



An Extended Guide · No. 1880

Installing a Robot Mower — Base Station, Signal & First Mow

A calm, step-by-step setup
for your first season

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Let's get your robot mower set up right

A robot mower is a lovely thing once it's running — it keeps the lawn trim all season while you sit on the porch. But the setup is where folks get tangled up. This guide walks you through it calmly, one step at a time, so the first mow goes smoothly.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping neighbors get comfortable with their gear, patiently and in plain language. Think of this as me in your yard with you, pointing out where the charging base wants to go and what to tap on your phone.

Setting up a robot mower comes down to a handful of things: a good spot for the charging base, a clear enough view of the sky or a buried wire, the first map drawn on your phone, and a sensible first week of settings. Get those right and the mower mostly looks after itself.

★ I'll handle the fiddly phone part

The app setup, the mapping, and the schedule are the parts that trip people up, and they're exactly what I'm glad to do with you. For digging a wire or adding an outdoor outlet, I'll line up a trustworthy local pro. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole setup, on one page

If you remember only these things, your install is already most of the way there.

- ❑ Put the charging base on level ground, near power, with a clear approach so the mower can drive in and park.
- ❑ Keep the base out of the worst weather — not in a puddle, not baking in the open if you can help it.
- ❑ A wire-free satellite (RTK) model needs a clear view of the sky for its antenna; trees and buildings block the signal.
- ❑ A wired model needs its boundary wire laid around the lawn edge — that digging is a job for a pro.
- ❑ The first map is drawn on your phone: you walk or steer the edge, then add any keep-out zones.
- ❑ Set a gentle cutting height, an easy schedule, and turn on rain delay for the first week, then adjust.

✓ One rule to hold onto

Go slow on the very first mow and watch it. Five minutes of supervising the first run saves you a week of head-scratching later.

Where the charging base wants to live

The charging base — the little dock the mower drives home to — is the heart of the whole setup. A good spot for it pays off all season.

The base wants **level, firm ground**. A tilted or soft spot makes the mower miss the dock or park crooked. Most folks set it along the edge of the lawn against a wall, a fence, or a flower bed, out of the way of foot traffic but not boxed into a tight corner.

Give the mower a **clear, straight approach** to the base — a stretch of open lawn in front of it so it can line itself up and drive in. If the only path home is a tight, twisty gap, the mower will fuss over docking every single time.

✓ Think about where you'll see it

A base you can glance at from a window or the back door makes it easy to tell at a quick look whether the mower is home and charging — handy in the first weeks while you're still learning its habits.

Power and keeping it out of the weather

The base needs electricity, and it lives outdoors in Ohio weather. A little planning here keeps it reliable and long-lived.

The base plugs into an outlet, so it needs an **outdoor-rated outlet within reach** of its cord. If you don't have one near your chosen spot, that's an electrician's job — adding a proper weatherproof outdoor outlet is wiring, not something to improvise with an extension cord run across the grass. I'll help you line up a pro for that.

Try to keep the base **out of the worst weather**. It's built to live outside, but a spot that sits in a puddle every storm, or bakes in full afternoon sun all summer, is harder on it. A little shelter — the lee of the house, under an eave, or a small cover made for your model — helps it last.

! No extension cords across the lawn

A long extension cord to the base is a trip hazard and a shock risk in wet grass, and the mower can cut it. If power won't reach safely, have an outdoor outlet added properly — that's a pro's job, and worth it.

How your mower knows where the lawn ends

Before we site the signal gear, it helps to know which of the three ways your mower keeps itself on the grass. Your model uses one of these, and it changes what you install.

- **Buried boundary wire** — a thin wire laid around the lawn edge that the mower senses and stays inside. Proven and cheap in parts, but laying the wire is the work.
- **Wire-free with satellite (RTK)** — a small fixed antenna gives the mower its position from satellites, accurate to a couple of centimeters. You draw the boundary on your phone instead of digging.
- **Camera and vision (sometimes with laser)** — the mower sees obstacles with cameras, often combined with satellite for position. Setup is mostly on the phone.

