BILL'S HOME TECH

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My Clock or Date Is Wrong and Things Stopped Working

A wrong clock quietly breaks websites, logins, and codes — here's the one-minute fix

Plain-English tech help from:
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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A device whose clock or date is wrong quietly breaks things — secure websites won't load, logins fail, time-based security codes don't match, and reminders fire at the wrong time — because the internet uses the correct time to verify it's talking to the real site. The fix is almost always to open Settings, find Date & Time, and turn on 'Set automatically,' plus automatic time zone; the clock corrects itself and the broken things usually work again at once.

The year is the field that matters most if you set it by hand. For rejected security codes, also run the authenticator app's own time sync. If the clock keeps resetting whenever a computer is unplugged, its small internal clock battery is likely worn and cheap to replace.

1 The Short Version

A surprising number of mysterious problems trace back to one thing: the device's clock or date is wrong. When the time is off — especially the date or year — secure websites refuse to load, logins fail, and the short security codes that depend on timing stop matching.

The fix is almost always to turn on 'set date and time automatically,' which syncs the correct time from the network and keeps it right. Once the clock is correct, the things that broke usually start working again straight away.

- A wrong clock, especially the wrong date or year, quietly breaks websites, logins, and codes.
- The fix is usually to turn on 'set date and time automatically.'
- Once the time is right, the broken things typically work again at once.
- If the clock keeps going wrong, a dying internal battery may be the cause.

TIP

If websites suddenly say they 'can't be reached' or warn that a connection 'isn't private,' check your device's date and time before anything else. A wrong clock is a classic, easily-missed cause of exactly those errors — and a one-minute fix.

2 Why a Wrong Clock Breaks So Much

It feels odd that the time of day could stop a website from loading, but there's a sensible reason. When your device connects to a secure website — anything with a padlock, which is most sites now — the two check certificates that are only valid during certain dates. If your clock thinks it's the wrong year, those checks fail and the site is blocked for your safety.

The same timing matters for the short security codes used in two-factor login — many of them are generated from the current time, so a clock that's off by minutes makes the codes not match. And reminders, alarms, and calendar events naturally fire at the wrong moment if the clock is wrong.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your device being fussy about the clock is actually a security protection — it's making sure it's talking to the genuine, current website and not an impostor. The downside is that a wrong clock trips that protection and blocks legitimate sites too, which is why fixing the time fixes the errors.

3 The Main Fix: Set It Automatically

The single best fix is to let the device keep its own time by syncing from the network. This is accurate, it corrects itself, and it handles things like daylight-saving changes for you.

1. Open Settings and find Date & Time (often under General, System, or Clock).

2. Turn ON 'Set automatically' (sometimes 'Set time automatically' or 'Use network-provided time').
3. If there's a separate 'Set time zone automatically,' turn that on too.
4. Give it a moment; the clock should correct itself to the right time and date.
5. Try the website, login, or code that was failing — it usually works now.

> **TIP**
> 'Set automatically' is the setting to leave on for good. It keeps your clock perfectly accurate without you thinking about it, and it quietly prevents this whole category of problems from ever coming back.

4 Setting It Manually If Needed

Occasionally 'set automatically' can't reach the network — for instance if the very problem is that the internet is down — and you need to set the time by hand to get going. It's straightforward.

1. In Date & Time settings, turn OFF 'set automatically' so you can edit the fields.
2. Set the correct date — double-check the YEAR especially, as a wrong year causes the most trouble.
3. Set the correct time, and the right time zone.
4. Save, then try the thing that was broken.
5. Turn 'set automatically' back on later once the internet is working, so it stays accurate.

> **WATCH OUT**
> When setting the date by hand, the year is the field that matters most — a clock set to the wrong year breaks secure websites completely, while being a few minutes off the time is usually harmless. Double-check the year is right before anything else.

