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AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2336

Updated November 2026

iMessage: Green vs. Blue & "Not Delivered"

What the colors and labels really mean, and exactly what to do when a message won't go through

Plain-English iPhone help from:

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A blue bubble is an iMessage sent over the internet between Apple devices; a green bubble is a regular text that travels over the phone network and reaches any phone, including Android — both arrive fine, so the color alone is never a problem. 'Delivered' means it reached their phone (not that they've read it), 'Read' appears only on blue messages when the other person allows it, and a red exclamation mark means 'Not Delivered' — just tap it and choose Try Again.

If messages keep failing, check your signal or Wi-Fi, toggle Airplane Mode on for five seconds and off, and restart. If blue iMessages stop entirely, switch iMessage off and back on in Messages settings to re-register it. Turning on 'Send as SMS' makes failed iMessages fall back to a text automatically so your message still gets through.

1 The Short Version

You send a text and wonder: why is this one blue and that one green? Why did one say 'Delivered' and another say 'Not Delivered' with a red exclamation mark? These little colors and labels confuse a lot of people, but they are simply your iPhone telling you how a message traveled — and once you know the code, you will never be puzzled by it again.

This guide explains blue versus green, what 'Delivered' and 'Read' really mean, and exactly what to do when a message will not go through. No jargon — just plain answers to the small mysteries of the Messages app.

- Blue means iMessage (iPhone to iPhone); green means a regular text, often to an Android phone.
- Neither color means anything is wrong — they just travel by different roads.
- 'Delivered' means it arrived; 'Not Delivered' with a red mark means it needs another try.

- Most 'not delivered' messages are a simple signal hiccup, fixed by resending or a quick toggle.

> **TIP**
> The color is not about whether your message is good or bad — it is only about HOW it is being sent. Blue and green messages both arrive perfectly well. There is nothing to fix just because a message is green.

2 Blue vs. Green — What the Colors Mean

The color of your message bubble tells you which of two systems carried it. A blue bubble is an iMessage: it went over the internet from your iPhone to another Apple device — an iPhone, iPad, or Mac. A green bubble is an ordinary text message (the old 'SMS'), the kind that travels over the phone network and works with any phone, including Android.

Both get your message there. The difference is simply the road it took. Blue iMessages can do a few extra things — like showing when a message was read, and sending bigger, sharper photos — because they use the internet. Green texts are the universal fallback that reaches absolutely any phone.

Blue bubble (iMessage)	Green bubble (text / SMS)
iPhone to another Apple device	To an Android phone, or when iMessage can't be used
Travels over the internet (Wi-Fi or data)	Travels over the phone network
Can show 'Read' and send big, sharp photos	Works with any phone, but photos may shrink

3 Why a Message Might Turn Green Unexpectedly

Sometimes a message to a friend who normally shows up blue suddenly comes through green, and people worry they have been blocked. Usually it is far more innocent than that.

- That person turned their iPhone off, or it has no internet right then — so your iPhone sends a green text instead to make sure it still arrives.
- Your own iPhone briefly lost its internet connection, so it fell back to a regular text.
- The person switched to an Android phone, which cannot receive blue iMessages at all.
- A temporary iMessage outage pushed the message to the green backup road.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A message turning green is almost always your iPhone being helpful — choosing the reliable backup road so your message still gets through rather than failing. It is rarely a sign of anything being wrong between you and the other person.

4 What 'Delivered' and 'Read' Actually Mean

Under your sent messages you sometimes see small gray words, and each one means something specific and reassuring.

- 'Delivered' — the message reached the other person's phone. It does NOT mean they have looked at it yet.
- 'Read' — on blue iMessages only, and only if the other person has Read Receipts turned on, this means they opened it.
- No label at all — perfectly normal for green texts, which usually do not report back.
- A time stamp like 'Delivered 9:14 AM' — just tells you when it arrived.

WATCH OUT

'Delivered' is the one that matters most: it confirms your message got there. Whether the person has read it or replied is up to them — a lack of a reply is never a sign your message failed to arrive.

5 The Dreaded Red Exclamation Mark

The one label that actually means 'try again' is 'Not Delivered,' shown with a red circle and an exclamation mark beside your message. It simply means the message did not make it out — almost always because of a momentary signal or internet hiccup, not anything you did wrong.

1. Tap the red exclamation mark beside the message.
2. Choose 'Try Again' to resend it.
3. If it fails again, check that you have a signal or Wi-Fi, then try once more.
4. As a last resort, you can choose to send it as a regular text message instead.

GOOD TO KNOW

A single 'Not Delivered' is almost always a brief blip — you drove through a dead spot, or the Wi-Fi stuttered for a second. Tapping 'Try Again' resends it, and it usually goes straight through the second time.

6 Fix Messages That Keep Failing

If messages fail again and again, rather than just once, a few calm checks clear up nearly every case. Work down them in order.

1. Check your connection: do you have a signal or Wi-Fi? A text needs cellular; an iMessage needs internet.
2. Toggle Airplane Mode on for five seconds and back off, to make the phone re-find its signal.
3. Restart the phone fully, then try sending again.

4. Make sure iOS is up to date in Settings, General, Software Update.

> **TIP**
>
> The Airplane Mode trick — on for five seconds, then off — is the quickest cure for messages that stall. It forces the phone to grab a fresh signal, and it fixes a stuck Messages app more often than anything else.

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 Make Sure iMessage Is Set Up Right

If your blue messages have stopped working altogether, iMessage itself may need a nudge. These checks set it right without losing any of your conversations.

