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iPhone Won't Charge — Fixes Before You Panic

Why a phone stops charging, and the calm, in-order fixes that almost always bring it back

Plain-English iPhone help from:

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A phone that won't charge is almost never ruined — it's usually the cable, the outlet, or a clogged port. Start with the two cheapest fixes: try a different cable AND a different plug, and plug straight into a wall outlet rather than a hub, power strip, or car socket. The most common real cause is pocket lint packed into the charging port, so turn the phone off and gently clean it out with a dry, non-metal tool.

If the phone was fully dead, leave it on the charger for 15 to 30 minutes before expecting the charging screen. Still nothing? Force-restart it, try a wireless pad if you have one, and check for a liquid warning.

If the phone charges but drains fast, check Battery Health — a worn battery is a cheap fix.

- The cable and plug are the most common culprits — swap them one at a time.
- Lint in the port is the #1 real cause; clean it dry and gentle, never with metal.
- A truly dead phone needs 15–30 minutes on power before it shows a charging screen.

1 The Short Version

You plug in your iPhone and nothing happens — no charging symbol, no little lightning bolt, no reassuring buzz. It is an alarming moment, especially if the battery is nearly flat and you need the phone. Take a breath, because the good news is real: a phone that will not charge is very rarely a dead phone. Nine times out of ten the culprit is something small and cheap — a worn cable, the wrong kind of outlet, or a surprising amount of pocket lint packed into the charging port.

This guide walks through the fixes in the exact order a professional would try them, starting with the thirty-second checks that solve most cases and ending with how to tell whether it is the cable, the port, or the battery. Work down the list and stop the moment your phone starts charging; there is no need to go further than the step that

works.

- A phone that won't charge is almost never ruined — it's usually the cable, the outlet, or a clogged port.
- The single most common real cause is lint packed into the charging port, and it's free to fix.
- Try a different cable AND a different plug before assuming anything is wrong with the phone.
- A completely dead phone can take 15 to 30 minutes on power before it even shows a charging screen.

> **TIP**
> Before you worry, try the two cheapest things first: a different charging cable and a different wall plug. A frayed cable or a tired little plug is the most common reason of all, and swapping them takes less than a minute.

2 First, Take a Breath — What's Really Going On

When a phone refuses to charge, it is natural to fear the worst and picture an expensive trip to the store. But charging is a simple chain: wall outlet, to plug, to cable, to the port on your phone, to the battery. If any single link in that chain is weak, charging stops — and most of those links are cheap and easy to check.

The part that actually wears out or breaks is almost always one of the outer links: the cable (which flexes and frays), the plug, or the port getting blocked. The battery itself and the phone's insides are the last things to suspect, not the first. So we start at the outside and work in.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Charging cables live a hard life — coiled, yanked, stepped on, and bent at the connector. They are the single most common point of failure, which is exactly why 'try another cable' is the first thing any repair shop does, before touching anything else.

3 Start Simple: A Different Cable AND a Different Brick

The cable and the little square plug (often called the 'brick' or 'adapter') are two separate parts, and either one can quietly die. The trick is to change them one at a time so you learn which one was the problem — and to borrow known-good ones if you can.

1. Swap in a different charging cable — ideally one you know works on another device — and try again.
2. If that doesn't help, keep the new cable but swap the plug for a different one.
3. Try the plug from another Apple device, or any good-quality USB plug you trust.
4. Watch the screen for the charging symbol for a full minute before deciding it hasn't worked.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Very cheap, no-name cables and plugs from gas stations or dollar bins often charge poorly or not at all, and some can even run hot. If a bargain cable is the one that stopped working, that may simply be the answer — a decent replacement is well worth the few dollars.

4 Plug Into a Wall Outlet, Not a Hub or Power Strip

Where you plug in matters more than most people expect. A wall outlet gives the steadiest, strongest power. A USB hub, a power strip with USB ports, the back of a TV, a computer, or a car socket often give weaker or fussier power that an iPhone may refuse or charge painfully slowly.

1. Plug the phone's charger straight into a wall outlet you know works.

2. Avoid charging through a USB hub, a multi-port strip, a computer's USB port, or the back of a TV for now.
3. Test the outlet itself with something else — a lamp or another charger — to be sure it has power.
4. If you were charging in the car, try a wall outlet instead; car sockets are a common weak link.

> **TIP**
>
> If your phone charges fine from a wall outlet but not from a hub or the car, nothing is wrong with the phone at all — it just wants stronger, steadier power. Charging it at the wall is the simple fix.