5 Check the Time Zone

Sometimes the time is 'wrong' only because the time zone is set for somewhere else — the clock is right for a different part of the world. This throws off reminders and calendar events even when the date is fine.

1. In Date & Time settings, find the Time Zone option.
2. Turn on automatic time zone if available, or set it to your own region manually.
3. Confirm the displayed time now matches your actual local time.
4. Check that reminders and calendar events show the right times again.

GOOD TO KNOW

A wrong time zone is a sneaky one — the minutes are right but everything happens an hour or several hours off. It often gets set wrong after travel or a setup mistake, and correcting the zone puts all your scheduled things back on track.

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6 Why the Clock Went Wrong

Knowing why the clock drifted helps you tell a one-off from a recurring problem. A single wrong reading is nothing; a clock that keeps resetting points to a cause worth addressing.

- The device was off or out of battery for a long time and lost track.
- 'Set automatically' was turned off at some point, so it drifted.
- A long trip across time zones left the zone wrong.
- On a computer, a tiny internal battery that keeps the clock can wear out, making it reset every time it's unplugged.

> **TIP**
> If the clock is right while the device is on but resets to a wrong date every time it's fully powered off, that's the sign of a worn internal clock battery — common on older computers, inexpensive to replace, and a tidy thing to have done.

7 When Security Codes Won't Match

If the short codes from an authentication app keep being rejected, a wrong clock is a prime suspect, because many of those codes are generated from the current time. A clock off by even a minute or two can make them fail.

1. Fix the device's clock first, using 'set automatically.'
2. Many authentication apps also have their own 'time correction' or 'sync time' option in their settings — run it.
3. Request a fresh code after the time is corrected.
4. Make sure you're reading the code from the right account, as that mix-up looks similar.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Time-based codes change every thirty seconds and are checked against the current time, so an accurate clock is essential for them. Correcting the device's time — and the authentication app's own time sync — is usually all it takes to make the codes accepted again.

8 Websites Saying 'Not Private' or 'Can't Be Reached'

These alarming-looking browser warnings are frequently caused by nothing more than a wrong clock. Before fearing a virus or a broken site, check the time.

1. Note the error — 'your connection is not private,' 'certificate error,' or 'can't be reached' are the telltale ones.

2. Open Date & Time settings and confirm the date, year, and time are correct; turn on 'set automatically.'
3. Close and reopen the browser, then try the site again.
4. If many secure sites were failing and now work, the clock was the culprit.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> While a wrong clock is the most common innocent cause of a 'not private' warning, don't blindly bypass such warnings on sites where you enter passwords or payment details. Fix the clock first; if the warning persists on a sensitive site with a correct clock, be cautious and get advice.

9 Reminders and Alarms at the Wrong Time

If alarms go off at odd hours or reminders arrive at the wrong time, the clock or time zone is almost certainly the reason. Fixing the time puts them right.

- Correct the time and time zone as above.
- Check that existing alarms and events show the times you expect after the fix.
- An event created while the time zone was wrong may need its time adjusted once.
- Turning on automatic time and zone prevents this recurring.

> **TIP**
>
> Calendar events are stored with a time zone attached, so one created while your zone was wrong can look off even after you fix the zone. If a particular event is at the wrong time, open it and reset its time once — new events will be fine.

10 After Fixing the Clock

Once the time is correct, a little follow-through makes sure everything catches up. Most things right themselves immediately, but a couple benefit from a nudge.

1. Close and reopen any app or browser that was misbehaving, so it picks up the correct time.

2. Retry the login, code, or website that failed.
3. Restart the device if something stubbornly clings to the old error.
4. Confirm 'set automatically' is on so it stays correct going forward.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Some apps only check the time when they start, so they keep showing the old error until you close and reopen them. A quick restart of the app — or the whole device — clears any lingering confusion after the clock is fixed.

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11 Smart Devices and the Wrong Time

Smart speakers, thermostats, and other connected gadgets rely on the correct time too, especially for schedules and routines. If one is acting up on timing, the clock is worth a thought.