1. Open Settings, then Apps and Messages (or Messages directly), and confirm iMessage is switched on.
2. If it seems stuck, switch iMessage off, wait ten seconds, and switch it back on — it will re-register.
3. Check 'Send & Receive' lists your phone number and Apple email correctly.
4. Make sure you are signed in with your Apple Account.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Switching iMessage off and back on makes it re-register with Apple, which cures most 'my blue messages stopped' problems. Give it a minute afterward to reconnect — a brief 'Waiting for activation' message during that time is normal, not an error.

8 Send a Text as a Backup When iMessage Is Down

When a blue message will not go, you can usually still reach the person with a plain green text — the universal road that almost always works. It is the reliable fallback whenever iMessage is having a bad day.

1. If a message shows 'Not Delivered,' tap the red mark and look for 'Send as Text Message.'
2. You can also turn on a setting that does this automatically: in Messages settings, enable 'Send as SMS' so failed iMessages fall back to a text on their own.
3. A text reaches any phone, so it is the dependable way to get an urgent message through.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Turning on 'Send as SMS' in Messages settings means you rarely see a failed message again — when iMessage can't get through, the phone quietly sends a regular text instead, and your message still arrives.

9 About 'Read Receipts' and That Little 'Delivered'

One small feature causes a lot of quiet worry: read receipts. When they are on, the other person sees 'Read' under your message once they open it — and you see the same from them. Some people love knowing; others find it stressful. Either way, it is entirely your choice, and easy to change.

1. Open Settings, then Apps and Messages (or Messages).
2. Find 'Send Read Receipts' and turn it on or off to suit you.
3. You can even set it per-person: open a conversation, tap the name at the top, and choose for just that chat.

GOOD TO KNOW

Turning read receipts off means people can no longer see when you have opened their message — which takes the pressure off replying the instant you read something. It only affects blue iMessages; green texts never showed read status anyway.

10 When Only One Person's Messages Fail

Sometimes everything works except messages to one particular person. That narrows things down nicely, and the fixes are specific and simple.

- They may have switched to an Android phone — your messages to them will now be green, which is correct.
- Their phone may be off or out of signal; your message will wait or fall back to a green text.
- Delete the old conversation and start a fresh one to clear any stuck thread.
- Double-check you have their current number saved correctly in Contacts.

TIP

If one person's messages suddenly turn green and stay green, the most common reason by far is that they got a new, non-Apple phone — not that anything is wrong on your end. Your messages are still reaching them perfectly.

11 Texting With Android Friends

Messages to friends on Android phones will always be green, and that is completely normal — Android phones cannot receive Apple's blue iMessages. Knowing what to expect prevents a lot of needless worry.

- Green is the right, expected color for any message to an Android phone.
- Photos and videos sent to Android may arrive smaller or blurrier, because green texts shrink them.

- For sharp photos to an Android friend, email them or use a sharing app instead of the Messages app.
- Group chats mixing iPhone and Android work, but some extras — like reactions — may show up as plain text.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> None of this means anything is broken. iPhone and Android simply speak slightly different languages for messages, and green is the common tongue they both understand. Your message gets there either way.

12 Sending Photos So They Look Their Best

A common frustration is sending a lovely photo of the grandkids only for it to arrive small and blurry. Whether that happens comes down to the blue-versus-green roads again, and there are easy ways to make sure your pictures arrive sharp.

- Photos sent as blue iMessages (iPhone to iPhone) arrive full-size and sharp.
- Photos sent as green texts to an Android phone are shrunk to fit the old text system, so they look blurry.
- For a sharp photo to an Android friend, email it or use a sharing app instead of the Messages app.
- Sending many photos at once over a text can be slow or fail; send a few at a time.

1. To send a photo in Messages, tap the plus or camera icon beside where you type.
2. Pick the photo or photos you want and send.
3. If it is going to an Android friend and must look its best, close Messages and email it instead.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> If your photos to one person always arrive blurry, that person is almost certainly on an Android phone, so your pictures travel the green-text road that shrinks them. Emailing those photos is the simple way to send them in full quality.

13 When to Call Bill

The colors and labels in Messages are easy once you know the code, and resending a failed message is usually a single tap. But if your messages keep failing, iMessage has stopped working, or you just want someone to explain it all with your own phone in hand, I am happy to help.

On a visit I will make sure iMessage is set up correctly, your messages send reliably over both roads, and your photos go through looking their best. I will also clear up any lingering confusion about the colors and labels, so your Messages app finally makes plain sense.

- Your messages keep showing 'Not Delivered' no matter what you try.
- Your blue iMessages have stopped working entirely.
- You are worried a message did not reach someone important.
- You would simply like the whole blue-green-delivered business explained clearly, once and for all.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. The color is only about HOW a message is sent — both arrive fine.

I want to...	Do this...
Understand the colors	Blue = iMessage (iPhone to iPhone); Green = regular text (any phone, incl. Android)
Read the labels	'Delivered' = it arrived; 'Read' = they opened it; red '!' = it needs resending
Resend a failed message	Tap the red exclamation mark Try Again
Fix messages that keep failing	Check signal/Wi-Fi, toggle Airplane Mode 5 seconds, then restart
Revive blue iMessages	Settings Messages turn iMessage off, wait 10 sec, back on
Always get it through	Turn on 'Send as SMS' so failed iMessages fall back to a text
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

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KEY SPECS

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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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