



Remote Start & Car Apps — Starting and Checking Your Car from Your Phone

Start, lock and find your car from your phone An Extended Guide · No. 1921

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1921 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit — billshometech.com/book

What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

1. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	4
2. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	5
3. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	6
4. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	7
5. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	8
6. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	9
7. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	10
8. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	11
9. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	12
10. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	13
11. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	14

12. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	15
13. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	16
14. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	17
15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	18
16. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	19
17. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	19
18. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	21
19. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	22
20. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	23
21. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	24
22. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	24
A Picture to Follow Along	25
A Second Look	26
A Note From Bill	26
Your Visit — and My Promise	27

1. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

What's Inside Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now..... 4

1. The 60-Second Version.....	4
2. What a Car App Actually Is.....	5
3. Two Kinds of Remote Start.....	5
4. The Key-Fob Remote Start.....	6
5. The Phone App Remote Start.....	6
6. Why the App Wants Money.....	7
7. What the Different Brands Call It.....	7
8. Finding Out If Your Trial Is Ending.....	8
9. Is the Paid Plan Worth It?.....	9
10. Checking the Doors From Afar.....	9
11. Finding Where You Parked.....	10
12. Fuel, Range and Battery Charge.....	10
13. Climate Preconditioning.....	11
14. Never Start a Gas Car in a Closed Garage.....	11
15. The Car Locks Itself for a Reason.....	12
16. Preconditioning an Electric Car.....	12
17. Watching the Charge From Your Phone.....	13
18. How Far the App Can Reach.....	13
19. When the App Says 'Cannot Reach Vehicle'.....	14
20. Adding Phone Start to a Car That Did Not Come With It.....	14
21. The Aftermarket Brands to Know	

2. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

..... 15	22. Choosing a Shop You Can Trust.....	15	23.
The Cold Ohio Morning.....	16	24. The Hot Summer	
Afternoon.....	16	25. Setting Up the App the First Time.....	17
26. Finding the VIN and Other Numbers.....	18	27. When the Start Button	
Does Nothing.....	18	28. Common Reasons a Start Request	
Fails.....	19	29. The App Shows the Wrong Information.....	19
30. Protecting Your Account and Your Car.....	20	31. Thinking About the	
Whole Bill.....	20	32. How to Cancel or Change a Plan.....	21
33. Common Questions, Short Answers.....	21	34. When to Call	
Bill.....	22	Everyday Cheat Sheet.....	23
A Picture		to Follow Along.....	24
A Second Look.....	24		
A Note From Bill.....	25	Your Visit — and My Promise	

START HERE

3. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

1. The 60-Second Version If you only read one page, read this one. Many newer cars let you start the engine, lock or unlock the doors, and find where you parked — all from an app on your phone. It feels like magic on a frosty Ohio morning. Here is the catch most folks are never told: the phone version of remote start almost always runs on a paid service from the carmaker. You get a free trial when the car is new, then it quietly starts charging, and the day it lapses the Start button stops working. The good news is that a plain key-fob remote start, if your car came with one, keeps working forever with no app and no bill. The app can start, lock, unlock, locate, and check fuel or charge. App-based remote start usually needs a paid subscription after the free trial. A button on your key fob that starts the car does not need any subscription. Older cars can get phone start added by a shop with an aftermarket kit. Never remote-start a gas car parked in a closed garage. WATCH OUT Do all your setup and tapping while safely parked. Never fiddle with the app while you are driving. THE BIG PICTURE 2. What a Car App Actually Is A remote control for your car that lives on your phone. Think of the car app as a remote control that lives on your phone instead of in a drawer. When you tap a button, your phone sends a little message over the internet to the carmaker's computers. Those computers pass the message along to your car, wherever it is parked, over the same kind of cell signal your phone uses. The car does what it is told and sends an answer back, so the app can show you that the engine is running or the doors are locked. This is why the app can reach your car from across town or across the country — it is not a short-range gadget like a garage remote. It is talking through the internet the whole way. GOOD TO KNOW Because the app works through the internet, it can reach your car from almost anywhere you have a signal — not just from the driveway.

