BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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My Device Froze and Nothing Happens When I Tap

The screen's lit but won't respond to a single touch — here's the calm way back

Plain-English tech help from:

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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A frozen device is overwhelmed for a moment, not broken, and your photos and files are never at risk. First stop tapping and wait thirty seconds — a spinning circle means it's busy, not dead. If just one app is stuck, open your recent-apps list and swipe it closed (or Force Quit it on a computer).

If the whole device ignores you, restart it, using a force restart if nothing responds. Low battery or heat can cause freezes too, so charge it and let it cool. Repeated freezing almost always means low storage or an app that needs updating — free some space and update, and the freezing usually stops.

If it keeps freezing no matter what, that points to a cause worth finding.

1 The Short Version

When a device freezes, it has simply gotten overwhelmed for a moment — too many things happening at once, or one app that stumbled and took the screen down with it. The picture stays frozen because the part that listens to your taps has stopped responding, not because anything is broken.

The way back is a short ladder: wait a moment, try to close the stuck app, then restart. Each rung is safe, and the great majority of freezes clear on the first or second. Your photos, messages, and files are never at risk from any of it.

- A freeze is a temporary overload, not a breakage — it clears with a restart almost every time.
- Give it thirty seconds first; some freezes thaw on their own.
- If one app froze, closing that app often fixes it without a full restart.
- A force restart is the sure cure when nothing responds at all.

TIP

Resist the urge to tap and swipe faster and faster — it doesn't help, and it can queue up a flurry of actions that fire all at once when the freeze clears, making things jump around. One tap, then wait, is the calm approach.

2 First, Give It a Moment

Before you do anything, pause for a slow count to thirty. A surprising number of freezes are the device wrestling with one heavy task — a big update downloading, a large photo loading, an app thinking hard — and it unfreezes itself once that task finishes.

1. Stop tapping and set the device down for thirty seconds.
2. Watch for any sign of life — a spinning circle, a progress bar, a flicker.
3. If a spinning wheel or "loading" sign is showing, wait longer; it is busy, not dead.
4. If after a minute it still ignores every touch, move on to the next step.

GOOD TO KNOW

A spinning circle or hourglass means the device is working, not frozen. Interrupting it then can cause the very freeze you're trying to avoid. Patience is genuinely a fix here more often than people expect.

3 Is It the Whole Device or Just One App?

It helps to know whether everything is frozen or just one app has seized up, because a single stuck app has a gentler fix than the whole device. The test takes a few seconds.

1. Try to leave the app: on a phone, swipe up from the bottom (or press the Home button); on a computer, try clicking another window.
2. If you can get back to the home screen or another program, only that one app was stuck.

3. If the whole screen ignores you — no home screen, nothing — the whole device is frozen.
4. Note which app it was if it's just one; that's useful if it keeps happening.

> **WATCH OUT**
> If you can reach the home screen, you don't need to restart the whole device — just close the misbehaving app, covered next. That's faster and gets you back to everything else right away.

4 Close the Stuck App

When one app is the troublemaker, forcing just that app to close is the quickest fix and leaves everything else running. It is completely safe — you can reopen the app immediately.

1. Phone/tablet: open the list of recent apps (swipe up and hold, or double-press Home), find the stuck app, and swipe it away to close it.
2. On a computer running Windows: press Ctrl, Alt, and Delete together, choose Task Manager, click the frozen program, and choose End Task.
3. On a Mac: hold Option and Command and press Escape, select the frozen app, and click Force Quit.
4. Reopen the app fresh and see if it behaves.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Closing an app this way does not delete anything in it — your documents, messages, and saved progress are kept. It simply stops the app and lets you start it clean, which clears most one-app freezes.

5 Restart the Whole Device

If the whole device is frozen, or closing the app didn't help, a restart is the next and usually final step. If the screen still responds a little, use the gentle restart; if it ignores you completely, use a force restart.

