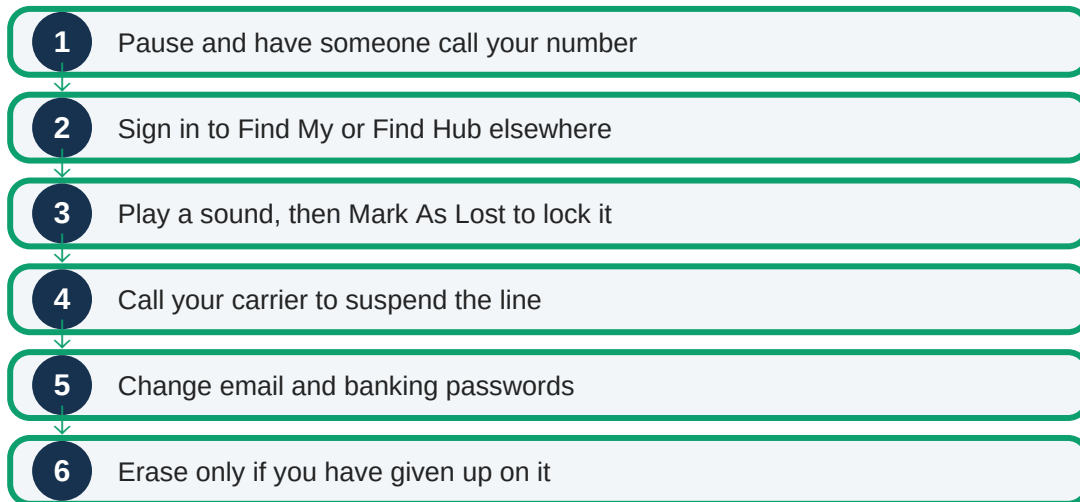
Borrow a phone
Or use a computer
Sign in to your account

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

The First Hour, Step by Step

Follow these in order and a lost phone stays manageable.



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**

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.