

Free Audiobooks: LibriVox

THE QUICK VERSION

- 1 Install a free LibriVox app from your app store, or open librivox.org in a browser.
- 2 Search for a title or author, or browse the most popular books.
- 3 Sample the first minute — the readers are volunteers, so pick a voice you like.
- 4 Press play, or download the book over wifi to listen with no signal, anywhere.
- 5 Pair it with Project Gutenberg to read the same classics free as e-books.
- 6 The recordings are always free — never pay or give card details to listen.

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Free Audiobooks Beyond the Library: LibriVox

Classic books read aloud by volunteers -- free, with nothing to borrow or return

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1906 · NO. LE-16 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

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What's Inside

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WELCOME

1. Read this first — these audiobooks really are free

LibriVox is a genuine, long-running collection of free audiobooks — no account, no credit card, no catch.

Here is the whole idea in one breath: there is a project that records classic books as audiobooks and gives the recordings away, completely free, with nothing to sign up for and no credit card anywhere. It is called LibriVox, and it has been doing this for about twenty years.

The recordings are free because the books themselves are in the public domain — their copyright has expired — and because the readers are volunteers who donate their voices for the love of it. You are not pirating anything and you are not the product. It is simply a gift, built one chapter at a time by people around the world.

I am Bill, from Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. For folks whose eyes tire, who spend time in the car, or who just love being read to, this is one of my favorite things to show. If you only remember one thing, remember the name: LibriVox, at librivox.org.

WATCH OUT

You never need an account or a credit card to listen to LibriVox. If something calling itself 'free audiobooks' asks you to pay or hand over card details, it is not LibriVox — the real one just lets you press play.

THE SHORT VERSION

2. The short version

Get the app or open the website, pick a book, and press play — free.

If you would like the whole routine before we slow down, here it is.

- 1 On a phone or tablet, install a free LibriVox audiobook app from your app store — or just open librivox.org in a browser.
- 2 Search for a title or author, or browse by what is popular.
- 3 Open the book and press play; the chapters are listed so you can pick up where you left off.
- 4 Listen on the phone's speaker, with earbuds, or through a connected speaker or the car.
- 5 It is all free — nothing to borrow, nothing to return, nothing to cancel.

GOOD TO KNOW

LibriVox recordings are free to stream and, in many apps, free to download so you can listen without using data or when you have no signal.

WHAT IT IS

3. What LibriVox actually is

A worldwide volunteer effort to read the classics aloud, for free.

LibriVox is a nonprofit, volunteer project that turns public-domain books into free audiobooks. Readers from all over the world each record a chapter or a whole book and donate it, and the finished recordings go into a free library that anyone may listen to or download. There is no charge and no catch.

Because the books come from the public domain — the same well that feeds Project Gutenberg — the collection leans toward the classics: great novels, poetry, histories, essays, children's stories, and the like. If there is a classic you have always meant to get to, there is a good chance a volunteer has already read it aloud for you.

It runs on goodwill and donations, not on selling you anything. No ads interrupt the chapters, and nothing tracks what you listen to. It is one of the internet's quieter kindnesses.

THE HONEST CATCH

4. The one honest thing to know: the voices vary

Real volunteers, so the reading quality is a mixed bag — and that is all right.

Let me be straight with you about the one real trade-off. Because LibriVox is read by volunteers rather than paid professional narrators, the quality varies from reader to reader. Some are wonderful — warm, clear, a pleasure to listen to. Others are plainer, or have an accent you are not used to, or a simpler recording.

This is not a flaw so much as the nature of a free, volunteer gift. The happy news is that many popular books have been recorded more than once, so if one reader does not suit your ear, you can often find another version of the same book. A minute of sampling before you settle in saves any disappointment.

GOOD TO KNOW

If a reader's voice does not suit you, do not give up on the book — check whether another volunteer has recorded the same title. Popular classics often have several versions to choose from.

GETTING STARTED

5. Getting to LibriVox the safe way

An app or the real website — both free.

