BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Is It My Device, My Wi-Fi, or the Company's Outage?

Before you blame yourself, find out WHERE the problem actually is — in three quick tests

Plain-English tech help from:
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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

When something won't work online, find WHERE the problem is before fixing anything — it's your device, your home network, or the company's service. Three quick tests settle it: try a second device (if it works, only your first device is the problem); try your phone on cellular data (if that works, your home network is the broken link); and try a different website or app (if only one fails, that company is having an outage, not you).

If everything's down but cellular works, restart your internet box. If a problem only affects certain rooms, that's Wi-Fi coverage, not an outage. Often the most freeing answer is discovering it isn't you at all — just wait for the company to fix it.

1 The Short Version

Online problems live in one of three places: your single device, your home network (Wi-Fi and internet box), or out at the company whose service you're trying to use. The whole art of fixing them calmly is figuring out which layer is actually at fault before you touch anything.

Three quick tests narrow it down almost every time: try a second device, try without Wi-Fi, and try a different website or app. Those three answers tell you where to aim — and sometimes tell you the honest answer is "wait, it's not you at all."

- Three layers: your device, your home network, or the company's service.
- Second device works? The problem's your first device, not the internet.
- Nothing anywhere works? It's your home network or the provider.
- Only one website or app fails? That company is likely having an outage — not you.

WATCH OUT

Resist the urge to start changing settings before you know where the problem is. Five minutes of these simple tests saves an hour of fixing the wrong layer — and spares you from "fixing" something that was never broken.

2 The Three Layers Explained

Picture your connection as three links in a chain. Your device talks to your home network; your home network talks to your internet provider; your provider connects you to the service you want, like your email or a streaming site. A break in any one link stops you, but the fix for each is different.

- Your device (phone, tablet, computer, TV): its own Wi-Fi, settings, or an app can fail on their own.
- Your home network (Wi-Fi, router, modem): can go down and take every device with it.
- Your provider and the service: the internet company or the website itself can have an outage, which is out of your hands.

GOOD TO KNOW

Knowing there are three layers is half the battle. Most frustration comes from attacking the wrong one — restarting a phone over and over when the real problem is an outage at the company, for instance. Find the layer first.

3 Test One: Try a Second Device

This is the most useful single test there is. It instantly separates a one-device problem from a whole-network problem.

1. Pick up a second device on the same Wi-Fi — a phone, tablet, or another computer.
2. Try the same thing, or just open a reliable website or app.

3. If the second device works fine, the problem is your FIRST device — only that one needs fixing.
4. If the second device fails too, the problem is your home network or the provider — not any single device.

> **TIP**
> This one test saves enormous effort. If your tablet works but your laptop doesn't, there's no point touching the internet box at all — the laptop is the whole problem, and that's a far smaller thing to fix.

4 Test Two: Try Without Wi-Fi

If you have a phone with a cellular plan, you can test whether the wider internet is reachable at all, independently of your home Wi-Fi. This separates a home-network problem from a provider outage.

1. On your phone, turn Wi-Fi off so it uses its cellular data instead.
2. Try the website or app that was failing.
3. If it works on cellular, the wider internet and the service are fine — the problem is your home network.
4. If it fails on cellular too, the service itself is likely down for everyone.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> This test is clever because it steps around your home network entirely. If a site works on your phone's cellular data but not on your home Wi-Fi, you've proven the site is up and your home connection is the broken link.

5 Test Three: Try a Different Site or App

The third test tells you whether the whole internet is down for you, or just one particular service is having a bad day. It takes seconds and often reveals that the problem was never yours.

1. On a device that's on your Wi-Fi, try two or three different, reliable websites or apps.
2. If everything else works but one app or site fails, that one service is the problem — likely an outage at their end.
3. If nothing at all loads, your connection is down — your home network or provider.
4. Try the failing service again in a few minutes; brief outages often pass on their own.

> **TIP**
>
> If your weather app won't load but your email, news, and search all work fine, the weather app's company is having the problem, not you. There's nothing to fix at home — just wait for them to sort it out.

6 Reading the Results Together

Put the three tests together and the answer usually jumps out. Here's how the combinations point to the culprit.

What you found	Where the problem is
Second device works fine	Your first device — fix just that one
All devices fail; cellular works	Your home network — restart the internet box
All devices fail; cellular fails too	The provider or a wide outage — wait or call them
Only one site/app fails	That company's service — an outage at their end

With the layer identified, you know exactly which chapter to follow next — and, just as valuable, when the honest answer is to put the device down and wait, because the problem belongs to someone else to fix.

GOOD TO KNOW

The most freeing result of all is discovering it's not you. A great deal of tech frustration is people blaming themselves and their equipment for an outage at a company — which no amount of restarting will ever fix.

