



An Extended Guide · No. 1266

Common Problems & Simple Fixes

When it won't start or acts up

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Hello, and welcome

Sooner or later, every generator has an off day — it won't start on the morning you need it, a warning light comes on, or it runs but nothing seems to work. Take heart: the fixes are usually simple, and this guide walks you through them calmly, one at a time.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent more than 30 years helping folks get comfortable with their technology — patiently, in plain language, and at their own pace. Think of this guide as me sitting at your kitchen table, walking through it with you one step at a time.

We'll start with the little safety rule that always comes first, then work through the common hiccups: what to check when it won't start, the number-one culprit (stale fuel) and how to beat it, the low-oil shutoff, a fouled spark plug, the overload light, and the puzzle of a unit that runs but sends no power to the outlet. There's a quick symptom-to-fix table to keep handy, honest advice for both town and country homes, and a clear line for when it's time to stop and call for help.

You do not have to read this all at once, and you certainly don't have to memorize it. Skip to whatever you need, keep it handy, and know that a real person is only a phone call away.

★ How to use this guide

Each page stands on its own. Read one, take what's useful, and come back for the next when you're ready. If a step ever feels fuzzy, that's on my writing — not on you — and you can always call me at (330) 200-8042.

First, take a breath

If your generator won't start or is misbehaving, take heart — these machines are simple at their core, and nearly every hiccup comes down to a short list of ordinary, fixable things.

Most no-starts trace back to just four usual suspects: no fuel or stale fuel, low oil, a switch or lever left in the wrong spot, or simply asking the generator to run more than it has the muscle for. None of those is a disaster, and you can sort out most of them yourself in a few unhurried minutes.

Before you touch anything, though, there is one safety rule that comes first and never bends. Do all of your checking and starting **outdoors**, in the open air, at least 20 feet from the house. Never pull it into the garage, the basement, or a shed to work on it — not even to get out of the rain, and not even for a quick test. A running engine gives off carbon monoxide, an invisible gas that can harm you fast in an enclosed space.

Work calmly and in order. Change one thing at a time and try again, rather than fiddling with three things at once and losing track of what helped. Keep your owner's manual within reach — it shows where your particular unit's switches and levers live, since every model is laid out a little differently.

! Never troubleshoot a running unit indoors

This is the rule that matters most. If the engine is running, the generator must be outside and well away from the house — never in a garage, breezeway, or shed, even with the door open. If you ever feel dizzy, headachy, or sick while it's running, get to fresh air first, then call 911. No repair is worth your safety.

When it won't start: the first easy checks

Nine times out of ten, a generator that won't start is missing something simple. Run through these first, in order, before you go looking for anything harder.

Start with **fuel**. Is there gas in the tank, and is it **fresh**? An empty or nearly empty tank is the most obvious miss, and the easiest to overlook in a hurry. Just as important, check the **fuel valve** — the little lever, sometimes called a petcock, that lets gas flow to the engine. It's easy to leave closed after storage, and a closed valve will stop a perfectly good generator cold.

Next, the **choke**. A cold engine usually needs the choke closed, or 'on,' to start, and then opened again as it warms up. A choke left in the wrong position is a classic reason a unit won't fire or starts and immediately dies. While you're there, make sure the **engine on/off switch** is on and the **fuel cap vent** is open, if your cap has one — a closed vent can starve the engine.

Take these one at a time and try a start after each. If you've confirmed fresh fuel, an open valve, the right choke, and the switches on, and it still won't go, the trouble is usually one of three deeper-but-still-simple culprits: stale fuel, a low-oil shutoff, or a fouled spark plug. Each of those gets its own page next.

✓ Check the obvious first

It sounds too simple, but a closed fuel valve and an empty tank account for more 'dead' generators than anything mechanical. Always rule out the easy things before you reach for a tool.

Stale fuel: the number-one real culprit

If there is one thing to remember from this whole guide, it's this: when a generator that ran fine a while ago won't start now, **stale fuel** is far and away the most likely reason.

Here's what happens. Gasoline doesn't keep. Over a few months it goes stale, and today's gas, which usually contains up to ten percent ethanol, actually draws in moisture as it sits. That old, watery fuel turns into a gummy varnish that clogs the tiny passages inside the carburetor — the part that mixes fuel and air for the engine. Starved of clean fuel, the engine won't catch, or it starts and quickly dies.