- Most smart devices get their time from the internet automatically, so a connection problem can leave them with the wrong time.
- A routine firing at the wrong hour often means the device's time or zone is off.
- Reconnecting the device to Wi-Fi usually lets it fetch the correct time.
- Check the device's app for a time-zone or location setting.

> **TIP**
>
> If a smart-home routine suddenly runs at the wrong time, suspect the device's time zone or a location setting before rebuilding the whole routine. Getting the time right often fixes the schedule without any other changes.

12 Keep It From Happening Again

Prevention here is wonderfully simple — one setting left on handles almost everything. A couple of extra notes cover the rest.

- Leave 'set date and time automatically' and automatic time zone turned on.
- On a computer that resets its clock when unplugged, consider having the internal battery replaced.
- After travel, glance at the time zone to be sure it came back.
- If the clock keeps drifting despite automatic time, that's worth investigating.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A clock that won't stay right even with 'set automatically' on usually has a hardware reason — a dead clock battery in a computer, or a device that can't reach the network. That pattern is the clue that points to the real, fixable cause.

13 A Quick Way to Confirm the Clock Is Right

Once you've fixed the time, it's worth a quick confirmation that it's genuinely accurate — not just close. A clock that's off by even a few minutes can still trouble time-based security codes.

1. Compare your device's clock to a source you trust — another device, a wall clock you know is right, or the time shown on a phone network.
2. Check the date and year, not just the time of day, since the date causes the biggest problems.
3. Confirm the time zone matches where you actually are.
4. If 'set automatically' is on and connected, the time should be accurate to the second.

GOOD TO KNOW

Comparing against a second device is the simplest accuracy check there is. If your phone and a network-set clock agree exactly, you can trust the time — and rule the clock out as the cause of whatever was failing.

14 Travel, Daylight Saving, and the Clock

Clocks most often go astray around travel and the twice-yearly daylight-saving changes. Knowing this helps you anticipate and prevent the trouble.

- After crossing time zones, check that automatic time zone caught up to your new location.
- With 'set automatically' on, daylight-saving changes happen for you — you shouldn't have to touch anything.
- If your clock didn't 'spring forward' or 'fall back' on its own, 'set automatically' may be off — turn it on.
- A device that was switched off during a time change sometimes needs a moment of connection to catch up.

WATCH OUT

Leaving 'set automatically' on means you never have to think about daylight saving or time zones again — the device handles both. If a clock ever misses a daylight-saving change, that's usually the clue that the automatic setting got switched off.

15 When to Call Bill

Fixing the clock is a one-minute job you can do yourself, and it clears up a whole family of baffling problems. But if the clock keeps going wrong no matter what, if correcting the time doesn't fix the errors you're seeing, or if you'd rather not bypass a website warning on your own, I'm glad to help.

I come to you, set the time to keep itself right, track down why a clock keeps drifting — often a simple battery replacement — and make sure the websites, logins, and codes that depend on it all work again. And I'll confirm that any website warnings you've seen are the harmless kind, not a sign of something worse.

- The clock keeps resetting to the wrong date or time.
- Correcting the time didn't fix the websites or codes that were failing.
- You're seeing 'not private' warnings and want to be sure they're harmless.
- A computer resets its clock every time it's unplugged (likely a battery).

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

A wrong clock quietly breaks websites, logins, and codes. Fixing it usually fixes them all.

I want to...	Do this...
Fix it the easy way	Settings Date & Time turn ON 'Set automatically'
Fix the time zone too	Turn on automatic time zone, or set your own region
Fix it by hand if offline	Turn off 'automatic,' set the correct date (check the YEAR), time, and zone
Make codes work again	Fix the clock, then run the authenticator app's own 'time sync'
Clear a 'not private' error	Correct the date/year, then reopen the browser
Stop it recurring	Leave 'set automatically' on; replace a computer's clock battery if it resets
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.

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