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5 Clean the Lint Out of the Charging Port — the #1 Real Cause

Here is the fix that surprises people most, and the one that quietly solves a huge share of 'my phone won't charge' calls. The charging port at the bottom of your phone is a small open slot, and it spends its life in pockets and purses collecting lint, dust, and grit. Over months, that fluff packs into a tight little plug at the back of the port, so the cable can no longer seat all the way in and make contact.

The tell-tale sign is a cable that feels like it does not quite click in all the way, or that only charges if you hold it at an angle. The cure is simply to clean out the packed lint — gently, with the phone turned off.

1. Turn the phone off first, so nothing is live while you work.
2. Shine a light into the port and look for a gray, packed layer of lint at the very back.

3. Gently scrape it out with something small, dry, and non-metal — a wooden toothpick or a plastic sim-tray tool works well.
4. Work slowly, lifting the lint out rather than pushing it deeper, until the port looks clean and open.
5. Turn the phone back on and try the cable again — it should now seat fully with a solid connection.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Never use a metal pin, needle, or paperclip in the port, and do not spray liquid cleaners or canned air hard into it. Metal can short the delicate contacts and liquid can cause damage. Dry, gentle, and non-metal is the rule — and if it feels stuck, stop and let someone do it for you.

6 Give a Completely Dead Phone Time on Power

If your phone drained all the way to zero and switched itself off, it will not spring back to life the instant you plug it in. A truly empty battery needs to gather a little charge before the phone has enough power even to show the charging screen — and in that window, it looks exactly like a phone that won't charge.

1. Plug the phone into a wall outlet with a cable and plug you trust.
2. Leave it completely alone for 15 to 30 minutes — resist the urge to keep pressing buttons.
3. After that wait, the charging screen (a battery with a charging symbol) should appear.
4. Once it shows some charge, you can turn it on normally.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> This is one of the most common false alarms of all. A phone that sat dead overnight can take a surprisingly long time to wake up on the charger. If you only gave it a minute or two, give it a proper half hour before worrying.

7 Force-Restart the Phone

Sometimes the battery is fine and the cable is fine, but the phone's software has quietly frozen in a way that stops it charging or shows a blank screen. A force-restart jolts it awake without erasing a single thing — no photos, messages, or apps are touched. It is a safe, standard move worth trying any time the phone seems unresponsive on the charger.

1. On most modern iPhones: quickly press and release the Volume Up button, then quickly press and release Volume Down.
2. Then press and HOLD the side button and keep holding it — past the power-off slider — until the Apple logo appears.
3. Let go once you see the logo, and give the phone a moment to start up.
4. Plug it back in and check whether it now charges.

> **TIP**
>
> A force-restart is different from simply turning the phone off and on — it's a firmer wake-up that clears a frozen state. It's completely safe, changes nothing you've saved, and is always worth a try before assuming hardware is broken.

8 Try a Wireless Charger If You Have One

If your iPhone supports wireless charging and you happen to have a pad or stand, it makes a handy test. Wireless charging bypasses the port and cable entirely, so if the phone charges on the pad but not with a cable, you have learned something valuable — the battery is fine, and the trouble is in the port or cable.

1. Set the phone squarely in the center of the wireless pad or stand.
2. Make sure the pad itself is plugged into a wall outlet and powered on.
3. Remove any thick case or metal pop-socket, which can block wireless charging.
4. Watch for the charging symbol; give it a minute to connect.

GOOD TO KNOW

A phone that charges happily on a wireless pad but not with a cable is pointing straight at a blocked port or a bad cable — not a dead battery. That's genuinely reassuring, and it tells you exactly where to focus.

9 Check for Damage, Water, or a 'Liquid Detected' Message

If your phone got wet, or you see a warning about liquid or moisture in the connector, the phone is protecting itself by refusing to charge until the port dries out. This is the phone being sensible, not breaking — but it does need patience, and there are a couple of things never to do.

1. If you see a liquid or moisture warning, unplug the cable right away and do not force charging.
2. Stand the phone upright somewhere warm and dry, with the port facing down, and leave it for several hours.
3. You can gently tap it, port-down, to coax out droplets — but do not shake it hard.
4. Once it has thoroughly dried, try charging again; the warning should be gone.

WATCH OUT

Never put a wet phone in a bowl of rice (it does little and leaves dust in the port), and never blast it with a hair dryer on heat or push cotton swabs into the port. Heat and poking do more harm than good. Air, time, and patience are what actually work — and if the phone was truly soaked, have it looked at.