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 If It's Just Your One Device

When the second device works but one stubbornly won't, the fix lives on that device — and these are quick and safe.

1. Turn that device's Wi-Fi off and back on.
2. Restart the device.
3. "Forget" your Wi-Fi network in its settings and rejoin by typing the password.
4. Make sure it's on your main Wi-Fi, not a guest network or a neighbor's.
5. Update the app that's failing, or close and reopen it.

TIP

Forgetting and rejoining the Wi-Fi sounds drastic but just means retyping your password once. It clears a stale connection that's a common reason one device sulks while the rest are happy.

8 If It's Your Home Network

When every device fails but cellular works, your home network is the broken link — and restarting it fixes the great majority of cases.

1. Unplug the modem and router (or your combined box), wait a full 30 seconds.
2. Plug the modem back in first and wait two to three minutes for its lights to settle.
3. Plug the router back in and wait another two minutes.
4. Check the box's "Internet" or "Online" light — steady is good, red or off points beyond your home.
5. Try a device again once the lights are steady.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Don't press the small recessed "reset" button on the box — it erases your Wi-Fi name and password. To restart, only unplug the power. The reset button creates more problems than it solves when pressed by mistake.

9 If It's the Provider or Service

When even cellular can't reach the internet, or one service is down for everyone, the problem belongs to a company and your job is simply to confirm it and wait — not to keep fiddling.

1. Use your phone's cellular data to check for an outage (your home internet may be down).
2. Look at the company's own status page or app, or check whether others are reporting it down.
3. Ask a neighbor on the same internet provider whether theirs is out too.
4. If it's confirmed down, note the time, and call the provider only to report it or get an estimate.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Portage County sees weather-related outages, and a storm that darkens the whole street on one provider is a clear sign. There's genuinely nothing to fix at home — service returns when the provider restores it.

10 Handy Ways to Check If It's Just You

A few simple habits and tools make the "is it just me?" question easy to answer, so you're never left guessing.

- Keep your phone's cellular data available as your independent way to get online and check.
- Many services have a status page or a social-media account that posts outages.
- Outage-tracking websites show spikes of reports when a service is widely down.
- A neighbor on the same provider is the oldest and most reliable outage detector there is.

> **TIP**
>
> When you suspect an outage, checking on your phone's cellular data is the key move — it lets you look things up even when your home internet is the very thing that's down. Without it, you're stuck guessing.

11 When It's Only Certain Rooms

Sometimes the internet works, but only in some rooms — which is a fourth kind of answer pointing to Wi-Fi coverage rather than a true outage. It's worth recognizing so you don't misdiagnose it.

- If far rooms are weak or drop out while near the router is fine, it's a coverage problem, not an outage.
- Thick walls, long distances, and interference all weaken Wi-Fi in certain spots.
- A Wi-Fi extender or mesh system can help, but only when placed well.
- Moving the router out of a cabinet or corner often improves coverage more than people expect.

GOOD TO KNOW

A "dead room" where the internet never works well isn't an outage and won't be fixed by restarting — it's a coverage gap. That's a layout and equipment question, and one that's very fixable with the right placement or a mesh unit.

12 Keep a Simple Picture of Your Setup

Knowing your own setup turns these tests from a scramble into a calm routine. A little note, made once, pays off every time something goes wrong.

- Note what your internet provider is and their support or outage number.
- Know where your modem and router live and which cable is their power.
- Note which light on the box is the "Internet" one.
- Keep your Wi-Fi name and password on a card nearby for rejoining devices.

TIP

I'm happy to help you make a one-page picture of your setup — provider, equipment, the key lights, and your Wi-Fi details. It makes every future "is it me?" moment a two-minute check instead of an afternoon of worry.

13 When to Call Bill

These three tests solve most "where's the problem?" puzzles, and often reveal there's nothing for you to fix at all. But if your home network keeps dropping, if certain rooms never work well, or if you simply can't tell whether it's your gear or your provider, you don't have to sort it out alone.

I come to you, run the same tests with a trained eye, tell you plainly which layer is at fault, and fix or improve the part that's yours — a tired modem, a poorly placed router, a device that won't hold a connection. When it's the provider, I'll help you confirm it and deal with them.

- Your home internet drops again and again.
- Certain rooms never get a good connection.
- You can't tell whether it's your equipment or the provider.
- You'd like your whole setup checked, mapped, and made reliable.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Before fixing anything, find WHERE the problem is: your device, your network, or the company.

The test	What it tells you
Try a second device	Works = it's your first device; fails = network or provider
Try your phone on cellular	Works = your home network is the problem; fails = a wider outage
Try a different site/app	Only one fails = that company's outage, not you
All devices down, cellular OK	Restart the internet box (unplug 30 sec, modem first)
Only certain rooms	It's Wi-Fi coverage, not an outage — placement or a mesh unit
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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