The fix is to get rid of the old fuel and start fresh. Drain the stale gas from the tank — into an approved container, outdoors, away from any flame — and refill with fresh gasoline. Often that alone brings a stubborn unit right back to life. If the carburetor is already badly gummed, it may need a proper cleaning, which is a straightforward service job you can hand to a pro or to me.

Far better, of course, is to prevent it. Add a **fuel stabilizer** any time the gas will sit for more than about a month, keep your supply fresh and rotate it, and consider ethanol-free gas for storage if you can find it. For long off-season storage, either treat the fuel or drain the carburetor and tank the way your manual describes.

★ Prevention beats repair every time

The single best thing you can do to avoid no-start headaches is to never let old gas sit in the machine. Fresh, stabilized fuel and a short monthly run will head off the number-one problem before it ever starts. If you'd like, I'll set you up with a simple fuel routine that fits how you use your generator.

The low-oil shutoff: add oil, on level ground

Many inverter generators have a built-in safety sensor that will not let the engine run when the oil is low. It's there to save the engine from ruin — but it can look alarmingly like a breakdown if you don't know about it.

If your unit won't start, or it starts and then shuts itself off after a few seconds for no obvious reason, a **low-oil shutoff** is a prime suspect. The cure is simple: check the oil and top it up. Set the generator on flat, level ground, pull the dipstick or open the fill, and bring the oil up to the mark using the weight your manual calls for — a thinner oil in cold weather. Generators use a little oil over time, so this is worth checking before every use.

Here's the part that catches people out. Because the sensor simply reads how much oil is pooled at the bottom, a generator sitting on a **slope** can read 'low' even when there's plenty of oil in it — the oil has just run to the downhill side, away from the sensor. So if it keeps stopping, first make sure it's on genuinely level ground and try again before you assume anything is wrong.

Whatever you do, don't keep cranking a generator that may be low on oil in the hope it'll catch. Running an engine short of oil is exactly what the sensor is trying to prevent, and it can cause real, expensive damage in short order.

! Low oil ruins engines — check it every time

The low-oil shutoff is a friend, not a fault. Get in the habit of checking the oil on level ground before each use, and topping it to the mark. It takes a minute and saves the most expensive part of the machine.

A fouled or dirty spark plug

If the fuel is fresh and the oil is full and it still won't fire, the humble spark plug is the next cheap, common thing to check.

The spark plug is what lights the fuel inside the engine. Over time — especially on stale fuel, or after a lot of low-idle running — it can get **fouled**, meaning coated with black soot or wet with fuel, and a fouled plug makes a weak spark or none at all. No spark, no start.

Checking it is a job most folks can do. With the engine **off and cool**, find the spark plug (your manual shows where), pull off its wire, and unscrew the plug with the right size wrench. Look it over: a healthy plug is dry and tan-colored, while a soot-black or oily-wet one has been fouled. You can gently clean a lightly fouled plug, but the surest fix is simply to thread in a fresh one — they're inexpensive, and it's smart to keep a spare on the shelf. Set the gap to what the manual specifies if you're comfortable doing so.

This is a five-minute job for the mechanically inclined, and a fine one to hand off if you'd rather not. A fresh plug once in a while is cheap insurance against a frustrating no-start when a storm is bearing down.

✓ Keep a spare plug on hand

A spare spark plug costs very little and takes almost no room in a drawer. Having one ready — along with the little wrench — turns a dead-generator morning into a five-minute fix, instead of a trip to a store that may be closed.

The overload light or a tripped breaker

This one sounds scary and almost never is. An overload light — or a breaker that pops and kills the outlets — simply means you asked the generator for more watts than it has to give, and it shut the power off to protect itself.

You might see a red **overload light** come on, hear the engine bog down, watch the lights you're running dim, or find the outlets suddenly dead while the engine keeps running. That's the generator saying, in the only way it can, that it's carrying more than it can handle.