Our which-mower and boundary-wire guides go deeper on choosing between these. Here we'll just set up whichever one you've got.

✓ Not sure which yours uses?

Check the box or the maker's page for 'boundary wire', 'RTK', or 'GPS'. If it came with a big spool of thin wire and pegs, it's a wired model. If it came with a little antenna on a stake, it's a satellite model.

A clear view of the sky, for satellite models

If your mower is a wire-free satellite (RTK) model, the single most important thing you install is the little antenna — and it needs sky.

The antenna is usually a small puck on a short stake or pole, often mounted near the base or on an open patch of ground. It places the mower by satellite, so it needs a **clear view of the open sky**. Tall trees, the house, a garage, and dense cover all block the signal — and a mower that loses its signal gets lost or stops.

On an open suburban lot this is easy. On a wooded Portage County lot with big maples and oaks, it can be the whole ballgame — the shade is fine for the grass, but it's murder on the satellite signal. Some models offer a taller pole or a data-signal option to help; our slopes-and-trees guide covers the wooded-yard problem honestly.

! Test the signal before you commit the spot

Before you set the antenna in concrete, use the app's signal or coverage check from that spot. If it's weak under your trees, a different location — or a taller mount — can make the difference between a happy mower and a frustrated one.

Laying the boundary wire, for wired models

If your mower is a wired model, the boundary wire is the big job. It's not hard to understand — it's just the part that takes muscle and care.

You run a thin wire around the whole edge of the area you want mowed, and around anything you want it to avoid — the flower bed, the pond, the tree trunks. The wire is either pegged down onto the grass (it sinks in and disappears within a few weeks) or buried a couple of inches with an edger or a trencher. Either way it loops back to the base.

The wire has to be continuous and laid at the right distance from the edge, or the mower runs over your mulch or stops short of the grass. Fixing a break later — a nick from an aerator, a squirrel, a frost heave — means finding and splicing the wire, which is its own little hunt.

★ The digging is a pro's job — the rest is mine

Laying and burying boundary wire cleanly is real yard work, and I line up a trustworthy local pro for the digging. Once the wire's down, I'll handle the app, the first map, and the schedule with you. Call (330) 200-8042.

The first map, on your phone

Whether wired or wire-free, modern mowers do their real setup through a phone app. This is the part I most often do with folks, and it's a one-time job.

First the app connects the mower to your home Wi-Fi or its own signal and updates its software — a bit like a new phone on its first day. Then comes the **mapping**: on a satellite model you walk the mower around the lawn edge (steering it with the app) so it records the boundary, or on some models you draw the boundary on a map right on the screen.

Take your time and go a little inside the true edge, not right on it. A boundary drawn a hair tight keeps the mower off the driveway, the mulch, and the neighbor's grass. You can always nudge it out later once you see how it behaves.

✓ Map on a calm, clear day

For satellite models, map when the sky is open and the signal is strong — not in a downpour. A clean first map is the foundation for every mow after it, so it's worth picking a good moment.

Keep-out zones and no-go spots

Once the outer boundary is set, you tell the mower about the things inside the lawn it should leave alone. This is where a map really earns its keep.

In the app you mark **keep-out zones** around the flower beds, the vegetable garden, the fire pit, the trampoline posts, the pond, and any soft spot that stays muddy. The mower treats these like little islands and drives around them.

If your yard has a front and a back joined by a narrow side gap, you may set up a **passage** or separate zones so the mower knows how to get from one to the other. Tight passages are fussy, so keep them as wide and straight as you can — our slopes-and-trees guide has more on awkward layouts.

✓ Add zones as you learn the yard

You don't have to mark every obstacle on day one. Run it, watch where it bumps or gets stuck, and add a keep-out zone there. The map gets smarter the first couple of weeks.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

An open, flat town lot and a big wooded rural lot ask for very different installs. Picture your own yard as you read, and set your expectations to match.