THE BIG PICTURE

4. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

3. Two Kinds of Remote Start Know which one you have before you worry about a bill. This trips up a lot of people, so let me make it plain. There are two completely different ways to start a car without sitting in it, and only one of them costs money. The first is the key-fob remote start — a button right on the little remote you carry in your pocket. You press and hold it, and the car fires up from a short distance away. The second is phone remote start, where you use an app over the internet. The fob kind is built into the car and costs nothing to keep using. The phone kind rides on a paid service. Many cars have the fob kind, the phone kind, or both. Feature Key-fob start Phone app start Range Short, nearby Anywhere with signal Monthly cost None Usually a paid plan Needs a phone No Yes THE FOB 4. The Key-Fob Remote Start The free one that never sends you a bill. If your car came with remote start built into the key fob, you are in luck. This is the version that keeps working year after year with no subscription and no app. You will usually see a curved-arrow button on the fob, sometimes marked with a little circle. On most cars you press lock first, then press and hold the start button for a couple of seconds. The engine turns over, the climate control picks up where you left it, and the car stays locked the whole time. The range is short — think across a parking lot, not across town — but for warming the car in the driveway that is all most of us need.

- 1 Point the fob toward the car and press the lock button once.
- 2 Press and hold the remote-start button for two to three seconds.
- 3 Watch for the lights to flash, meaning the engine started.
- 4 When you get in, press the brake and the start button to take over.

TIP

5. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

If the fob start quit working, try a fresh battery in the fob before you assume anything is broken. It is the most common cause. THE APP 5. The Phone App Remote Start The clever one that usually comes with a monthly cost. Phone remote start is the one that feels futuristic. You are standing in your kitchen in your slippers, you tap a button, and the car starts warming up in the driveway. Because it works through the internet, distance does not matter — you can start the car from inside the grocery store or from a relative's house across the county. That reach is exactly why it is not free. The carmaker has to keep a cell connection alive in the car, month after month, and run the computers that relay your tap from your phone out to the driveway. They pay a phone company and they run data centers to make that happen, so they charge you for the privilege. Nearly every brand gives you a free trial when the car is new, often somewhere between a few months and a few years, and when that trial ends the Start button in the app simply stops responding until you sign up and pay. Everything else about the car keeps working exactly as before — it is only the remote reach-out that switches off. WATCH OUT If your phone-start suddenly stopped and nothing is broken, the free trial most likely ran out. Check the app for a renewal or subscription message. THE SUBSCRIPTION 6. Why the App Wants Money The free trial ends, and the car knows it. I want to be straight with you about this because it surprises so many people. When you buy a new car, the salesperson shows off the app, starts the car from the showroom, and it all looks included. It is — for a while. That first stretch is a free trial, often somewhere between a few months and three years depending on the brand. The moment the trial ends, the carmaker expects a monthly or yearly payment to keep the remote features alive. If you do not pay, the app still opens, but the Start, Lock, and Unlock buttons stop doing anything. Nothing is broken. The service simply switched off. This is normal across the whole industry, and it is worth knowing before you count on it.

GOOD TO KNOW

6. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

Plan names and prices change often. I will not quote a figure that might be stale — check the current cost in your car's app or on the carmaker's website. THE SUBSCRIPTION 7. What the Different Brands Call It Every carmaker has its own name for the same idea. Each brand dresses up the same service with its own name, which makes it confusing. Underneath, they all do the same thing: a paid connected-services plan that keeps remote start, lock, unlock, and location working from the app. Knowing your brand's name helps when you call the dealer or hunt through the app's menus. If you are not sure which plan you need, the one that mentions remote start or remote access is the one that controls the Start button. Brand What the service is called Ford / Lincoln FordPass, Ford Power-Up GM (Chevy, Buick, GMC) Remote Access, Connect Plus Toyota / Lexus Remote Connect Hyundai / Kia Bluelink, Kia Connect Subaru Starlink THE SUBSCRIPTION 8. Finding Out If Your Trial Is Ending A little checking now saves a cold morning later. Nobody likes a surprise, so it pays to know when your free trial runs out before it catches you on a frozen January morning. The app itself is the best place to look. Most brands tuck a line about your plan under a Settings, Account, or Subscription heading. It will show what you have and the date it renews or expires. If you cannot find it, the dealer where you bought the car can look it up by your license plate or by the long number called the VIN. Knowing the date lets you decide calmly whether to pay or let it lapse, instead of discovering it when the Start button goes quiet.

- 1 Open your car's app and sign in.

