BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Make Siri or Google Assistant Actually Useful — 10 Commands

Ten plain-spoken requests that make the voice assistant earn its keep

Plain-English tech help from:
Bill's Home Tech
Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Your phone's voice assistant — Siri on iPhone, Google Assistant (or Gemini) on Android — can handle the small interruptions of the day without touching the screen. Wake it with “Hey Siri” or “Hey Google,” or by holding the side button, then speak in plain words. The most useful commands are reminders (“remind me to take my pills at 8”), timers, hands-free calls and texts, directions home, weather, quick math, and adding to a shopping list.

Save your key contacts and home address once, and “call Dory” and “take me home” just work. If it mishears, simply say it again.

1 The Short Version

Your phone has a built-in helper you can simply talk to. On an iPhone it is Siri; on most Android phones it is Google Assistant (newer phones may call it Gemini). You wake it with your voice or a button, then ask in ordinary words — no special commands to memorize. It is especially handy when your hands are busy or the screen is hard to reach.

- Wake it by saying "Hey Siri" or "Hey Google," or by holding the side button.
- Speak in plain English — it understands normal, everyday phrasing.
- The best uses are reminders, timers, calls, texts, and quick questions.
- If it mishears, just say it again a little more slowly; no harm done.

WATCH OUT

The most life-improving command is the reminder: "Remind me to take my pills at 8 p.m." or "Remind me to call the doctor tomorrow." The phone remembers so you do not have to.

2 First, Make Sure It's Listening

Before the commands, a quick check that the assistant is turned on and set to hear you. This is a one-time setup.

1. iPhone: open Settings, find Siri (or "Apple Intelligence & Siri"), and make sure "Listen for" / "Hey Siri" is on.
2. Android: open the Google app or Settings, find Google Assistant, and make sure "Hey Google" is on.
3. Follow the short prompt to teach it your voice if it asks.
4. Test it: say "Hey Siri, what time is it?" or "Hey Google, what time is it?"

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> You can also wake the assistant without speaking: on most iPhones, press and hold the side button; on many Android phones, press and hold the side button or swipe up from a bottom corner. Handy in a quiet room.

3 1. Set Reminders and Alarms

This is the assistant at its most useful — a memory that never forgets. Just tell it what and when.

- "Remind me to take my medicine at 8 a.m."
- "Remind me to call Dory when I get home."
- "Set an alarm for 6:30 tomorrow morning."
- "Wake me in 20 minutes" — perfect for a nap.

> **TIP**
>
> A reminder tied to a place — "remind me to get the mail when I get home" — pops up when you arrive, not at a set time. It feels like a thoughtful nudge exactly when you need it.

4 2. Set a Timer While Your Hands Are Full

Cooking, laundry, the sprinkler — a spoken timer saves you drying your hands to tap a screen.

- "Set a timer for 15 minutes."
- "Set a bread timer for 40 minutes" — you can name timers so you know which is which.
- "How much time is left on my timer?"
- "Stop the timer."

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> You can run more than one timer at a time on most phones — one for the roast, one for the vegetables — and name each so the phone tells you which just finished.

5 3. Make Calls and Send Texts Hands-Free

You can call or text someone without dialing or typing — a real help while driving or when the screen is hard to see.

- "Call Dory."
- "Call the pharmacy." (It uses your contacts.)
- "Text my son that I'm running ten minutes late."
- "Read me my last text message" — and "reply" to answer it by voice.

> **TIP**
> It helps to have your important people saved in Contacts with simple names — "Dory," "Dr. Smith," "the pharmacy." Then you just say the name and the phone does the rest.

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.

6 4. Get Directions and Traffic

Ask for directions out loud and the phone maps the route and reads the turns to you as you drive.

- "Give me directions home."
- "How do I get to the nearest pharmacy?"
- "How long will it take to drive to Ravenna?"
- "Where is the closest gas station?"

GOOD TO KNOW

Set your home and work addresses in the Contacts or Maps app once, and then "take me home" works from anywhere — you never have to type the address again.

7 5. Quick Weather and the Day Ahead

A spoken weather check beats squinting at a tiny forecast, and you can ask about any place or time.

- "What's the weather today?"
- "Will it rain this afternoon?"
- "What's the weather in Florida this weekend?" (handy before visiting family).
- "What's on my calendar today?"

TIP

"What's my day look like?" gives you your appointments in one go — a gentle morning briefing without opening anything.

8 6. Little Math and Conversions

For the small sums that come up while shopping or cooking, just ask — no squinting at a calculator.

- "What's 20 percent off of 60 dollars?"
- "What's the tip on a 45-dollar meal?"
- "How many cups are in a quart?"
- "What's 15 times 12?"

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> This is a quiet favorite at the store and in the kitchen — the answer comes back spoken and on screen, so you can double-check a sale price or scale a recipe in seconds.

9 7. Look Something Up on the Spot

When a question pops into your head — a fact, a word, a phone number — the assistant can answer or search for you.

