BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2095

Updated November 2026

Printer Says Offline — But It's Right There and Turned On

What "offline" really means, and the calm, in-order fixes that get it printing again

Plain-English printer help from:

Bill's Home Tech

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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

"Offline" almost always means the printer and computer lost track of each other, not that the printer is broken. Wake the printer, re-select it, and set it as your default; if that fails, restart the router, wait three minutes, then the printer. Clear any stuck jobs in the print queue. If it keeps dropping offline, the lasting fix is giving the printer a fixed address on your network — a quick job I do on a visit. You can usually still print from a phone in the meantime.

1 The Short Version

Your printer is sitting right there, the power light is on, and yet your computer insists it is "offline" and nothing prints. It is one of the most common and most maddening tech problems, and the good news is that it is almost never a broken printer. Nine times out of ten the printer and the computer have simply lost track of each other over the home Wi-Fi, and a few calm steps put them back in touch.

This guide walks you through the fixes in the order a professional would try them, from the ten-second ones that solve most cases to the one permanent fix that stops it happening again. You do not need to understand any of the technical words to follow along — just go down the list until it prints.

- "Offline" almost always means a lost connection, not a broken printer.
- Start with the quick fixes: restart the printer, re-select it, set it as the default.
- If it keeps dropping offline, giving it a permanent address on your network is the lasting fix.
- When it fights you for more than a few minutes, that is a perfect call for Bill.

TIP

Before anything else, make sure you are not looking at a second, old printer in the list. Many computers keep a ghost copy of a printer you set up years ago. If you see two printers with similar names, that is often the whole problem — pick the right one and set it as the default.

2 What "Offline" Actually Means

When your computer labels a printer "offline," it is not making a statement about whether the printer has electricity. It means the computer tried to reach the printer a moment ago, did not get an answer, and gave up. The printer may be wide awake; the message is really the computer saying "I knocked and nobody came to the door."

On a home network, your printer and your computer find each other over Wi-Fi using an address the router hands out, a bit like a house number on your street. If the printer goes to sleep, the router restarts, or the printer is quietly given a new house number, the computer keeps knocking at the old address and hears nothing. That is the entire problem in most cases, and it is why simply waking everything up and reintroducing them works so often.

GOOD TO KNOW

Printers are built to doze off to save power. A sleeping printer sometimes answers slowly, and the computer marks it offline before it fully wakes. Printing a page, or just pressing a button on the printer to wake it, can be enough to clear the status on its own.

3 The 60-Second Fixes — Try These First

Most "offline" messages clear up in under a minute with the simplest possible steps. Do them in this order and stop as soon as it prints — there is no need to go further.

1. Wake the printer: press any button on it, or open and close the paper tray, and watch for the screen or lights to come fully on.
2. On your computer, open your printers list and look at the name — make sure the one marked offline is really your current printer and not an old one.
3. Right-click that printer (on a Mac, open it from Printers & Scanners) and look for a "Use Printer Online" or "Resume" option; if it is there, choose it.
4. Send one test page. Many printers flip back to "ready" the instant they receive a job.
5. If nothing happens, move on to restarting both the printer and your Wi-Fi box in the next chapter.

> **TIP**
> Set your everyday printer as the "default" so your computer always reaches for the right one. On Windows it is a right-click option; on a Mac it is a drop-down in Printers & Scanners. A wrong default is a surprisingly common cause of "it won't print."

4 Restart Everything — In the Right Order

If the quick fixes did not do it, a full restart of the printer and your home internet box clears the great majority of stubborn cases. The order matters, because your router hands out the addresses everything else uses, so it should come back first.

1. Turn the printer fully off with its own power button, and unplug it from the wall for good measure.
2. Unplug your Wi-Fi router (and modem, if separate) and leave them unplugged for 30 seconds.
3. Plug the router back in first and wait two to three full minutes until its lights settle.
4. Plug the printer back in and turn it on; give it a minute to rejoin the Wi-Fi.
5. Try printing again, or restart your computer too if it still cannot see the printer.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Hold the printer's power button to turn it off, rather than only unplugging it mid-job. Yanking power while it is printing can leave a job stuck in its memory that blocks the next one — exactly the problem we fix in the next chapter.