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10 Rule Out a Software Hiccup

Now and then a charging problem is really a software one — an out-of-date system, or a setting quietly getting in the way. These are quick to rule out and occasionally solve the whole thing.

1. With the phone on, open Settings, then General, then Software Update, and install anything waiting there.
2. While it updates, keep the phone on Wi-Fi and, if it will charge even a little, plugged in.
3. If your phone is warm, let it cool — iPhones slow or pause charging when they get too hot, which can look like 'not charging.'
4. Try charging again once it is up to date and at a normal temperature.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Modern iPhones deliberately pause charging to protect the battery when the phone is very hot, and some have a feature that holds the charge at 80% until you need it. Both are normal and healthy — a phone that seems 'stuck' may simply be doing exactly what it was designed to do.

11 Check Your Battery Health

If the phone does charge but the battery drains alarmingly fast or shuts off at odd moments, the issue may be a worn battery rather than the charging chain. Your iPhone keeps an honest record you can read in a few seconds.

1. Open Settings and tap Battery.
2. Tap Battery Health & Charging.
3. Read the number next to Maximum Capacity — the share of the original battery the phone can still hold.
4. Note any message about 'performance' or a worn battery below it.

WATCH OUT

If Maximum Capacity is well below 80%, or the phone shuts down suddenly even with charge left, the battery is likely worn — and a replacement on an otherwise good phone is a cheap fix that makes it feel new again. I'm glad to check the numbers with you and tell you honestly whether it's worth it before you spend a thing.

12 Is It the Cable, the Port, or the Battery?

By now you have the clues to pin down the real culprit without guessing. Matching your symptoms to this short list usually tells you which part to replace — and often saves you from buying a whole new phone.

If you notice this...	It's most likely...
Another cable or plug works fine	The old cable or plug — just replace it
Charges only at an angle, or feels loose	A lint-clogged or worn charging port
Charges on a wireless pad but not a cable	The port or cable, not the battery
Charges fine but drains very fast or shuts off	A worn battery worth replacing
Nothing works on any cable, plug, or pad	Time for a professional look

TIP

Keep one charging setup you absolutely trust — a known-good cable and plug — tucked away just for testing. When something stops charging, that trusted set instantly answers the first and biggest question: is it the phone, or is it everything else?

13 Charging Habits Worth Keeping

A few gentle habits keep your charging trouble-free and your battery healthy for years. None of them ask you to baby the phone — modern iPhones are built to be used every day.

- Pull the cable out by the plug end, not by yanking the cord — that's what frays cables at the connector.
- Blow out or check the charging port every few months, especially if the phone lives in a pocket or purse.
- Keep the phone out of hot cars and direct sun; heat is harder on a battery than anything else.
- Use good-quality cables and plugs, and leave Optimized Battery Charging turned on in Battery settings.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> You don't need to run the battery to zero or charge it to a full 100% every time — that's old advice for old batteries. Today's iPhones are happiest kept comfortably in the middle and charged with a cable you treat kindly.

14 When to Call Bill

Most charging troubles come down to a cable, a plug, or a port full of lint, and you should feel free to work down this list as far as you are comfortable. But if you've tried the simple things and the phone still won't take a charge — or you'd simply rather not poke around inside a charging port yourself — that's exactly the kind of thing I sort out quickly.

I come to you, test the phone with charging gear I know is good, clean the port properly if that's the cause, and tell you honestly whether it's a two-dollar cable, a worn battery worth replacing, or something more. No upselling and no jargon — just a phone that charges again and a straight answer about why it stopped.

- You've tried different cables, plugs, and a wall outlet, and it still won't charge.
- The port looks clogged and you'd rather someone clean it out safely.
- The phone got wet, or shows a liquid warning that won't clear.
- The battery drains fast or shuts off suddenly and you want honest advice on a replacement.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Work down the list; stop as soon as the charging symbol appears.

I want to…	Do this…
Rule out the obvious	Try a different cable AND a different wall plug
Use the right power	Plug straight into a wall outlet — not a hub, strip, or car socket
Fix the #1 real cause	Turn the phone off and gently clean lint out of the charging port (non-metal only)
Wake a dead phone	Leave it on the charger 15–30 minutes before expecting the charging screen
Clear a freeze	Force-restart: Volume Up, Volume Down, then hold the side button to the Apple logo
Check the battery	Settings Battery Battery Health & Charging read Maximum Capacity
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
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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