BILL'S HOME TECH

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Metal Detecting With Phone Apps: A Beginner's Guide

Getting started with a detector, the helpful apps, and detecting right

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

What's Inside

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The Hobby in a Breath

What it's all about.

Metal detecting is simple at heart: you sweep a detector low over the ground, and when it passes over buried metal it beeps and shows a number hinting at what's below. You pinpoint the spot, dig a small, neat plug of turf, retrieve the find, and replace the turf so the ground heals. A phone app can log each find with a photo and map where you've searched, and the golden rule throughout is to detect only where you have permission and to leave every spot as tidy as you found it.

A basic machine and a little curiosity are all you need to begin.

- The detector beeps and shows a number over buried metal.
- A beginner machine from a known brand is plenty to start.
- A phone app logs finds and maps where you've been.
- Always get permission, and always leave the ground as tidy as you found it.

> **TIP**
>
> Before buying anything, try detecting with a friend who has a machine, or rent one for a day. An hour of swinging teaches you more about whether the hobby's for you than any amount of reading — and with nothing spent.

HOW IT WORKS

2 How a Metal Detector Works

The simple science.

A metal detector sends a gentle electromagnetic signal into the ground through the flat coil at the bottom. When that signal passes over metal, the metal disturbs it, and the detector senses the disturbance and alerts you with a sound and a reading. Different metals disturb the signal differently, which is how the machine can guess whether you're over a coin, a nail, or a pull-tab.

- The coil sends a signal into the ground and listens for metal.
- Metal objects change the signal, and the detector beeps.
- The tone and number hint at the type and size of metal.
- Depth depends on the object's size and the machine — a few inches is typical.

You don't need to understand the physics to enjoy it. What matters in practice is learning your machine's tones and numbers — which beeps are worth digging and which are likely trash — and that comes quickly with a little time in the field.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Most detectors can 'discriminate,' meaning you can tell the machine to ignore certain kinds of metal, like iron nails, so it only beeps on more promising targets. Beginners often do best leaving this fairly open at first and learning the tones.

THE MACHINES

3 Choosing a First Machine

The well-known brands.

You don't need an expensive machine to start, and the major brands all make dependable beginner models. The big, respected names you'll see are Minelab, Garrett, and Nokta, and any of their entry-level detectors is more than enough to learn on and find good things.

Brand	Known for
Minelab	A wide range from beginner to serious; strong reputation
Garrett	Popular, easy-to-learn beginner models and pinpointers
Nokta	Good value, feature-rich machines at friendly prices

For a first detector, look for a simple, lightweight model with clear tones and a readable display, rather than the most features. You can always move up later once

you know what you enjoy. Comfort matters too — you'll be holding it for hours, so weight and balance count.

> **TIP**
>
> Buy from a dealer who knows detecting, not just the cheapest online listing. A good shop will set the machine up for you, show you the basics, and be there if you have questions — worth far more than a few dollars saved.

THE DISPLAY

4 Reading the Display

What the numbers mean.

Most modern detectors show a number when they beep, often called the target ID. It's the machine's best guess at what kind of metal is below, on a scale — low numbers for iron and junk, higher numbers for coins and more valuable metals. It's a guide, not a guarantee.

- Low numbers often mean iron, foil, or trash.
- Mid-range numbers can be pull-tabs, small objects, or gold (which is tricky).
- Higher numbers often mean coins and larger silver or copper objects.
- The same tone and number repeating as you sweep from different angles is a good sign it's a real, solid target.

The art is learning your own machine's numbers, because they differ between brands. With time you'll come to trust certain readings and tones and to recognize the fluttery, inconsistent ones that usually mean trash. Early on, though, digging a bit of everything is how you learn.

THE APPS

5

The Phone Apps That Help

Logging, mapping, and identifying.

Your phone is a surprisingly useful detecting companion. A handful of apps help you keep track of your hunts, remember where you've searched, identify finds, and connect with other detectorists — and most of the core features are free.

- Finds logs: snap a photo of each find and record where and when you dug it.
- GPS mapping: mark the spots you've searched so you don't cover the same ground twice.
- Identification help: compare a find against photos of coins and relics to figure out what it is.
- Community: forums and groups where detectorists share finds, tips, and locations.

The mapping feature is the quiet hero — over weeks it builds a picture of where you've been and where still looks promising. And an honest finds log, with photos and dates, turns a pile of objects into a real record of your hobby that's a pleasure to look back on.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your phone's own camera and notes can do a lot of this for free if you'd rather not install a dedicated app: photograph each find, and jot where you found it. A dedicated app just makes it tidier and adds the map.