5 Clear a Stuck Print Job

Sometimes one jammed or half-finished print job clogs the line, and every page you send afterward just piles up behind it while the printer shows offline or simply does nothing. Clearing that queue is quick and safe.

On Windows, open Settings, go to Bluetooth & devices, then Printers & scanners, choose your printer, and open the print queue; cancel every job listed, especially any marked "error" or "deleting." On a Mac, open System Settings, Printers & Scanners, select the printer, open the queue, and cancel everything waiting.

1. Open your printer's queue (the list of waiting documents) from your printers settings.
2. Cancel or delete every item in the list, not just the top one.
3. If a job refuses to cancel, turn the printer off and on, then try canceling again.
4. Once the list is empty, send a single fresh page and see if it prints.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> On Windows, if a job is truly frozen and will not clear, the lasting fix is to restart the "Print Spooler" — the behind-the-scenes helper that manages the queue. That is a slightly more technical step, and a good moment to let Bill do it with you rather than hunting through settings.

6 Reconnect the Printer to Your Wi-Fi

If restarting did not help, the printer may have genuinely dropped off your Wi-Fi — common after a power blip or a router change. Most printers with a screen can rejoin in a couple of minutes from their own menus.

1. On the printer's screen, open Settings or the wireless/network menu and choose the wireless setup or "Wi-Fi Setup Wizard."
2. Pick your home Wi-Fi name from the list the printer shows.

3. Type your Wi-Fi password carefully — it is case-sensitive, and this is where most people slip.
4. Wait for the printer to confirm it is connected (a steady wireless light or an on-screen check).
5. Print the printer's own "network" or "wireless" test page if it offers one, to confirm it is really on.

> **TIP**
>
> If your printer has no screen, the maker's phone app (covered in a later chapter) is the easiest way to reconnect it — and it is the same app you would use to connect it to a brand-new router.

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.

7 The HP+ "Always-Online" Trap

Newer HP printers enrolled in a program called HP+ have a quirk worth knowing about: they are designed to stay connected to the internet at all times, and if your internet drops even briefly, the printer can sulk and show offline until it is firmly back online — sometimes needing a restart to snap out of it.

This is not a fault you caused, and it is not something you did wrong. If you have an HP printer that went offline right after an internet hiccup, restarting the printer after your internet is fully back is usually all it takes. If it happens often, the permanent-address fix later in this guide helps, and it is worth a conversation about whether HP+ is the right fit for how you use the printer.

WATCH OUT

HP+ also requires genuine HP ink to keep working. That is a separate HP policy, not a malfunction, but it surprises people — so if an HP+ printer suddenly refuses a cartridge, that is usually why, not a breakdown.

8 Reinstall the Printer the Right Way on Windows

When the printer is awake and on the Wi-Fi but Windows still cannot find it, removing it and adding it fresh often clears whatever got tangled. Done in the right order, it is painless.

1. Open Settings, then Bluetooth & devices, then Printers & scanners.
2. Click your printer, choose Remove, and confirm — this does not harm the printer, only the computer's memory of it.
3. Make sure the printer is on and connected to the same Wi-Fi as the computer.
4. Back on the Printers & scanners screen, click "Add device" and wait for your printer to appear, then select it.
5. If Windows does not find it, the maker's app (HP Smart, Canon, Epson) will add it reliably — install that from the Microsoft Store.

WATCH OUT

Avoid random "driver download" websites that show up in a search — several are traps that install junk or worse. Use only the printer maker's own app or site, or let Windows find the printer on its own. If you are unsure which is the real one, that is a good moment to call Bill before clicking.

9 Re-Add the Printer on a Mac

The Mac version is just as straightforward. macOS usually rediscovers a healthy network printer within seconds once you remove the stale copy.

1. Open System Settings, then Printers & Scanners.

2. Select the troublesome printer and click the minus (–) button to remove it.
3. Confirm the printer is on and on the same Wi-Fi as your Mac.
4. Click the plus (+) button; your printer should appear in the list within a few seconds — select it and click Add.
5. Send a test page to confirm it is back.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> If your printer appears twice in the add list — once with "AirPrint" next to it and once with a specific driver — the AirPrint version is usually the simplest and most reliable choice for everyday home printing.

