BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Reinstalling Your Printer the Right Way

The clean, in-order reinstall a pro uses — safely, on Windows or a Mac

Plain-English printer help from:

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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

When a printer misbehaves, the most reliable fix is to remove it from your computer and add it back fresh — it clears whatever got tangled and does not harm the printer. On Windows, use Settings Printers & scanners to Remove it, then Add device; on a Mac, use System Settings Printers & Scanners and the Remove/Add buttons, choosing the AirPrint copy.

Make sure the printer is awake and on the same Wi-Fi first. Only ever get software from the maker's own free app — HP Smart, Epson Smart Panel, Canon, or Brother — never a random "driver download" site, which is often a scam. If Wi-Fi will not cooperate, a USB cable is the sure fallback.

- Remove duplicates so you are left with one correct printer.
- Set it as your default and print a test page to confirm.
- No screen? The maker's phone app reconnects it to Wi-Fi easily.

1 The Short Version

Sometimes a printer that worked fine for years just stops cooperating with your computer — it will not show up, it prints gibberish, or it sits there "offline" no matter what you try. One of the most reliable cures a professional reaches for is also one of the simplest: remove the printer from the computer completely and add it back fresh. It clears out whatever got tangled behind the scenes, and nine times out of ten everything works again afterward.

The important part is doing it in the right order, and using only the printer maker's own software — never a random "driver" website. This guide walks you through a clean reinstall on both Windows and a Mac, plus the safe way to get the right software and what to do if the computer still cannot find the printer.

- Reinstalling means removing the printer from your computer's memory and adding it back — it does not harm the printer.

- Always get software from the maker's own app (HP Smart, Epson Smart Panel, Canon, Brother) — never a search-result "driver download" site.
- Make sure the printer is on and on the same Wi-Fi before you add it back.
- If it still will not appear, a quick USB cable or a visit from Bill sorts it out.

> **TIP**
>
> Before you remove anything, look at your printers list for duplicates — many computers keep two or three old copies of the same printer. Clearing those out is often the whole fix, and a clean reinstall leaves you with just one correct printer.

2 Why a Clean Reinstall Fixes So Much

When you first set up a printer, your computer stores a small bundle of settings and a "driver" — the translator that turns your documents into something the printer understands. Over months and years, a Windows update, a new router, or a half-finished setup can leave that bundle out of date or confused, and the printer starts misbehaving in ways that are hard to pin down.

Removing the printer and adding it back gives the computer a clean, current copy of everything. It is a bit like reintroducing two people who have forgotten they already met — once the introduction is fresh, they get along fine. Nothing is lost on the printer itself; you are only refreshing the computer's memory of it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> This is why "have you tried removing it and adding it back?" is such a common first question. It is not a brush-off — it genuinely resolves a large share of printer problems, and it is completely safe to do.

3 Before You Start: What to Have Ready

A couple of minutes of preparation makes the reinstall smooth. Gather these so you are not hunting for them halfway through.

- Your Wi-Fi network name and password, in case the printer needs to rejoin.
- The printer turned on, awake, and showing its ready screen or steady lights.
- The printer's brand and rough model name (usually on the front or a sticker) — you may need it to find the right app.
- A USB cable as a backup, if you have one, in case Wi-Fi will not cooperate.

WATCH OUT

Make sure the printer and the computer are on the same home Wi-Fi — the same network name — before you add the printer back. A computer on one network and a printer on another (or on a "guest" network) will never find each other, and that alone causes a lot of failed reinstalls.

4 Step One: Remove the Old Printer on Windows

We start by clearing the computer's old copy of the printer. This removes only the computer's memory of it — the printer and its settings are untouched.

1. Open Settings (the gear icon on the Start menu).
2. Go to Bluetooth & devices, then Printers & scanners.
3. Click the printer you are having trouble with.
4. Choose Remove (or Remove device) and confirm.
5. If you see several copies of the same printer, remove all of them so you can add back just one clean copy.

GOOD TO KNOW

If a printer refuses to remove and keeps reappearing, there is usually a stuck print job or a background helper holding onto it. Restarting the computer and then trying the removal again almost always clears it.

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.

5 Remove the Printer on a Mac

The Mac version is just as gentle. macOS will happily rediscover a healthy network printer within seconds once the stale copy is gone.

1. Open System Settings, then Printers & Scanners.
2. Click the printer you want to remove.
3. Click the Remove Printer button (or the minus – button) and confirm.
4. Remove any duplicate copies too, so only the correct one gets added back.

TIP

On a Mac you rarely need to download anything at all — macOS includes the software for most printers and finds them automatically. That is why the Mac reinstall is usually the quickest of all.

6 Get the Software the Safe Way

This is the single most important safety point in the whole guide. When you search the web for a printer "driver," the top results are often traps — lookalike sites that install junk software, bombard you with pop-ups, or worse. You never need them.

The only places you should ever get printer software are the printer maker's own free app from your device's app store, the maker's official website, or whatever your computer finds on its own. For the big four brands, the apps are HP Smart, Epson Smart Panel, Canon PRINT, and Brother Mobile Connect (older Brother models use Brother iPrint&Scan).

WATCH OUT

If a website asks you to pay for a "driver," run a "driver updater," or call a phone number for printer help, close it immediately — those are scams aimed squarely at people trying to fix a printer. Printer software from the real maker is always free. When in doubt about which site is genuine, that is a perfect moment to call Bill before clicking.

7 Add the Printer Back on Windows

With the old copy removed and the printer awake on your Wi-Fi, adding it back is usually a matter of a click or two.