An open, flat town lot

If you've got a tidy, mostly open lawn with good sky overhead — a typical in-town yard — the install is about as easy as it gets.

- A satellite model gets a strong signal, so wire-free setup is simple.
- The base and antenna find easy level spots near the house.
- Mapping goes quickly with a clean, obvious boundary.
- You'll likely be mowing on the schedule within an afternoon.

A big wooded or hilly rural lot

A larger Portage County lot with mature trees, slopes, and odd corners is more of a project — and worth being honest with yourself about up front.

- Trees can block the satellite signal, so test coverage before you commit; a wired model may suit better.
- You may need zones for beds, the woods' edge, and muddy low spots.
- Slopes and narrow passages take extra mapping care.
- Expect a bit of trial and error over the first week or two.

★ Let's size up your yard first

Before you buy or dig, I can walk your yard with you and tell you honestly whether a wire-free model will get signal, or whether a wired one makes more sense. No sales pitch — I don't sell mowers. Call (330) 200-8042.

First-week setting: cutting height

With the map done, the first week is about dialing in three settings. Start with how short it cuts.

Robot mowers cut a little off the top often, rather than a lot at once like a push mower. So set the **cutting height on the higher side** to begin with — a taller cut is kinder to the grass, handles our wet springs better, and crowds out weeds. You can always lower it a notch later if you want it tighter.

If your lawn is long and shaggy when you first set up, give it one normal mow with your regular mower first. A robot nibbling a little at a time can't tame tall, overgrown grass in one go — it's a maintainer, not a rescue crew.

✓ Higher is healthier in an Ohio summer

A slightly taller cut shades the roots and holds moisture through a dry August spell. It's one of the easiest ways to keep the lawn green with less fuss.

First-week setting: an easy schedule

The schedule is when and how often the mower runs. The beauty of a robot is that little-and-often keeps the lawn always tidy — but ease into it.

Start with a **modest schedule** — say a few hours on a few days — rather than running it dawn to dusk every day. That lets you watch how it does, keeps the noise reasonable for you and the neighbors, and gives the grass a rhythm. You can always add more time once you trust it.

Think about **when** it runs, too. Daytime, when you can glance out and when kids and pets aren't out, is the sensible choice. Please don't set it to mow at night — that's when wildlife and pets roam, and it's both a safety and a good-neighbor issue. Our mower-safety guide explains why night mowing is a bad idea.

! Skip night mowing from the start

It's tempting to have it mow while you sleep, but night is when toads, small critters, and roaming pets are out, and the noise carries to neighbors. Keep it to daylight hours. The safety guide covers this in full.

First-week setting: rain delay

Ohio gives us plenty of wet springs, so this setting matters more here than most places. Turn it on from day one.

Rain delay tells the mower to stay home and wait when it's wet. Mowing soaked grass clumps and clogs, leaves ruts and tire marks in soft ground, and makes a mess of the blades. Most mowers sense rain or take a forecast and simply postpone the run until things dry out.

Leave rain delay generous at first. A lawn that gets mowed a few hours later because it was damp is no harm at all — a lawn chewed up by a mower driving through mud is a real nuisance to fix. Let it be patient.

✓ Wet springs are the robot's weak spot

Through a soggy April and May, expect the mower to skip plenty of runs — that's it being sensible, not broken. It'll catch up easily once the ground firms up.

Supervising the very first mow

Everything's installed and set. Now press go — and stay and watch the first run. This is the most useful half hour of the whole setup.

Follow it around for the first mow. You're looking for spots where it bumps something it shouldn't, climbs onto a bed, teeters near a slope or a step, or wanders near the edge of its boundary. Each one tells you where to add a keep-out zone or nudge the map.