10 The Permanent Fix: Give Your Printer Its Own Address

If your printer drops offline again and again, the real culprit is usually that your router keeps handing it a different address, so the computer loses the thread. The lasting cure is to pin the printer to one fixed address so it never moves — your computer always knows exactly where to find it.

There are two ways to do this. The simpler is in the printer's own network settings, where some models let you set a "Manual" or "Static" IP address. The more reliable is in your router's settings, reserving an address for the printer so the router itself always gives it the same one. Both involve a few technical fields, and getting a number slightly wrong can knock the printer off entirely.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> This is the one fix in this guide that is genuinely fiddly, and it is the most common reason people call me for a printer that "keeps going offline." I set the reservation in your router in a few minutes, confirm the printer holds steady, and you are done with the problem for good.

11 Print From Your Phone or Tablet

Even while you sort out the computer, you can usually still print from a phone or tablet, because they use a simpler, more forgiving connection. On an iPhone or iPad it is called AirPrint; on Android it is called Mopria or the maker's app. Both just need the phone and printer on the same home Wi-Fi.

1. Make sure your phone or tablet is on the same Wi-Fi as the printer.
2. Open whatever you want to print — a photo, an email, a web page.
3. Tap Share (the box-with-an-arrow) or the three-dots menu, then choose Print.
4. Pick your printer from the list and tap Print.

> **TIP**
>
> If your printer does not show up from the phone, it is almost always because the phone is on a different Wi-Fi band or network — for example a "guest" network, or a "5G" name when the printer is on the "2.4G" name. Connecting the phone to the same network name as the printer fixes it.

12 Blank or Faded Pages — Ink Versus the Print Heads

A printer that goes through the motions but spits out blank or badly faded pages is a slightly different problem from "offline," but it is close cousin and worth covering, because people often assume the worst when the fix is simple. On an inkjet, pale or streaky printing almost always means low ink or a print head that has partly dried and clogged — not a dead printer. On a laser printer, faded output usually means the toner is running low or the cartridge needs a gentle reseat.

The first thing to try on an inkjet is the printer's own "clean print heads" routine, found in its maintenance menu or in the maker's app. It uses a little ink to flush the nozzles and often restores crisp printing in one or two passes. If a color is missing entirely, that single cartridge is likely empty or clogged, even if the others are fine.

1. Check the ink or toner levels on the printer's screen or in the maker's app.
2. On an inkjet, run "Clean Print Heads" (maintenance menu) once, then print a test page.
3. If one color is missing, replace or reseat that specific cartridge.
4. On a laser, remove the toner cartridge, rock it gently side to side, and reinsert it to redistribute toner.
5. Print a test page after each step and stop as soon as it looks right.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A printer that sits unused for weeks is the most common cause of a clogged inkjet head. Printing a single color page every week or two keeps the ink flowing and saves far more ink than the big cleaning cycles a dried-out printer needs.

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.

13 When Only Black — or Only One Color — Prints

Sometimes everything connects and prints, but the colors are wrong: a photo comes out with a strange tint, or only black text appears while colors are missing. This points to one or two specific cartridges rather than the whole printer, and it rarely means anything is broken.

The usual causes are an empty or clogged color cartridge, a cartridge still wearing its little protective tape, or a setting that quietly switched the printer to "grayscale" or "black ink only." Checking that print setting is a thirty-second fix that solves it surprisingly often.

- A missing color usually means that one cartridge is empty, clogged, or not seated.
- A new cartridge may still have protective tape over the nozzles — check and remove it.

- In the print window, make sure "grayscale" or "black ink only" is not switched on by accident.
- Run the head-cleaning routine if a color is faint rather than fully missing.

14 Set the Right Default Printer

If your computer sometimes sends pages to the wrong place — or to a printer that no longer exists — the problem is the "default" printer, the one your computer reaches for automatically. Pinning the default to your real, everyday printer prevents a whole category of "it didn't print" confusion.