There are two easy doors. The simplest on a phone or tablet is a free LibriVox audiobook app from your device's official app store — search for 'LibriVox' and look for a free one that plays the catalog. The other door is the website itself, librivox.org, which you can open in any browser on any device.

As always, type librivox.org yourself rather than trusting a random search result, because 'free audiobooks' is a phrase scammers love. The genuine site and the genuine apps never ask for a credit card, because there is simply nothing to pay.

WATCH OUT

Some phone apps that play LibriVox books are free but show ads or offer paid extras. The recordings themselves are always free — never pay for the books, and never give card details to listen.

LISTENING ON A PHONE

6. Listening on a phone or tablet

An app makes it as easy as any other audiobook.

On a phone or tablet, a free LibriVox app is the friendliest way in. You search for a book, tap it, and press play, just like any audiobook. The app keeps your place, lets you jump between chapters, and usually lets you download a book so you can listen with no signal — handy in the car or away from home.

You can listen on the phone's own speaker, through earbuds, or by connecting to a speaker. Set it going while you potter in the kitchen or rest your eyes, and the book keeps you company. Once you have done it once, it is second nature.

LISTENING ONLINE

7. Listening on a computer or in your browser

No app needed — press play on the website.

If you would rather not bother with an app, the LibriVox website plays the books right in your browser. You find the book, and each chapter has a play button and a download link. Press play and listen through your computer's speakers; it is the quickest way to try the whole thing out.

This is a fine way to sample a reader before you commit to a long book, and perfectly comfortable for listening at your desk or on a laptop in a favorite chair.

THROUGH A PODCAST APP

8. Listening through a podcast app

Your familiar podcast player can carry LibriVox too.

If you already listen to podcasts, you may be able to find LibriVox books through your usual podcast app, since the recordings are shared in the same simple format podcasts use. For folks who have grown comfortable with a podcast player, this means one less new app to learn — the books live right alongside your shows.

If that sounds unfamiliar, do not worry about it; the LibriVox app or website is all you need. But if you are already a podcast listener, it is a pleasant shortcut worth knowing about.

ON A SPEAKER

9. Playing it on a smart speaker

Some speakers can read you a LibriVox book on request.

If you have a smart speaker in the house, you may be able to ask it to play a LibriVox audiobook aloud, hands-free, which is a gentle option for anyone who finds a phone fiddly. The exact words and whether it works depend on your speaker, so it is worth a try rather than a promise.

Even without that, the simplest route is to start a book in the app on your phone and connect the phone to a speaker you already have. Either way, filling the room with a good

book read aloud is a lovely thing.

FINDING GOOD BOOKS

10. Finding a book worth your time

Browse the favorites, and sample before you settle.

If you are not sure where to begin, LibriVox lists its most popular books, which is a ready-made shelf of the classics people reach for most. You can also search by author or title if you have something particular in mind, or browse by subject when you feel like wandering.

Whatever you choose, give the first few minutes a listen before you settle in for the long haul. Because the readers are volunteers, that quick sample tells you whether this particular voice suits your ear — and if not, another version is usually a tap away.

PAIRS WITH GUTENBERG

11. A perfect partner: Project Gutenberg

Read it or hear it — the same free classics, both ways.

LibriVox has a natural twin called Project Gutenberg, which gives away the very same public-domain books as free e-books to read. Between the two, you can read a classic on your tablet by day and listen to the identical book in the car or while you garden, all without spending a penny.

Many people use them together without thinking of it as two things: the words when they want to read, the voice when they want to listen. We have a separate guide devoted just to Project Gutenberg if you would like to explore the reading side.

WHY LISTEN

12. Why audiobooks are such a gift

They open books back up when reading gets hard.

For a great many people, audiobooks are not a lesser way to enjoy a book — they are the way that keeps books in their life. If your eyes tire, if small print has grown difficult, or if holding a book for a long stretch is uncomfortable, a voice reading to you gives the whole pleasure back.