Check that it finds its way home to the base and parks cleanly when it's done or low on charge. If it struggles to dock, the approach is usually too tight or the base isn't quite level — both easy to fix now, before you walk away and leave it running on its own.

★ I'll stay for the first run with you

When I set one up, I don't leave until we've watched a full first mow together, fixed the snags, and you've started and stopped it yourself a couple of times. That's how you end up confident, not just set up. Call (330) 200-8042.

What I do, and what calls for a pro

I want to be straight about where I help directly and where I bring in a trusted local pro, so there are no surprises.

The parts I handle with you are the **app, the Wi-Fi, the mapping, the zones, the schedule, and the first mow** — the setup and the learning. I'll also help you choose the right model for your yard before you buy, since I sell no mowers and earn no commission.

The parts I line up a pro for are the ones that call for digging or wiring: **burying the boundary wire** on a wired model, and **adding a proper outdoor outlet** for the base. I'm not a licensed electrician or landscaper, and I'd rather get you someone who is than risk doing it wrong.

✓ One visit can cover the learning

Many folks have the pro do the digging, then have me out to do the app, the map, and the first mow — so the technical learning and the physical work each land with the right person.

Setting it up safely from the start

A robot mower has spinning blades, so a few safety habits belong in the setup itself, not as an afterthought.

Learn where the **big stop button** is and how the **PIN lock** works before the first mow, so you can halt it instantly and so a child can't start it. Set a keep-out zone around anywhere people gather — the patio, the kids' play set — and plan the schedule for times the yard is empty.

Our mower-safety guide goes through blade design, the lift and tilt sensors that stop the blades, keeping children and pets clear, and why night mowing is off the table. If you have little ones or pets, please read it alongside this one — it's written for exactly that.

! Know the stop and the PIN before you mow

Before you ever let the mower run unsupervised, make sure you can stop it with one press and that it's PIN-locked so no one else can start it. These two things take two minutes and matter more than any other setting.

Common first-week snags and easy fixes

A few hiccups are normal in the first week. Here are the ones I see most and what usually sorts them.

- **Won't dock cleanly** — the base isn't level or the approach is too tight. Level it and clear a straight run-in.
- **Loses signal and stops** (satellite models) — trees are blocking the sky. Move or raise the antenna, or add a zone around the deep shade.
- **Stops mid-lawn** — often wet grass, a clump of clippings, or a stick or acorns jamming the blades. Clear it and raise the cut.
- **Climbs onto a bed or leaves the edge** — the boundary is drawn a touch wide. Nudge it inward in the app.
- **Runs too long or too loud** — ease back the schedule; little and often beats all day.

✓ Note the model and keep the manual

Jot down your exact model and keep the manual with your home papers. When you call me or the maker, those two things make sorting out a snag far quicker.

A simple install checklist

Keep this handy on setup day. Tick each box as you go and nothing gets forgotten.

- ☐ Base on level, firm ground with a clear, straight approach.
- ☐ A proper outdoor outlet within reach — no extension cord across the lawn.
- ☐ Base sheltered from standing water and, if possible, all-day sun.
- ☐ Satellite model: antenna has a clear sky view and tests strong.
- ☐ Wired model: boundary wire laid continuous and the right distance in.
- ☐ Mower updated and connected; first map drawn a hair inside the edge.
- ☐ Keep-out zones marked for beds, water, and gathering spots.
- ☐ Cutting height set high, modest schedule, rain delay on, daytime only.
- ☐ Stop button and PIN lock learned; first mow watched end to end.

✓ Do it in order

The list runs base, power, signal, map, zones, settings, safety, first mow. Work top to bottom and the setup almost assembles itself.

Common setup mistakes to avoid

A handful of avoidable slip-ups cause most first-week grief. Now you'll know them before they bite.