The fix is to lighten the load and reset. First, **shed some load** — unplug the biggest power hogs, which are almost always things that make heat: a space heater, an electric kettle, a coffee maker, a hair dryer. Then **reset the breaker** by pushing its button or flipping it back, or let the overload light clear per your manual. Now plug your things back in a few at a time, most important first, and stop before you reach the edge again.

One more trick helps when a big motor is what pushed it over. When you start something like a refrigerator or a pump, switch **eco mode off** for a moment so the full power is ready for that brief surge, then turn eco back on once it's running. Leave a little headroom in general, and start big motors one at a time.

✓ The culprit is usually a heater, not the fridge

When a generator overloads, the thing that tipped it over is far more often a space heater, kettle, or hair dryer than the refrigerator. Unplug the heat-makers first and you'll usually be right back in business.

Eco mode and hard motor starts

Eco mode — sometimes called economy or smart-throttle — is one of the best things about an inverter generator. But there's one moment when it can trip you up, and it's worth understanding so it never puzzles you.

Eco mode saves fuel and keeps things quiet by letting the engine idle down to match a light load. That's wonderful when you're running a few lights and charging phones. The catch comes when a big **motor** suddenly kicks on — a refrigerator's compressor, a pump, a power tool. A motor demands a big gulp of power the instant it starts, and if the engine is loafing along in eco mode, it sometimes can't spin up fast enough to catch that surge. You'll hear it stumble or dip, or the overload light may blink on.

The fix is a simple habit, not a repair. Just before you start something with a big motor, flip **eco mode off** so the generator is already running at full speed with all its power ready. Let the motor start and settle, then switch eco back on to enjoy the quiet and the fuel savings again.

It's worth saying plainly: this is normal behavior, not a fault. Every inverter generator works this way. Once you know the little 'eco off to start the big stuff, eco on to run it' routine, hard starts simply stop happening.

✓ Eco off to start, eco on to run

That's the whole rule in six words. Turn eco off for the big motor starts so the full surge is on tap, then turn it back on to save fuel and keep the peace with your neighbors.

It runs, but nothing comes out of the outlet

Here's a puzzling one: the engine is humming along contentedly, but the thing you plugged in is dead. Reassuringly, the trouble is almost always in the outlet or the cord, not the engine itself.

The first thing to check is the **GFCI**. Many generators have ground-fault outlets — the kind with little 'test' and 'reset' buttons, like the ones near a bathroom sink — and they trip easily from moisture, a damp cord end, or a fault in whatever's plugged in. Simply press the **reset** button firmly and see if power returns. A generator sitting out in damp weather trips these fairly often.

If that's not it, look for a **push-button outlet breaker** — a separate little reset near the outlets — and press it back in. Then check the **cord and connection**: make sure the plug is pushed all the way in, try a different outlet on the panel, and inspect the cord for damage. If your unit has a 120/240-volt selector, make sure it's set the way you need.

There's one important caution here. If a GFCI trips **again** the moment you reset it, don't keep forcing it — and never try to defeat it. A GFCI that won't stay reset is telling you there's a real fault in the cord, the device, or the generator, and that's your cue to stop and get it checked.

! A GFCI that keeps tripping is a warning

Those reset buttons are safety devices. If one trips over and over, it has found a fault and is doing its job. Unplug things and test them one by one to find the culprit — and if it keeps tripping with nothing plugged in, the generator itself needs a look.

The electric start just clicks — or does nothing

If your generator has a key or a push-button start and it won't crank over, don't be stranded. The cause is usually just a tired little starter battery, and there's a backup built right in.

First, get yourself running. Nearly every electric-start inverter generator also has a **recoil pull cord** — the same kind you know from a lawn mower — as a backup. Use it to start the unit now, so a dead battery doesn't leave you without power during an outage. It's worth practicing the pull start once on a calm day so it's familiar when you need it.

Then deal with the battery. These small batteries slowly lose their charge just sitting through a long off-season, so a generator that started fine in the fall may only click in the spring. The good news is that simply **running the generator** usually recharges the battery as it goes. For a battery that's gone flat, charge it the way your manual describes, and consider a small trickle charger or maintainer over the winter to keep it topped up.

Cold weather is hard on batteries too, so a marginal one often gives out on the coldest morning. If yours is dead every single time, even after charging, it has probably reached the end of its life and needs replacing — a simple part a pro or I can sort out for you.