1. Back on the Printers & scanners screen, click "Add device."
2. Wait up to a minute for your printer to appear in the list, then select it and follow any prompts.
3. If Windows finds it, let it finish — it downloads the right software for you.
4. If Windows does not find it, install the maker's app (HP Smart, Epson Smart Panel, Canon, or Brother) from the Microsoft Store and let the app add the printer.
5. Send a test page once it appears.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the printer shows up twice when you add it — once plainly and once with extra words like "IPP" or a long model code — either usually works. Pick the simpler-looking one, and if it gives trouble, remove it and try the other.

8 Add the Printer Back on a Mac

On a Mac, adding the printer back is quick and the system handles the software for you.

1. Open System Settings, then Printers & Scanners.
2. Click the Add Printer button (or the plus + button).

3. Your printer should appear in the list within a few seconds — select it.
4. If you see the same printer listed twice, once with "AirPrint" beside it, choose the AirPrint one — it is the simplest and most reliable for home use.
5. Click Add, then send a test page.

> **TIP**
> AirPrint is Apple's built-in printing that needs no extra software at all. If your printer offers it, that is almost always the best choice on a Mac, iPad, or iPhone.

9 If the Printer Won't Rejoin Wi-Fi

Sometimes the reinstall reveals that the printer itself has dropped off the Wi-Fi — which is why the computer could not find it. Most printers with a screen can rejoin in a couple of minutes.

1. On the printer's screen, open Settings, then the Network or Wireless menu.
2. Choose Wireless Setup Wizard (the wording varies by brand).
3. Pick your home Wi-Fi name and type the password carefully — it is case-sensitive.
4. Wait for the connected confirmation, then try adding the printer on the computer again.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> If your printer has no screen, the maker's phone app is the easiest way to reconnect it to Wi-Fi — the app can hand your phone's Wi-Fi details straight to the printer, so you may not even have to retype the password.

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10 Set It as Default and Print a Test Page

Once the printer is back, tell the computer this is the one to use by default, so it never reaches for a ghost copy or a "print to PDF" option by mistake.

1. Windows: on the Printers & scanners screen, click your printer and choose "Set as default." If there is a setting called "Let Windows manage my default printer," turning it off lets your choice stick.
2. Mac: in Printers & Scanners, use the "Default printer" drop-down to pick your printer.
3. Open any document and print a test page to confirm everything works.

> **TIP**
> Printing a single test page after any reinstall is the simplest way to know you are truly done — if that page comes out clean, the problem is solved.

11 The USB Fallback

If Wi-Fi simply refuses to cooperate, connecting the printer to the computer with a USB cable is the most reliable way to get printing again, and it often lets the computer find the printer instantly.

1. Find a USB cable — most printers use the wider, squarish USB-B plug at the printer end.
2. Plug it into the printer and into your computer, with the printer turned on.
3. On Windows or a Mac, the printer usually appears on its own within a minute.
4. If it does not, open the maker's app and let it add the USB-connected printer.

> **WATCH OUT**
> If your laptop only has the small, oval USB-C ports, you will need an inexpensive adapter to use an older USB cable. I keep these on hand and can bring the right one — it is a common snag on newer laptops.

12 Print From Your Phone in the Meantime

While you sort out the computer, you can usually still print from a phone or tablet, because they use a simpler connection. iPhones and iPads use AirPrint; Android phones use a built-in print service or the maker's app.

1. Make sure your phone is on the same Wi-Fi as the printer.
2. Open whatever you want to print, then tap Share (the box with an arrow) or the three-dots menu.
3. Choose Print, pick your printer, and tap Print.

13 The Factory Reset — a Last Resort That Often Works

If a reinstall on the computer side does not help and the printer itself seems confused — holding onto an old Wi-Fi, refusing every network, or behaving erratically — resetting the printer to its factory settings wipes its memory clean and lets you set it up fresh, as if it were new out of the box. It is a bigger step than a reinstall, so save it for when the gentler fixes have not worked.

1. On the printer's screen, look under Setup, Tools, or Maintenance for "Restore Defaults," "Restore Factory Settings," or "Reset."
2. If there is no screen, the maker's app or a button-press sequence (check the manual for your model) does the same thing.
3. Confirm the reset and let the printer restart — it forgets its Wi-Fi and most settings, but not any physical fault.
4. Set the printer up again from scratch: rejoin your Wi-Fi, then add it to the computer as in the earlier chapters.

WATCH OUT

A factory reset erases the printer's saved Wi-Fi and any scan-to-email setup, so be ready to redo those afterward — have your Wi-Fi name and password handy first. It does not fix a mechanical problem like a jam or a clog; it only clears a confused memory. If you are unsure whether a reset is the right move, it is worth asking before you do it.

14 When to Call Bill

A clean reinstall solves a great many printer problems, and most people can follow these steps comfortably. But if the computer still will not see the printer after a reinstall, if you are unsure which software is the real and safe one, or if you simply would rather have it done right the first time, there is no reason to wrestle with it.

I come to you, do the reinstall properly, clear out any ghost copies, confirm the printer holds its Wi-Fi, and leave you with one printer that just works. If your whole setup has drifted over the years, I will tidy it all at once so printing stops being a worry.

- The computer still cannot find the printer after a clean reinstall.
- You are not sure whether a "driver" download is the genuine, safe one.
- The printer shows up several times and you cannot tell which to keep.
- You would simply like it handled correctly in one visit.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the computer. Remove, then add back — in that order.

I want to…	Do this…
Remove it (Windows)	Settings Bluetooth & devices Printers & scanners pick it Remove
Remove it (Mac)	System Settings Printers & Scanners pick it Remove (–)
Add it back (Windows)	Printers & scanners Add device pick your printer
Add it back (Mac)	Printers & Scanners Add (+) pick the AirPrint one
Get software safely	Only the maker's app: HP Smart / Epson Smart Panel / Canon / Brother — never a search-result site
When Wi-Fi won't work	Connect by USB cable for a reliable fix
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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