- **Base in a bad spot** — tilted, soggy, or with a cramped approach it can't dock from.
- **Ignoring the sky test** — committing a satellite antenna under trees, then fighting lost signals forever.
- **Running an extension cord** to the base instead of having a proper outlet added.
- **Mapping too wide** — drawing the boundary right on the edge so it rides onto the drive or the mulch.
- **Starting too aggressive** — low cut, all-day schedule, no rain delay, and mowing an overgrown lawn it can't tame.
- **Walking away from the first mow** instead of watching and fixing the snags on the spot.

! The wire break you'll meet someday

On wired models, the most common long-term headache is a broken boundary wire from an aerator, frost, or a critter. Note roughly where the wire runs so a future repair is a quick hunt, not a whole-yard search.

Questions to ask before setup day

Whether you're reading the manual or talking to me, these are the questions that make for a smooth install.

Q: Does my yard have the sky view a satellite model needs?

If you have mature trees over the lawn, test coverage before you commit — or consider a wired model. Shade is fine for grass but rough on the satellite signal.

Q: Do I have a safe outdoor outlet for the base, or do I need one added?

The base needs a proper weatherproof outlet within reach. Adding one is an electrician's job — don't run an extension cord across the grass.

Q: Who's laying the boundary wire, if it's a wired model?

The digging is real work and a pro's job. Plan that before setup day, then the app and first mow can follow once the wire's down.

Q: What settings should I start with the first week?

A higher cut, a modest daytime schedule, and rain delay on. Watch the first mow, then adjust. Never set it to mow at night.

✓ There's no silly question

If any of this feels like a lot, that's normal — it's new. Setup is a one-time thing, and after it the mower just runs. Ask me anything before you start.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks installing their first robot mower, answered plainly.

Q: How long does setup actually take?

An open lot with a wire-free model can be mowing in an afternoon. A wooded or hilly lot, or a wired model that needs digging, is more of a project spread over a day or two.

Q: Can I set it up myself?

The app, mapping, and schedule are doable with patience, and I'm glad to do them with you. The digging for wire and any new outdoor outlet should go to a pro.

Q: Why does it keep stopping in my shady back corner?

On a satellite model, trees there are likely blocking the signal. Raise or move the antenna, or mark that corner as a zone and tidy it the old-fashioned way.

Q: Should I let it mow while I'm asleep?

No. Keep it to daylight hours. Night is when wildlife and pets roam and the noise bothers neighbors — our safety guide explains why.

Q: What if the boundary wire breaks later?

You find the break and splice it, which is easier if you noted where the wire runs. Many folks have me or a pro track it down. It's a common, fixable nuisance on wired models.

★ Want a hand on setup day?

Installing a robot mower is exactly the kind of thing I love to help with — I'll do the app, the map, and the first mow with you, and line up a pro for any digging. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made installing your robot mower feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

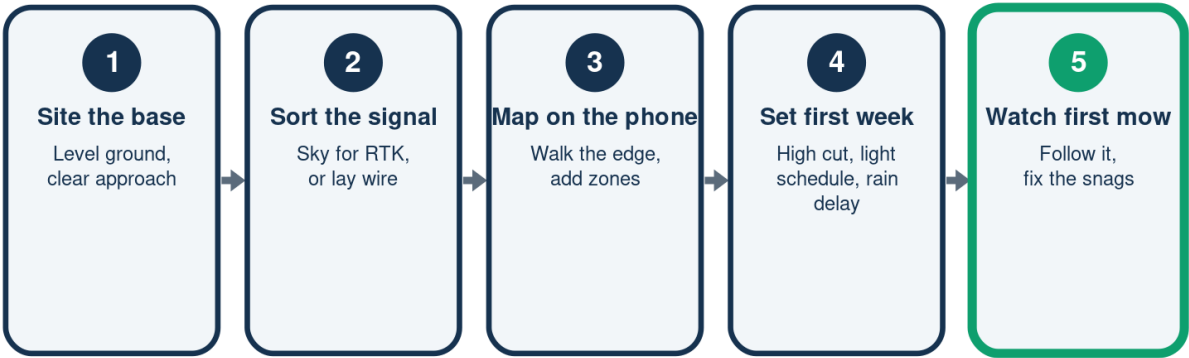
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. I'll help you choose the right machine, get it set up and mapped, connect it to your Wi-Fi and your phone, and show you how to run it. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site — app settings, schedules, a quick question — I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. For anything that calls for a ladder, wiring, or digging, I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro rather than risk it.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

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Setting Up in Five Steps

The calm order to install a robot mower



Do these in order and the first mow goes smoothly.