✓ The pull cord always works

Even on a fancy electric-start unit, the recoil cord is your dependable backup. Learn where it is and give it a pull now and then, so a weak battery is never more than a minor inconvenience.

Rough running, sputtering, or surging

Sometimes a generator starts just fine but won't run smoothly — it hunts up and down, sputters, coughs, or nearly stalls under load. Almost every time, the engine is starving for clean fuel.

The culprit is usually the same villain we keep meeting: **stale fuel and a gummed-up carburetor**. When old, varnished gas partly clogs the tiny fuel passages, the engine can't get a steady drink, so its speed wanders — that up-and-down surging you're hearing. Water that old ethanol gas has pulled in does the very same thing.

Start with the easy cure: drain the old fuel and refill with fresh gasoline, then run it a few minutes to see if it clears up. Often it does. Check that the **air filter** is clean while you're at it, and that the choke is fully open once the engine is warm — a half-closed choke makes an engine run rich and rough. If fresh fuel and a clean filter don't settle it down, the carburetor likely needs a proper cleaning, which is a quick service job for a pro or for me.

As always, prevention is easier than repair. The same fuel discipline that prevents no-starts prevents rough running too: fresh gas, a splash of stabilizer whenever it'll sit, and a short run once a month to keep everything flowing.

★ A surge means the engine is starving

When a generator hunts and surges, picture it gasping for clean fuel. Fresh gas fixes it more often than not; a carburetor cleaning fixes the rest. If yours is surging and fresh fuel didn't cure it, give me a call and we'll get it running smooth again.

If you live in town: city and suburb

Most of my customers here in town — in Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, and Aurora — are on city water and city power, and when a generator acts up, being close to town is a real advantage: help and parts are usually just up the road.

In a typical outage in town, you're leaning on the generator for the fridge, some lights, the phones, the internet, and maybe the furnace fan. So when it won't start, the goal is a **quick fix** — you don't want to be stuck fiddling in the dark while the food warms up. The good news is that the common fixes in this guide take only minutes, and everything you're likely to need is close by.

Because a hardware store or gas station is usually just a few minutes away, town folks can often grab fresh gas, a bottle of stabilizer, the right oil, or a new spark plug on short notice. Even so, keep a little of each on hand — during a big storm the whole neighborhood is at the same shelves, and stores may be closed or picked clean just when you need them most.

One caution matters more in town than almost anywhere: many houses here have **attached garages**, and it's tempting to pull the generator inside to start it out of the rain or the cold. Please never do that. An attached garage shares air with the house, and carbon monoxide from a running engine seeps right in. Do every start and every check outside, at least 20 feet from the house.

! Mind the neighbors while you troubleshoot

Houses sit close together in town, so when you're starting and testing the unit, keep it in eco mode once it's running, point the exhaust away from the houses, and keep it well clear of everyone's windows — yours and theirs. A little courtesy keeps the peace during a long outage.

If you're in the country on a well

Out in the townships — Atwater, Rootstown, Deerfield, and Palmyra — my country customers face one extra wrinkle when a generator acts up: the repair shop and the parts store are a good drive away, so a little know-how and a few spares on the shelf make all the difference.

When you're miles from the nearest store, you can't run out for a spark plug at nine on a stormy night. So the country rule is to **keep spares on hand** before you ever need them: the right oil for topping up, a spare spark plug, fresh gasoline with stabilizer already in it, and a funnel and gloves. With those in a bin by the generator, most of the fixes in this guide become a ten-minute job instead of a ruined evening.

It also pays to know the basic checks cold, because you may be your own first responder for a while. Fresh fuel, an open fuel valve, the right choke, oil topped up on level ground, a clean spark plug — run that little list and you'll cure the great majority of no-starts yourself, right there in the yard.

There's one 'problem' out here that isn't a fault at all, and it's worth naming so you don't chase it. Folks often expect a small, quiet generator to run the **well pump**, and when it won't, they think the generator is broken. It isn't — it's a mismatch, not a breakdown.