1. If you can reach it, use the normal restart: hold the power/side button, choose Restart or Power Off, wait, and turn back on.
2. If nothing responds, use a force restart — the firmer button combination for your device.
3. For an iPhone: quick Volume Up, quick Volume Down, then hold the side button to the Apple logo.
4. For a computer: hold the power button about ten seconds until it powers off, then turn it on.
5. Wait for the logo and let it start fully.

TIP

A force restart looks drastic but erases nothing — it only clears the freeze. If you're unsure of your device's exact combination, the force-restart guide spells out every one; it's worth keeping those steps on a card.

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6 Let the Battery Breathe

A device that is very low on battery, or very hot or very cold, can freeze because it simply doesn't have the steady power it needs. Giving it a charge and a comfortable temperature sometimes clears a freeze that nothing else will.

1. Plug it into a reliable charger and leave it for fifteen minutes.
2. If it is hot to the touch, move it out of the sun and off any soft surface that traps heat, and let it cool.
3. If it is very cold, let it warm up to room temperature before expecting it to work.
4. Then try waking it or a force restart.

WATCH OUT

If a device is uncomfortably hot, swollen, or the battery area looks bulged, stop and unplug it. That is a hardware concern, not a freeze to clear — set it somewhere safe and have it looked at before charging it further.

7 Why Devices Freeze in the First Place

Freezes feel random, but they almost always have a cause, and knowing the common ones helps you prevent the next. None of them mean you did anything wrong.

- Low storage space: a device with almost no free room has nowhere to work and freezes often.
- Too many apps open at once, especially heavy ones like video or maps.
- One buggy app that needs an update, or an app that doesn't get along with the device.
- An update that is overdue, or one that is downloading in the background.
- An aging battery that can't deliver steady power.

GOOD TO KNOW

Of all of these, low storage is the most common and the most overlooked. A phone with its storage nearly full behaves like a cluttered desk with no room to write — it stalls constantly until you clear some space.

8 If It Keeps Freezing: Find the Pattern

A one-off freeze is nothing to worry about. Repeated freezing is a message, and the message is usually specific. A little noticing turns a mystery into a fixable cause.

1. Notice whether it freezes in the same app each time — that app is likely the culprit and may need an update or reinstall.
2. Notice whether it freezes when the battery is low or the device is hot.

3. Check how much free storage space is left; if it's nearly full, freeing space often ends the freezing.
4. Make sure the device and its apps are up to date, as updates fix many freezing bugs.

> **TIP**
> Write down what you were doing each time it freezes for a few days. A pattern almost always emerges — "it's always the photos app" or "it's always when the battery's under 20%" — and that pattern is the key to stopping it.

9 Free Up Space to Stop the Freezing

Because low storage is such a common cause, clearing some room is one of the best cures for a device that freezes again and again. It is safe when done carefully, and it often transforms a sluggish device.

- Delete apps you no longer use — they take up more room than you'd think.
- Clear out old downloads, especially large video files and email attachments.
- Let photos back up to the cloud, then remove the copies crowding the device.
- Empty the trash or recycle bin, which often holds things you thought were gone.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Aim to keep a comfortable cushion of free space — roughly a tenth of the device's total is a good rule of thumb. A device with breathing room freezes far less, starts faster, and updates without a fuss.

10 Update Apps and the Device

Many freezes come from out-of-date software, and updates quietly fix them. Keeping things current is one of the simplest ways to prevent future freezes — just make sure to let updates finish.

1. Open your app store and let any waiting app updates install.

2. Check the device's own update setting (in Settings, under Software Update or similar) and install what's offered.
3. Plug in and connect to Wi-Fi before a big update so it doesn't stop partway.
4. Never interrupt an update once it starts — let it run even if it takes a while.

WATCH OUT

During an update the screen may look frozen for several minutes, or show a progress bar or the words "do not turn off." That is not a freeze — do not force restart it. Interrupting an update is one of the few things that can cause real trouble.