A Good Spot for the Base

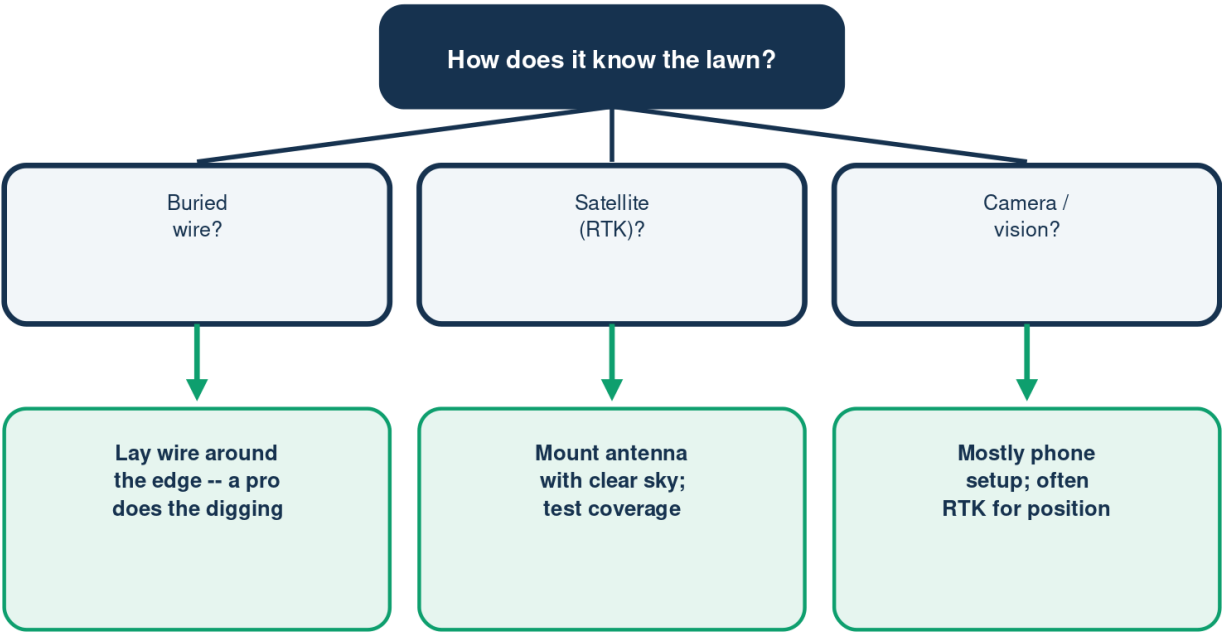
Where the charging dock wants to live

	Want this	Avoid this
Ground	Level and firm	Tilted or soft
Approach	Clear, straight	Tight, twisty
Power	Proper outlet	Extension cord
Weather	Some shelter	Puddle or glare

A good base spot pays off every single day.

What Does Your Model Need?

The signal setup depends on how it finds the edge



Trees block satellite signal -- test before you commit the spot.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

First-Week Settings

Start gentle, then adjust once you trust it

	Start here	Why
Cut height	On the high side	Kinder to grass
Schedule	A few hours/days	Ease into it
Rain delay	Turn it on	Wet Ohio springs
Time of day	Daylight only	Safe for wildlife
First mow	Watch it	Fix snags early

Little and often, in daylight, keeps the lawn tidy.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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— *Bill*



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