! The honest truth about well pumps

Most home well pumps run on 240 volts, and the small, quiet inverter generators most folks picture put out only 120 volts — so they cannot run the pump at all. For a well you need a larger inverter unit with a 120/240-volt outlet, sized to your pump, and a proper way to connect it. Pairing two little units together does not fix this — two 120-volt units still only make 120 volts. I'll help you get the right size, and bring in a licensed electrician for the hookup.

✓ A spares bin is a country must-have

Set aside a small tote with oil, a spare plug, stabilized fuel, a funnel, gloves, and your manual, and keep it right by the generator. When the power's out and the roads are bad, that little bin is worth its weight in gold. Happy to help you put one together: (330) 200-8042.

The safety talk: carbon monoxide

When a generator won't start or acts up, the temptation to pull it into the garage or under cover to fuss with it can be strong — especially in bad weather. This is the page that explains why you must never give in to that temptation, and it may be the most important one in the guide.

Every generator that burns gasoline or propane makes carbon monoxide, or "CO" — a gas you cannot see or smell. It is the one real danger with a generator, and it is completely avoidable. More people are hurt by running a generator in the wrong place than by anything else, so please read this page twice.

Outside only — no exceptions

Never run a generator indoors, and that includes the garage, the basement, a shed, a carport, or a covered porch — even with the door up or a window open. CO pools and seeps into the house. The only safe place is outdoors, in the open air.

At least 20 feet away, exhaust pointed away

Set the generator at least 20 feet from the house, and turn it so the exhaust blows **away** from any door, window, or vent. Don't tuck it against the wall to hide it or keep it dry — give it room to breathe and let the fumes drift off.

Alarms are your safety net

Put working carbon-monoxide alarms on every level of your home and near the bedrooms, and use ones with a battery backup so they work when the power is out. Test them now, before storm season, not during it.

Symptom to fix, at a glance

Here's the whole guide boiled down to one handy table. When something's wrong, find the symptom on the left, and start with the simple fix on the right.

Symptom	Likely cause	Simple first fix
Won't start at all	Out of fuel or valve closed	Add fresh gas; open the valve
Cranks, won't fire	Wrong choke, or stale fuel	Set the choke; use fresh gas
Starts, then dies	Low oil, or on a slope	Add oil; set it level
Hard to start	Fouled spark plug	Clean or swap the plug
Overload light on	Too many watts at once	Shed load; reset; eco off
No power at outlet	Tripped GFCI or breaker	Press reset; check the cord
Runs rough or surges	Stale or gummed fuel	Fresh fuel; service the carb
Won't crank	Weak starter battery	Use the pull cord; charge it

Notice how many roads lead back to **fuel** — fresh gas and a little stabilizer prevent more of these than anything else you can do. And when a fix here doesn't do the trick, that's your signal to stop and call for a hand rather than force it.

! The one rule that matters most: fresh air

And remember, every one of these checks happens outdoors. A generator's engine gives off carbon monoxide — an invisible, odorless gas that can kill before you know it's there. Three rules keep you safe: run it **outside only** (never in a garage, basement, shed, or breezeway, even with the door open); keep it **at least 20 feet from the house** with the exhaust pointed away from doors, windows, and vents; and put **working carbon-monoxide alarms** on every level and near where you sleep. If an alarm sounds or anyone feels dizzy or headachy, get to fresh air first, then call 911.

When to stop and call for help

Knowing when not to keep tinkering is its own kind of wisdom. A few situations mean it's time to set the tools down and bring in help — for your safety, not just the machine's.

Stop for anything electrical. If you smell something burning, see a melted or scorched cord or outlet, notice sparks, get even a small shock, or have a breaker that simply won't stay reset, don't go poking around live parts. Electrical faults are for a qualified pro, and I'm glad to help you find the right one.

Stop for any fuel leak. If you see gas dripping or pooling, or smell gasoline while it runs, shut the generator down if you can do so safely, move it well away from anything that could spark or flame, and let it air out. A fuel leak is a fire risk and is never something to run through — it needs proper repair before the unit is used again.

Stop if it just won't run right. If you've checked the fuel, oil, choke, and plug and it still won't start, keeps stalling, or surges badly no matter what, you've reached the edge of simple fixes. That's carburetor, valve, or internal territory — a service job rather than a driveway job.