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 When a Freeze Is Really Something Else

Now and then what looks like a freeze is a different problem wearing the same mask, and it helps to recognize these so you aren't restarting in circles.

- A cracked or wet screen may ignore taps in certain spots while the device is otherwise fine.
- A screen protector that's peeling or a dirty screen can block touches — clean it and check.
- A dead touch area can make it seem frozen when only part of the screen has failed.
- A very old device may simply be too slow for today's apps, which feels like constant freezing.

GOOD TO KNOW

Try tapping different parts of the screen. If some areas respond and others don't, it isn't a freeze — it's the touch screen itself, which is a repair question rather than a restart one.

12 Keep Things Running Smoothly

A few gentle habits keep freezes rare, and none of them take any real effort or skill. Think of it as light housekeeping for your devices.

- Restart your phone and computer about once a week to clear the clutter.
- Keep a cushion of free storage space.
- Let app and device updates install promptly.
- Close heavy apps when you're done rather than leaving dozens open.

> **TIP**
>
> A weekly restart is the single best habit for a device that "just gets weird sometimes." It costs two minutes and prevents most of the slow-building problems that end in a freeze.

13 When Taps Land in the Wrong Place

Sometimes the device isn't frozen at all — it's responding, but to the wrong spot, so buttons seem not to work. This "ghost touch" or lag feels like a freeze but has its own quick checks.

1. Clean the screen with a soft, dry cloth — smudges, lotion, and crumbs genuinely block touches.
2. Take off gloves, and make sure your fingertip is dry; wet or very dry skin can confuse a touch screen.
3. If a screen protector is bubbling or peeling at the edges, that can block touches — a replacement often fixes it.
4. Restart the device; a one-off touch glitch usually clears with a restart like any other freeze.

GOOD TO KNOW

A screen that responds in some places but not others, or registers taps you didn't make, isn't frozen — it's the touch layer struggling. Cleaning and a restart fix most cases; a persistent one points to the screen itself.

14 Your Work Is Safer Than You Fear

A common worry in a freeze is losing whatever you were typing or working on. In almost every case your work is far safer than it feels, because modern apps save as you go.

- Most phone and tablet apps save automatically as you type — a note or message is usually still there after a restart.
- Email and document apps often keep a draft, so a half-written message is frequently recoverable.
- On a computer, many programs offer to recover an unsaved document when you reopen them.
- Even if a few minutes of typing are lost, your saved files, photos, and messages are untouched.

TIP

When you reopen an app or document after a freeze, look for a "recover" or "restore" prompt or a saved draft before assuming anything's lost. More often than not, the app kept what you were working on.

15 When to Call Bill

You can safely work through all of these steps, and most freezes clear with a restart and stay gone once you've freed some space and updated things. But if a device freezes over and over no matter what you try, if it won't restart at all, or if parts of the screen have stopped responding, you don't have to keep fighting it.

I come to you, find the real reason behind the freezing — a full storage drive, a troublesome app, an aging battery, or a touch screen that's failing — and fix the cause so it stops. And I'll set the device up to stay smooth, with the space and updates it needs.

- It freezes again and again despite restarts, updates, and freeing space.
- It won't restart or force-restart at all.
- Part of the screen has stopped responding to touch.
- You'd simply rather have someone find and fix the underlying cause.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Screen's on but won't respond? Climb this short ladder — each rung is safe and loses nothing.

I want to...	Do this...
Give it a chance	Stop tapping; wait 30 seconds (a spinning circle means it's busy, not frozen)
Fix one stuck app	Open recent apps and swipe it away, or Force Quit it on a computer
Fix the whole device	Restart it; if it won't respond, force-restart it
Rule out low power/heat	Charge 15 minutes; let it cool if hot before trying again
Stop repeat freezing	Free up storage space and install app and device updates
Never interrupt	Don't force-restart a screen that says "updating" or "do not turn off"
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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