1. Windows: Settings Bluetooth & devices Printers & scanners. Turn OFF "Let Windows manage my default printer," then click your printer and choose "Set as default."
2. Mac: System Settings Printers & Scanners, then set "Default printer" to your everyday printer in the drop-down.
3. Delete any old, unused printers in the list so they can never grab a job by mistake.

> **TIP**
> "Let Windows manage my default printer" sets the default to whatever you printed to last, which is why your pages sometimes go astray. Turning that off and choosing your own default is one of the most satisfying small fixes there is.

15 Connect by USB as a Fallback

If the Wi-Fi connection keeps fighting you and you simply need to print today, a plain USB cable from the printer to the computer sidesteps the network entirely. It is not as convenient as wireless for a whole household, but it is rock-solid and a good temporary bridge while you sort out the Wi-Fi.

1. Find a USB printer cable — the flat end goes to the computer, the squarer end to the printer.

2. Plug it in with both devices on; the computer usually detects the printer within a few seconds.
3. If prompted, let the computer install the printer, or add it from your printers settings.
4. Print a test page to confirm.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Most modern printers do not include a USB cable in the box, so you may need an inexpensive one. Any standard "USB printer cable" (USB-A to USB-B) works for the great majority of home printers.

16 Scan Even When the Printer Won't Print

Here is a reassuring fact: the scanner and the printer are really two machines in one case, and one can work while the other sulks. If you urgently need to scan a document while the printing side is offline, you can usually still do it — often straight to your email or phone.

1. Use the maker's app (HP Smart, Epson Smart Panel, Canon) and choose Scan — it talks to the scanner directly.
2. Or press the Scan button on the printer itself and follow its screen to scan to a connected computer or a USB stick.
3. On a Mac or Windows PC, the built-in scan tool can also pull a scan from the printer over the network.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Scanning to your phone with the maker's app is often the quickest route of all, and it saves the scan as a PDF you can email right away — handy for sending a form to a doctor's office or the county.

17 A Few Minutes of Upkeep Keeps It Reliable

Most printer headaches are preventable with a little light maintenance, none of it technical. A printer that is kept awake, updated, and on a steady connection simply misbehaves far less often.

- Print something in color every week or two to keep inkjet heads from drying.
- Leave the printer powered on rather than switching it off at the wall; it sleeps on its own and reconnects faster.
- Let the printer install its occasional firmware updates — they fix bugs and connection quirks.
- Keep a spare set of the correct ink or toner on hand so a low cartridge never stops you mid-task.
- Once it is working well, note the model number and your Wi-Fi name on a card by the printer.

> *A printer is not a temperamental machine so much as a forgetful one. Keep it awake, updated, and on a steady connection, and it will quietly do its job for years.*

18 When to Stop and Call Bill

You should feel free to work down this list as far as you are comfortable, and most people clear the problem within the first few chapters. But there is no prize for struggling, and some steps — restarting the print spooler, setting a fixed address, untangling a printer that shows up two or three times — are quicker and calmer with a steady hand beside you.

If the printer has fought you for more than a few minutes, if you are being asked to download a driver and are not sure the site is safe, or if it simply keeps going offline no matter what, that is exactly the kind of visit I do every week. I come to you, make it print, set it so it stays reliable, and leave you a simple note of what to do if it ever

acts up again.

- It keeps going offline even after a restart — the fixed-address fix is the cure, and I set it in minutes.
- You are unsure whether a "driver" download is the real, safe one.
- The printer shows up several times and you cannot tell which to use.
- You would simply rather have it handled, correctly, the first time.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the computer. Work down the list; stop as soon as it prints.

I want to...	Do this...
Get it printing fast	Wake the printer, re-select it, set it as default, send a test page
Clear a stubborn jam	Cancel every job in the print queue, then restart the printer
Fix after a power blip	Restart the router first, wait 3 minutes, then the printer
Reconnect to Wi-Fi	Printer's screen Wireless Setup pick your network type the password
Stop it dropping for good	Give the printer a fixed address (I can set this in your router)
Print right now anyway	From your phone: Share Print (same Wi-Fi as the printer)
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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