! Fuel leaks and electrical faults: hands off, call for help

These two — a fuel leak or anything electrical — are the clear 'stop now' signs. I'm a tech-help pro, not a licensed electrician, so for wiring and electrical faults I'll bring in the right person; for a stubborn fuel or carburetor problem I can help you get it serviced. Either way, one call to (330) 200-8042 starts you toward a safe fix.

Heading off most problems before they start

Here's the cheerful truth: almost every problem in this guide can be prevented with a few easy habits. A little care now means the generator simply starts when you need it.

Mind the fuel above all. Since stale gas causes more trouble than everything else combined, never let old fuel sit in the machine. Use fresh gasoline, add a stabilizer whenever it'll sit more than a month, rotate your supply, and for long storage either treat the fuel or drain the carburetor and tank per your manual. Get this one habit right and you've prevented the number-one problem.

Run it, and check it. Start the generator and let it run fifteen or twenty minutes under a light load about once a month — that keeps the fuel moving, the battery charged, and the gremlins away. Check the oil on level ground before every use, keep the air filter clean, and inspect the spark plug now and then as the manual suggests.

Keep a few spares. A little kit turns most breakdowns into quick fixes: the right oil, a spare spark plug, fresh stabilized fuel, a funnel, and clean gloves, with the manual tucked alongside. This matters most for country homes far from a store, but every generator owner is glad to have it when a storm hits.

✓ A monthly run is the best insurance there is

If you do just one thing, make it this: run the generator for fifteen minutes once a month. Tie it to something you already do — the first of the month, or when you pay a certain bill — and it becomes a habit that quietly prevents most no-starts.

How I can help

When a generator won't cooperate — especially in the middle of an outage — it helps to have a calm, friendly person to call who can talk you through it or come take a look. That's exactly what I do for folks all over Portage County.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech right here in Portage County. I'm a tech-help person, not a power company and not a pushy salesman — I help folks pick the right gear, set it up, and feel confident using it. With generators, that means helping you choose a unit that fits your home and your budget, showing you how to run it safely, and getting your internet, TV, and devices happily back on once the power's flowing.

Some troubles cross into a licensed electrician's territory — anything wired into your home, a transfer switch, a 240-volt well-pump circuit, or an electrical fault inside the unit — and I'm a tech-help pro, not an electrician. What I can do is diagnose the everyday problems, handle the fuel-and-start fixes, set up your gear, and coordinate the right electrician when one is needed, so you have a single friendly point of contact for the whole thing.

Three easy ways to get help

- **An in-home visit** — a flat \$99 first visit. I come to you, here in Portage County, and every visit is 30-day come-back-free.
- **Remote help** — a flat \$49 screen-share, up to two hours, for the things I can sort out without coming over (it's free for Support Plan members).
- **A Support Plan** — \$39 a month for folks who'd like me on call all year.

Common troubleshooting questions

The questions I hear most when someone's generator won't behave.

Q: It ran fine last fall and won't start now. What changed?

Almost always the fuel went stale over the months it sat. Drain the old gas, put in fresh, and it usually comes right back. Add a stabilizer next time and run it monthly so it doesn't happen again.

Q: It starts, then dies after a few seconds. Why?

Most often the low-oil shutoff — top up the oil on level ground. A choke left closed too long can do it too. Check the oil first; it's the usual answer, and running low on oil is the one thing you don't want to ignore.

Q: Everything's plugged in but nothing has power.

The engine's fine; the outlet tripped. Press the GFCI reset button, and any push-button outlet breaker, then check the cord is fully seated and undamaged. If the GFCI trips again right away, stop and find the fault.

Q: The overload light keeps coming on.

You're asking for more watts than it has. Unplug the big power hogs — heaters and kettles first — reset it, and start any big motor with eco mode off. If it overloads with almost nothing plugged in, something's wrong; give me a call.

Q: Can I clean a gummed carburetor myself?

Draining in fresh fuel sometimes clears a mild case on its own. A real carburetor cleaning is a service job with small parts and care — a good one to hand to a pro or to me rather than wrestle with in the driveway.

Q: When is it truly unsafe to keep trying?