They also fill the in-between times beautifully: a long drive, a walk, time in the garden, a wakeful night. And there is something deeply comforting about being read to, a comfort most of us have not felt since childhood. Free audiobooks make all of that available at no cost at all.

IS IT LEGAL

13. Yes, it is completely legal

Public-domain books, freely given by volunteers.

As with anything advertised as 'free,' a little caution is wise — so let me be plain. LibriVox records only books whose copyright has expired, which places them in the public domain, free for anyone to record, share, and enjoy. Nothing here is pirated, and nobody is being cheated.

The one small caveat is that public-domain rules can differ from country to country, so a title free here may not be free everywhere. But for readers and listeners in our area, the collection is yours to enjoy with a clear conscience and an empty wallet.

A LITTLE HISTORY

14. A little history, because it is a nice story

Twenty years of readers donating their voices.

LibriVox began around 2005 with a simple, generous idea: if the books are free in the public domain, why not record them aloud so people can listen for free too? Volunteers signed up to read a chapter here, a whole book there, and over the years that goodwill built into a vast free audio library.

I mention it because it tells you something reassuring. This is not a slick company with a catch hidden in the fine print; it is a long-running labor of love. The recordings are donated, the books are free, and what you download is yours to keep and listen to whenever you like.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because you can download the recordings, a book you have saved plays even if you are offline or the site is ever down. What you have saved is yours.

SOLO OR GROUP

15. Solo readings and group readings

Two styles, each with its own charm.

You will notice two kinds of recordings. In a solo reading, one volunteer reads the whole book, so the voice stays the same throughout — lovely when you find a reader you like. In a group or 'collaborative' reading, different volunteers take different chapters, so the voice changes as you go, which some people enjoy and others find distracting.

Neither is better; it is a matter of taste. If a changing cast of voices bothers you, look for a solo reading of the book. If you do not mind, the group recordings widen your choices considerably.

DOWNLOAD FOR OFFLINE

16. Download for the car and for trips

Save over wifi, then listen anywhere with no signal.

The single most useful habit with LibriVox is to download a book while you are on your home wifi, before you need it. Once it is downloaded, it plays with no internet and uses no data — ideal for the car, a plane, a cabin, or anywhere the signal is poor. A long drive with a good book read aloud passes in no time.

Most LibriVox apps make this a single tap: find the book at home, download it, and it waits on your device until you press play. For anyone who travels or drives a lot, it turns dead time into something to look forward to.

HANDY CONTROLS**17. Handy controls: speed, sleep timer, bookmarks**

Small comforts that make listening your own.

Audiobook apps come with a few gentle comforts worth knowing. You can usually slow a reader down or speed them up a little to a pace that suits your ear. A sleep timer will stop the book after a set time, which is perfect for listening as you drift off without losing your place. And the app always remembers where you stopped, down to the chapter.

None of these are necessary, but they make the listening truly comfortable. A touch slower for a dense classic, a sleep timer at bedtime, and the book waiting right where you left it the next day — little things that add up to a pleasure.

CHILDREN'S STORIES**18. Lovely for the grandchildren**

Classic children's tales, read aloud, free.

LibriVox has a warm corner of children's classics — fairy tales, fables, and the beloved stories of earlier generations — read aloud by volunteers. They make wonderful listening when the grandchildren visit, or a gentle bedtime story to play for a little one over a video call when they live far away.

Because these are old, public-domain stories, there are no ads and nothing unsuitable slipping in. Just the tales themselves, read with care, free to play as often as the little ones ask.

POETRY & SHORT WORKS**19. Poetry and short pieces for a spare moment**

Not everything has to be a long novel.

If a whole novel feels like a commitment, LibriVox also has a great deal of shorter fare: single poems, short stories, essays, and collections you can dip into for a few minutes at a time. They are perfect for a spare moment — a cup of coffee, a short errand, a wakeful few minutes in the night.

Poetry in particular comes alive read aloud in a way it rarely does on the page. A single poem well read is a small gift you can give yourself in the time it takes the kettle to boil.