- "How old is Harrison Ford?"
- "What's the phone number for the Kent post office?"
- "How do you spell 'rhythm'?"
- "What's a four-letter word for happy?" (handy for crosswords).

> **TIP**
> If it cannot answer directly, it offers to search the web for you — and you can ask it to read the result aloud.

10 8. Control Your Music, Podcasts, and Radio

Start something to listen to without hunting through an app — just name what you want.

- "Play some Frank Sinatra."
- "Play the news."
- "Turn it up" / "Turn it down" / "Pause."
- "Play my favorites playlist."

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> This works with whatever music or radio app you already use. If you have a smart speaker, the same voice commands work on it, too, from across the room.

> 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.

11 9. Find Your Phone and Other Devices

If you have a smart speaker or a second device, you can make a lost phone ring — and the assistant helps with your other gadgets too.

- To an Alexa or Google speaker: "Find my phone" — it rings your phone so you can follow the sound.
- "Turn on the living room lights" — if you have smart lights set up.
- "Set the thermostat to 70" — with a compatible smart thermostat.
- "Lock the front door" — with a smart lock.

TIP

Even if you have no smart-home gadgets, a smart speaker's "find my phone" is worth it on its own for the daily hunt.

12 10. Jot a Note or a List

Capture a thought or add to a shopping list the moment it strikes, without stopping what you are doing.

- "Add milk to my grocery list."
- "Make a note: the spare key is in the blue drawer."
- "Add 'call the plumber' to my to-do list."
- "What's on my grocery list?"

GOOD TO KNOW

A spoken list syncs to the Reminders or Notes app on your phone, so it is waiting for you at the store — and you can share a list with your spouse so you are both adding to the same one.

13 Change the Voice or Slow It Down

If the assistant talks too fast, or you would simply prefer a different voice, you can change both. A clearer, slower voice makes everything it tells you easier to follow.

1. iPhone: open Settings, find Siri, then tap Voice to choose a different voice or accent.
2. To slow spoken replies, adjust the speaking rate in Settings under Accessibility, then Spoken Content / VoiceOver speed.
3. Android: open Assistant settings and look for "Assistant voice" to pick a different one.
4. Try a couple and keep whichever is easiest on your ear.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is no single "correct" voice — pick the one you understand most comfortably. A voice you can hear clearly makes the assistant far more pleasant to use day to day.

14 When It Mishears or Won't Understand

Every so often the assistant gets a word wrong or says it did not catch that. It is rarely your fault, and a few small habits make it understand you far better.

- Speak at a normal, steady pace — not too fast, and no need to shout.
- Pause a half-second after "Hey Siri" or "Hey Google" before your request.
- If it mishears a name, make sure that person is saved in Contacts spelled the way it sounds.
- In a noisy room, hold the phone a little closer, or press and hold the side button to talk instead of using the wake word.

TIP

If it keeps getting your voice wrong, you can re-teach it: in the assistant's settings, look for "re-train" or "Voice Match / Recognize My Voice" and run through the short setup again. It often makes a real difference.

15 Keeping Your Requests Private

People sometimes worry the assistant is "always listening." It is worth understanding what actually happens, so you can use it with an easy mind.

- The phone only springs to attention when it hears its wake word; it is not recording your day.
- You can turn the wake word off entirely and only use the assistant by holding a button, if you prefer.
- In the assistant's settings you can review and delete your request history.

- If you would rather it never listen for a wake word, that is a simple switch to turn off.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> You are in control of how much the assistant does. If the wake word ever feels like one gadget too many, turn it off and summon the assistant with a button press only — it works just the same.

16 When to Call Bill

None of this is a test, and there is no prize for struggling through it alone. Most of these tricks take a minute once you know where to look, and this guide gets you there. But if a setting has moved on your version of the phone, or you would simply rather have someone set it up beside you and show you once, that is exactly the kind of visit I make.

I come to you here in Portage County, sit down beside you, and set these up on your own phone or tablet so they work the way you like. I show you each step slowly, write down the few that matter, and make sure you can do it yourself afterward. No rush, no jargon, and no question is too small.

- "Hey Siri" or "Hey Google" is not waking the assistant and you want it set up to listen.
- The assistant keeps mishearing you, or calls the wrong person.
- You want your home address and key contacts set up so "call Dory" and "take me home" just work.
- You would like to connect it to your lights, thermostat, or a smart speaker.
- You would simply rather have it set up correctly the first time, with someone showing you how. Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by your chair. Just talk — plain words work.

I want to…	Say…
Wake it	“Hey Siri…” or “Hey Google…” (or hold the side button)
Remember something	“Remind me to take my pills at 8 p.m.”
Set a timer or alarm	“Set a timer for 15 minutes” / “Wake me at 6:30”
Call or text hands-free	“Call Dory” / “Text my son I'm running late”
Get directions	“Give me directions home”
Do quick math	“What's 20 percent off 60 dollars?”
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

Call or text (330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com

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