Any fuel leak or smell of gas, anything electrical like sparks or a burning smell, and running the unit anywhere but outdoors. In those cases, stop right away, get to fresh air if needed, and call for help.

A calm routine when something's off

When the generator acts up, work through it like a checklist instead of a worry. Here's the whole approach in the order you'd actually use it.

- **1. Take it outside first.** Move it into the open air, at least 20 feet from the house, before you start or test anything. Never troubleshoot a running unit in a garage or enclosed space.
- **2. Won't start? Fuel first.** Fresh gas in the tank, the fuel valve open, and the choke set for a cold start. This solves most no-starts on its own.
- **3. Still no? Oil, then plug.** Top up the oil on level ground for the low-oil shutoff, then check for a fouled spark plug.
- **4. Overloading? Lighten up.** Shed the big power hogs, reset the breaker, and start big motors with eco mode off.
- **5. Runs but no power? Reset it.** Press the GFCI and outlet-breaker reset buttons, and check the cord.
- **6. Smell fuel or see anything electrical? Stop.** A leak or an electrical fault means it's time to call for help, not to keep tinkering.

Follow those six steps in order and you'll handle almost anything a generator throws at you, calmly and safely — and you'll know the moment it's time to pick up the phone instead.

★ You don't have to remember all six

Keep this page with the generator, and when something goes sideways just work down the list. If you get to the bottom and it's still not right, that's what I'm here for — call (330) 200-8042 and we'll finish it together.

Your keep-it-running checklist

Tear this page out and tape it inside a cabinet door near the generator. A few minutes of readiness prevents most bad mornings.

- ☐ Fresh, stabilized fuel on hand — this year's, not last year's.
- ☐ The right oil for topping up, and you check it before every use.
- ☐ A spare spark plug and the little wrench in a drawer.
- ☐ You run the generator fifteen to twenty minutes about once a month.
- ☐ You know where the fuel valve, choke, eco switch, and reset buttons are.
- ☐ A safe outdoor spot picked out, at least 20 feet from the house.
- ☐ Working carbon-monoxide alarms inside, with fresh batteries.
- ☐ Bill's number handy for anything electrical or a fuel leak: (330) 200-8042.

Eight small check marks stand between you and most generator headaches. Tend to them on a calm afternoon, and your generator will be ready and willing the next time the lights go out.

The short version

If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember these:

- Most no-starts come down to a short list: no or stale fuel, a closed fuel valve, the wrong choke, low oil, or a fouled spark plug.
- Stale fuel is the number-one culprit — fresh gas and a little stabilizer prevent more trouble than anything else you can do.
- An overload light just means too many watts: shed some load, reset, and start big motors with eco mode off.
- If it runs but no power reaches the outlet, reset the GFCI and check the cord; a dead electric-start battery means use the pull cord, then charge it.
- Stop and call for a fuel leak, anything electrical, or a unit that just won't run right — and never troubleshoot a running generator indoors.

Symptom to Simple Fix

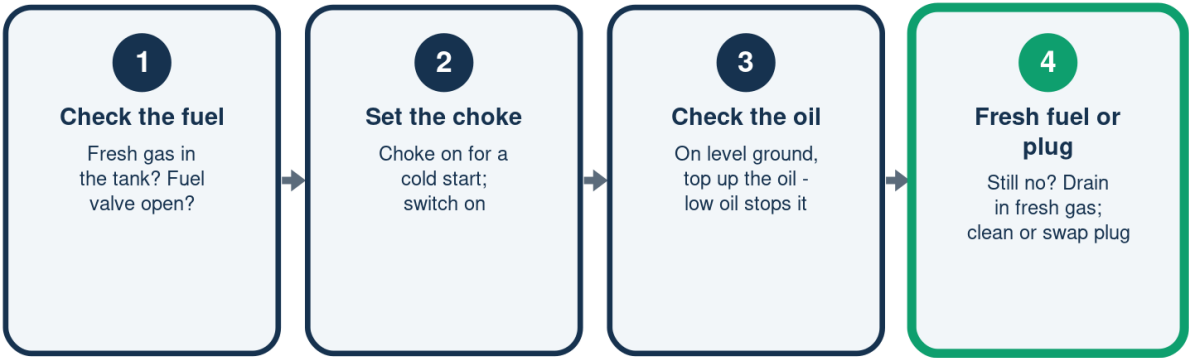
Your quick troubleshooting table

	Likely cause	Try this first
Won't start	No or stale fuel	Fresh gas, choke
Starts, then dies	Low oil or slope	Add oil, level it
Overload light	Too many watts	Shed load, reset
No power at plug	Tripped GFCI	Press reset
Runs rough	Stale, gummed fuel	Fresh fuel, service
Won't crank	Weak battery	Use the pull cord