A STEADY HABIT

20. Making a gentle listening habit

A chapter a day, free, fills the quiet times.

With a free, bottomless shelf of audiobooks, the nicest thing is to let one become part of your day. A chapter with your morning coffee, a book for the daily walk, a few minutes before sleep — the habit forms itself once you have one going. There is no cost and no deadline, so there is no pressure, only company.

Keep the next book or two downloaded and ready, so you are never caught without something to listen to. Over time, listening fills the quiet times beautifully, and you will have 'read' far more than you expected.

IF IT WON'T PLAY

21. If a recording will not play

Almost always a download or connection hiccup.

Now and then a book stalls or will not start. The usual causes are simple: a weak internet connection if you are streaming rather than listening to a download, or a download that did not finish. The cures are just as simple — wait for a better signal, or delete and download the book again over wifi.

If one particular recording seems broken, remember that many classics have more than one version on LibriVox, so you can simply pick another. It is rarely anything wrong with your device.

QUESTIONS

22. Do I need headphones?

No — listen however suits you.

Not at all. You can listen on the phone or tablet's own speaker, through earbuds or headphones if you like them, or by connecting to a speaker or the car. Headphones are nice for privacy or a long listen, but they are never required. Use whatever is comfortable.

QUESTIONS

23. Can I listen on more than one device?

Yes — download the book wherever you want it.

Because the recordings are free to download, you can have the same book on your phone and your tablet both, or move it to whichever device you are using. There are no loans or limits to juggle. Download it where you want it, and listen.

FINDING THE GOOD READERS

24. Finding the readers you love

A favorite narrator is worth seeking out.

Once you have listened a while, you will find certain volunteer readers whose voices simply suit you — clear, warm, nicely paced. It is well worth noting their names, because many of them have recorded dozens of books. Finding a reader you love is a shortcut to dozens of pleasant listening hours, since you already know you will enjoy the voice.

When you open a book, the reader's name is listed. If you adored a particular reading, search that name and see what else they have recorded. It is a lovely way to build a listening list around voices you trust.

LISTENING TOGETHER

25. Listening together, and sharing

A book read aloud is nice company for two.

Audiobooks are not only for solitary listening. A LibriVox classic played on a speaker makes gentle company for a couple over supper or a long evening, and it gives you something to talk about afterward. Because the recordings are free and public domain, you can also point a friend or relative to the very same book with a clear conscience.

For family who live far away, suggesting the same free audiobook and comparing notes on the phone is a warm, no-cost way to share something. The book costs nobody anything, and the conversation it sparks is priceless.

CLASSICS WORTH HEARING

26. Classics that shine read aloud

Some books are even better in the ear.

Certain kinds of books come alive especially well when read aloud. Older novels written in an age when families read to one another have a rhythm that suits the ear. Poetry, of course, was made to be heard. And rousing adventure stories and ghostly tales carry a particular thrill in a good reader's voice.

So if you have only ever met the classics on the page, listening can be a fresh pleasure — the same words, but with a warmth and pace that silent reading does not always give. It is worth trying a favorite you know well, just to hear it anew.

MIND AND COMPANY

27. Good for the mind, and for company

A quiet companion through the day.

Beyond the simple pleasure, listening to books keeps the mind engaged and the house from feeling too quiet. For anyone living alone, a familiar voice reading a good story is real, gentle company through the ordinary hours of the day — while cooking, resting, or lying awake at night.

It asks nothing of you but to listen, and it gives back a great deal: stories, company, and the comfortable feeling of being read to. That is a fine thing to have on tap, for free, whenever you want it.

QUESTIONS

28. Do I have to download an app?

No — the website plays books too.

You do not have to use an app. The LibriVox website plays every book right in your browser, on a phone, tablet, or computer. An app is handy because it lets you download books for offline listening and keeps your place neatly, but if you would rather not install anything, the website alone works fine.