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.

WHERE ALLOWED

6 Detecting Only Where It's Allowed

The rule that keeps the hobby welcome.

Where you may detect is the most important thing to get right, both legally and for the hobby's good name. The short version: always have permission for private land, and know the specific rules before detecting on any public land.

- Private property: always get the owner's permission first — every time.
- Public parks: rules vary by town and city; check before you swing.
- Beaches: often allowed, but local rules and tides matter.
- Protected and historic sites, and most federal land: generally off-limits — don't detect there.

A polite request to a landowner, with an offer to share interesting finds and to fill every hole neatly, often gets a yes. For public land, a quick check with the local parks department saves trouble. The hobby stays welcome only as long as detectorists respect these boundaries.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Never detect on known historic, archaeological, or protected sites, or on federal land where it's prohibited. Beyond being illegal, disturbing such places destroys history that can't be replaced — and gives the whole hobby a bad name.

ETIQUETTE

7 The Unwritten Etiquette

Leaving no trace.

Beyond the law, detecting has an unwritten code of good manners that keeps landowners happy and the hobby respected. It all comes down to leaving every place exactly as you found it — or tidier.

- Fill every hole neatly, replacing the turf so the ground heals with no scar.

- Carry out any trash you dig up — you'll find plenty of litter underground.
- Close gates, respect crops and livestock, and keep off anything fragile.
- Share notable finds with the landowner, and be honest about what you've found.

Detectorists are, at their best, quiet caretakers who clean up litter and leave no trace. That reputation is what earns the next person permission, so every tidy hole and piece of carried-out trash is a small gift to the whole community.

THE GEAR

8 Pinpointers and Digging Tools

The simple gear beyond the detector.

A few inexpensive extras make detecting far easier and tidier. The most valuable is a handheld pinpointer — a small wand that helps you find the exact spot of a target once you've dug a small hole, so you're not sifting endlessly through loose soil.

- A pinpointer: a handheld wand that beeps faster as it nears the object in the hole.
- A digging tool: a sturdy trowel or a purpose-made digger for neat plugs.
- A finds pouch: to hold your finds and any trash you carry out.
- Gloves and knee protection: for comfort over a long session.

The pinpointer in particular transforms the hobby — without one, finding a small coin in a hole is slow and frustrating; with one, it's quick and clean. It's usually the first accessory any new detectorist is glad they bought.

> **TIP**
>
> Learn the neat-plug technique early: cut a small flap of turf on three sides, fold it back like opening a book, retrieve the find, then fold the flap down and press it. Done right, the spot is invisible within days.

CLEANING FINDS

9 Cleaning What You Find

Gently — you can ruin a good coin.

When you bring finds home, the temptation is to scrub them shiny — but with coins and relics, aggressive cleaning can destroy both their look and their value. The safe default is gentle: rinse with water and leave it at that, especially for anything that might be old or valuable.

- Rinse finds in plain water and pat dry — that's often all you should do.
- Never scrub, polish, or use harsh chemicals on old coins; it can ruin their value.
- A soft toothbrush and water is the most you'd use on a sturdy modern object.
- If a coin might be valuable or historic, leave it as-is and ask an expert.

Common modern junk you can clean however you like, but treat anything that looks old with care. Collectors prize original surfaces, and an over-cleaned coin is worth far less than a dirty one. When in doubt, do less — you can always clean more later, but you can't undo it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> If you turn up something that looks genuinely old, unusual, or possibly valuable, photograph it and ask in a detecting community or a local coin dealer before touching it. A few finds are historically important and should be reported.

COMMON QUESTIONS

10 Common Questions

The beginner's worries, answered.

“Do I need an expensive machine to find anything?”

Not at all. Beginner detectors from Minelab, Garrett, or Nokta find coins, jewelry, and relics perfectly well. The person swinging matters more than the price of the machine — patience and learning your tones beat expensive gear every time.

“How deep can it detect?”

For typical coin-sized objects, a few inches is normal, with larger objects detectable deeper. Depth depends on the object's size, the soil, and the machine. Most good finds are in the top several inches of soil, well within any machine's reach.

“Where's a good place to start?”

Your own yard is the perfect no-permission-needed practice ground. After that, old parks, with permission and where allowed, and beaches are classic beginner spots. Anywhere people have gathered over the years tends to hold lost coins and jewelry.

“What if I dig up something dangerous or important?”

If you ever uncover anything that looks like live ammunition, a weapon, or human remains, stop, don't disturb it, and contact the authorities. For historically significant finds, report them per local rules. These are rare, but it's good to know the right response.