Anything electrical or a fuel leak? Stop and call Bill.

When It Won't Start, Stay Calm

Work down the list, outdoors only



Most no-starts are just fuel. Never crank it in a garage.

Two Safety Shutoffs

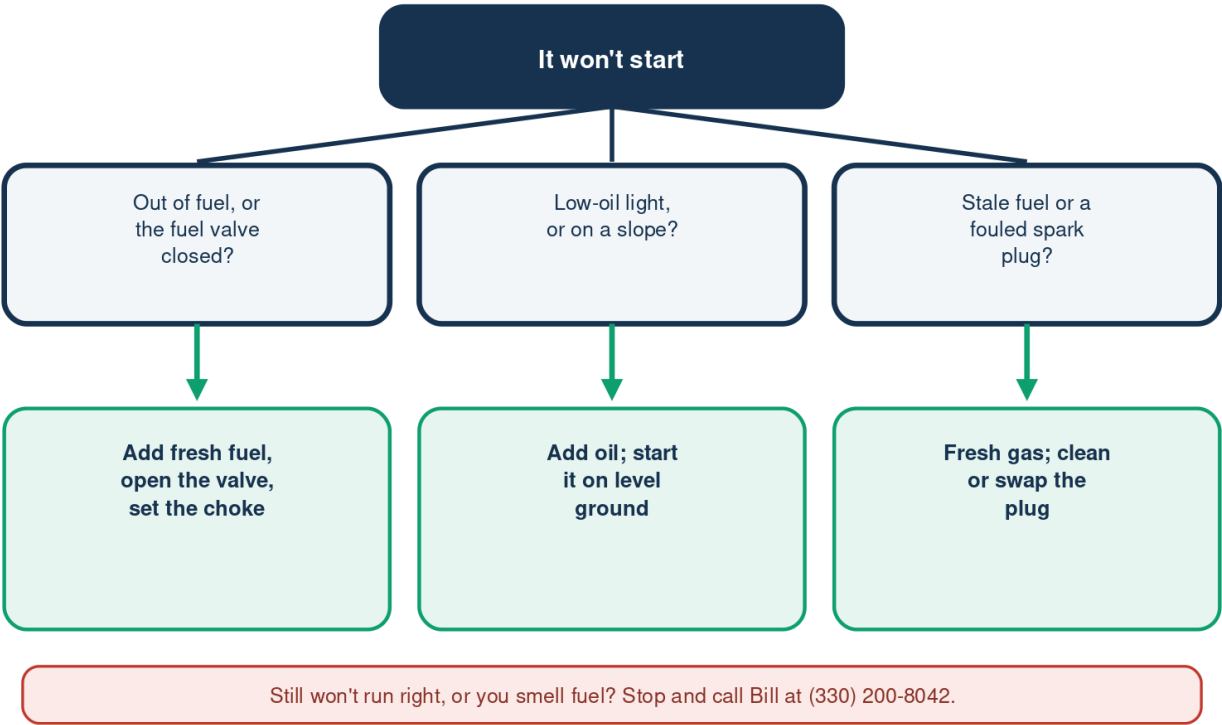
Same stop, different fix

	Low-oil shutoff	Overload / breaker
What you see	Oil light, stalls	Overload light
Why it stops	Low oil or slope	Too many watts
The fix	Add oil, level it	Shed load, reset
Prevent it	Check oil often	Size it, eco off

Two different lights, two different fixes - don't mix them up.

It Won't Start: What Now?

Follow the branch that fits



Most no-starts are fuel. Never run or troubleshoot it in a garage.



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You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
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— Bill

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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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— *Bill*



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