QUESTIONS

29. Can I speed up or slow down the reader?

Usually yes, in the app.

Most audiobook apps that play LibriVox let you nudge the reading speed up or down a little, so you can find a pace that suits your ear. If a reader feels too brisk or too slow, a small adjustment often makes all the difference. The website is simpler and may not offer this, but the apps generally do.

QUESTIONS

30. What if I fall asleep listening?

Use the sleep timer, and the app holds your place.

That is half the charm of a bedtime audiobook. Most apps have a sleep timer that stops the book after a set time, and whether you set one or not, the app remembers exactly where you were. So if you drift off, nothing is lost — you simply pick up where you faded out the next time.

QUESTIONS

31. Is the sound quality good?

It varies, but it is usually perfectly pleasant.

Because the recordings are made by volunteers at home rather than in a studio, the sound can vary a little from one to the next. Most are clear and easy to listen to. If a particular recording sounds poor to your ear, look for another version of the same book — the popular classics often have several to choose from.

TWO WAYS IN

32. Two ways people come to this — and both are fine

Saving on audiobooks, or getting books back when the eyes tire.

Some folks come to LibriVox to stop paying for audiobook subscriptions; others come because reading has gotten hard and they want books back in their life. Either way, you win.

If you are trimming the audiobook budget

You enjoy audiobooks but the monthly subscription has started to sting.

- Make LibriVox your first stop for any classic before paying for it elsewhere.
- Use your library's free Libby app for newer audiobooks LibriVox will not have.
- Keep a paid subscription only for the specific new titles you cannot get free.

If reading has gotten hard

Small print or tired eyes have made books a strain, and you miss them.

- Let LibriVox read you the classics you love, free, in a comfortable chair.
- Download books in the app so they play with no signal, anywhere in the house.
- Pair it with your library's audiobooks for a steady supply of listening.

GOOD TO KNOW

However you arrived, the gift is the same: good books read aloud, free, whenever you want them.

HELPING A RELATIVE

33. Setting it up for a parent

Being read to is a comfort at any age.

For an older parent whose eyes have tired, loading free audiobooks is a genuine kindness. Put a LibriVox app on their phone or tablet, download a few books they love so no signal is needed, and show them the single play button. Keep it simple — one app, a handful of favorites to start.

Connect it to a speaker they already have if a phone is fiddly for them, so a good book fills the room at the press of one button. A parent who gets the classics of their youth read back to them, free, tends to be genuinely moved — and it costs you nothing but a gentle afternoon.

TIP

Download two or three books your parent loves before you hand the device back, so there is always something ready to play without any searching.

COMMON MISTAKES

34. Common mistakes

Avoid these and the listening goes smoothly.

Almost every snag with LibriVox comes down to one of a few easy things.

- Giving up on a book because of one reader — check for another version of the same title.
- Paying for an 'audiobook app' that just repackages these free recordings.
- Not downloading before a drive, then having no signal — download at home over wifi first.
- Expecting brand-new bestsellers — LibriVox is public-domain classics, not new releases.
- Trusting a random 'free audiobooks' link — go to librivox.org or a known app yourself.

WATCH OUT

The recordings on LibriVox are always free. If any app or site asks for a credit card to listen to them, it is charging you for something you can get free — back out.

COMMON QUESTIONS

35. Common questions

The questions I hear most about LibriVox.

Here are the ones that come up most often at the kitchen table.

If yours is not here, it is very likely a quick answer — call me, or ask at your library, and we will sort it.

QUESTIONS

36. Is it really free, with no catch?

Completely free — no account, no card, no ads on the recordings.

Yes. LibriVox is a nonprofit, the books are public domain, and the recordings are donated by volunteers. You listen without paying or signing up. Some phone apps that play the catalog show their own ads, but the books themselves are always free.

QUESTIONS

37. Why do some readers sound better than others?

Because real volunteers record them, not paid narrators.

The readers are volunteers donating their voices, so the style and quality vary. Many are lovely; some are plainer. If a voice does not suit you, look for another recording of the same book — popular classics often have several, and a quick sample finds the one you like.