A HAND

11 If You'd Like a Hand

Getting started, together.

Getting going in a new hobby is more fun with a hand, and the technology side is easy to set up together. We can get your detector's settings sensible for a beginner, install and set up a finds-and-mapping app on your phone, show you how to log and photograph finds, and go over the simple rules and etiquette so you start off on the right foot.

Metal detecting is a gentle, rewarding way to spend time outdoors, and it's a pleasure to help someone get comfortably started with the gear and the apps that make it even more enjoyable.

GOOD TO KNOW

The next page is your quick-reference cheat sheet — how it works, reading the display, the apps, and detecting right — with my number on it if you'd like a hand.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
Understand how it works	The detector senses metal underground and beeps, with a tone and a number
Pick a first machine	A beginner model from Minelab, Garrett, or Nokta is plenty to start
Read the display	The number (the 'target ID') hints at what kind of metal is below
Use a helpful app	Log finds with photos and GPS, and map where you've already searched
Detect only where allowed	Get permission for private land; know the rules for parks and beaches
Dig a neat plug	Cut a small flap of turf, retrieve the find, and replace it so it heals
Find the target fast	Use a handheld pinpointer in the hole to zero in on the object
Clean a find gently	Rinse with water; never scrub coins harshly — that can ruin their value
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

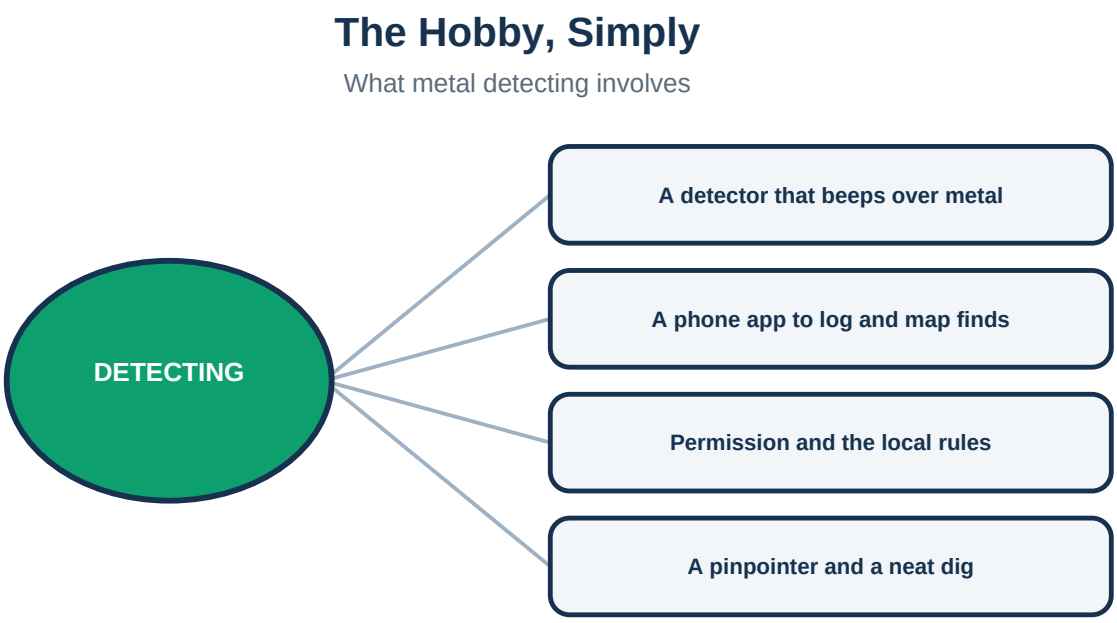


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

A Day Detecting

Four simple steps

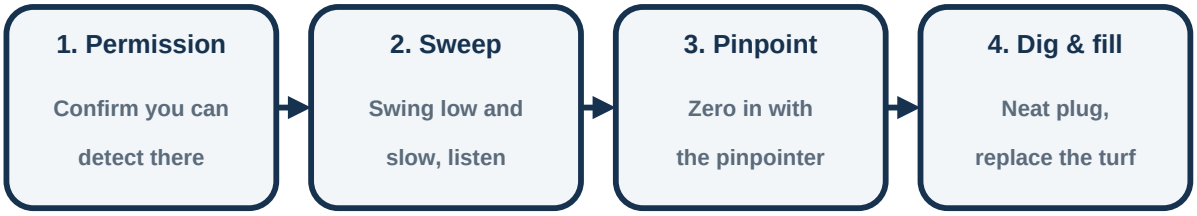


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

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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