QUESTIONS

38. Can I listen without using up my data?

Yes — download the book first over wifi.

Most LibriVox apps let you download a book while you are on home wifi, after which it plays with no signal and no data used. That makes it ideal for the car or anywhere away from home. Download at home first, then listen anywhere.

QUESTIONS

39. Will it have the newest bestseller?

No — it is classics whose copyright has expired.

LibriVox records public-domain books, so you will find the great classics rather than this season's new releases. For newer audiobooks, borrow free from your library's Libby app. Use LibriVox for the classics and Libby for the new.

QUESTIONS

40. How is it different from the library's audiobooks?

LibriVox is free classics to keep; Libby lends newer titles.

They work together. Your library's Libby app lends newer, professionally narrated audiobooks on a loan, sometimes with a wait. LibriVox offers public-domain classics, volunteer-read, free to download and keep with no waiting. Between them you will rarely run short of listening.

QUICK RECAP

41. The quick recap

The whole guide in one glance.

- LibriVox (librivox.org) gives away free audiobooks of classic, public-domain books, with no account.
- The readers are volunteers, so quality varies — sample first, and look for another version if needed.
- Listen with a free LibriVox app, on the website, through a podcast app, or on a speaker.
- Download books over wifi to listen with no signal, in the car or anywhere.
- It pairs with Project Gutenberg, which offers the same classics as free e-books to read.
- Everything is free and legal — the recordings never ask for a credit card.

GOOD TO KNOW

Good books, read aloud, free, whenever you want them — a quiet gift for tired eyes and long drives alike.

BILL'S HERE TO HELP**42. You do not have to do this alone**

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

I hope this guide made free audiobooks 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 do not worry for a moment about memorizing anything.

When you would rather have a hand, that is exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that do not need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I am a patient tech helper, so I will happily set up a listening app and load a few favorite books for you.

GOOD TO KNOW

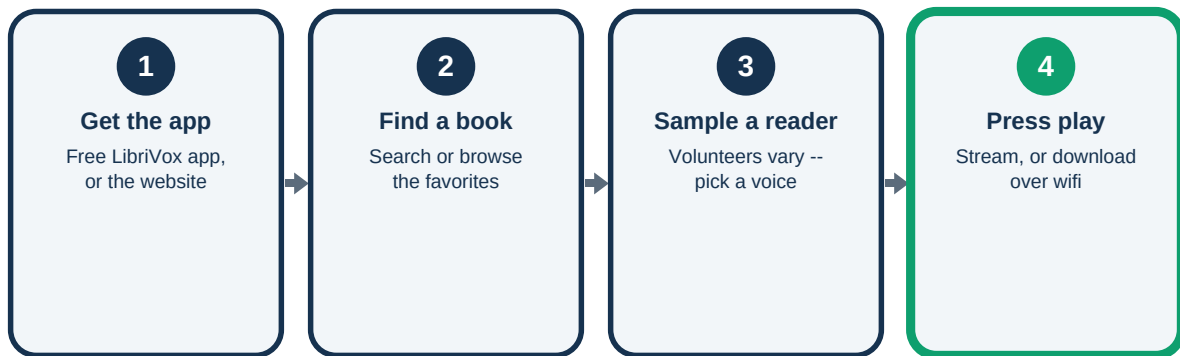
Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you are ever not 100% happy with a visit, I will make it right or refund it. That is a promise. — Bill

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

From App to Listening

Four steps to a free audiobook



No account, no card -- the recordings are public domain and free.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Read It or Hear It, Free

Each free source, and what it is best for

	Best for	Good to know
LibriVox	Free audiobooks	Volunteer-read
Project Gutenberg	Free e-books	The same classics
Library / Libby	Newer audiobooks	Borrowed, waitlists
Together	Read and listen	All free

LibriVox for classic audio, Libby for newer titles on loan -- both free.

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

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

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.

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