THE SUBSCRIPTION

7. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

- 1 Look for Settings, Account, or Subscriptions.
 - 2 Find the plan name and its renewal or expiration date.
 - 3 Write that date on your calendar so it does not sneak up on you.
9. Is the Paid Plan Worth It? An honest look at whether to keep paying. Only you can answer this, but let me lay out the honest trade-off. If you park outside through Ohio winters and dread the cold car, starting it from your warm kitchen is a genuine comfort worth a monthly fee to many people. If you have a garage and a fob that already starts the car, the paid app may be a luxury you can skip. The same plan often bundles other things — automatic crash help, stolen-vehicle tracking, maintenance alerts — so weigh the whole package, not just the Start button. There is no wrong answer here, and nobody should talk you into or out of it. Some folks happily pay a few dollars a month for the convenience and consider it money well spent on comfort; others let it lapse the day the trial ends and never miss it a bit. Think about how you actually live with the car — where you park, how far you walk to it, and whether a cold or hot cabin bothers you — and let that, not the sales pitch, make the call. Worth it if you park outdoors and hate cold or hot cars. Worth it if the plan also gives you safety and crash help you value. Maybe skip it if your fob already starts the car in the driveway. Maybe skip it if you rarely start the car before walking out to it.

WHAT IT SHOWS

8. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

10. Checking the Doors From Afar No more driving back to see if you locked it. One of the quietest joys of a car app is settling that nagging question — did I lock it? Instead of walking back out or turning the car around, you open the app and it tells you plainly whether the doors are locked. If they are not, you tap a button and lock them right from your chair. This works through the same internet connection as remote start, so you can do it from the house, the store, or a restaurant. For many people this one feature is more useful day to day than remote start itself, because the question comes up far more often than the cold. It is the end of that little worry that follows you after you have walked away from the car — the one that used to send you back across a parking lot just to be sure. A quick look at the phone settles it, and if you did forget, one tap puts it right without a single step outdoors. GOOD TO KNOW Lock and unlock from the app usually ride on the same paid plan as remote start. When the plan lapses, these buttons go quiet too. WHAT IT SHOWS 11. Finding Where You Parked The mall lot will never beat you again. We have all stood in a big parking lot turning in a slow circle, wondering where we left the car. The app can rescue you. Most car apps remember where the car last parked and show it as a pin on a map, the same kind of map you use for directions. Some will even walk you to it step by step. This is a lifesaver at the mall, the hospital, the fairgrounds, or an airport lot where you will be gone for days. The car does not have to be running or even awake for this to work — it quietly remembered the spot when you shut it off and walked away.

- 1 Open the car app on your phone.
- 2 Look for Find My Car, Car Finder, or Last Parked.
- 3 Tap it to see a map pin where the car is parked.
- 4 Follow the map, or let it guide you on foot.

WHAT IT SHOWS**9. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

12. Fuel, Range and Battery Charge Know before you go. The app is also a little dashboard you can read without going outside. For a gas car it shows how much fuel is in the tank and roughly how many miles that will take you. For an electric or hybrid car it shows the battery charge and the driving range left. This is handy on a morning when you are deciding whether to stop for gas on the way or if you can skip it. It is also reassuring with an electric car — you can glance at the charge from indoors and know it topped up overnight. No more guessing, and no more trudging out to the driveway just to read a gauge. **WATCH OUT** Glance at the fuel or charge in the app the night before a trip. It is the easiest way to avoid a scramble in the morning. **WHAT IT SHOWS**

13. Climate Preconditioning Walk out to a car that is already comfortable. Preconditioning is a fancy word for a simple comfort — getting the inside of the car to a nice temperature before you climb in. When you remote-start the car, it generally wakes up the heat or air conditioning at whatever setting you left them on. On a bitter Ohio morning that means the cabin is warm and the windows are clearing by the time you walk out. On a blazing July afternoon it means the air conditioning has already chased out the oven heat. Some apps let you set the exact temperature you want, and nicer ones will even turn on heated seats or the rear defroster. It is one of the features people fall in love with fastest. Set the climate controls where you want them before you shut the car off. The remote start brings them back on when it warms the car. Many apps can turn on heated seats or the defroster too. Give it five to ten minutes to really make a difference in deep cold.

SAFETY FIRST**10. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

14. Never Start a Gas Car in a Closed Garage This is the one rule you cannot bend. I need to be very serious for a moment, because this one can hurt you. A gas engine makes carbon monoxide — a gas you cannot see or smell that is poisonous. If you remote-start a gas car while it sits in a closed garage, that invisible gas builds up fast and can seep into the house. People have been badly hurt and even killed this way, often without any warning. So the rule is simple and has no exceptions: never remote-start a gas or hybrid car when it is parked in a garage with the door shut. If the car lives in the garage, open the garage door fully first, or just do your warming up only when the car is parked outside. Because carbon monoxide gives no warning your nose can catch, a battery alarm that listens for it is some of the best money you can spend for the home, and it matters all the more once remote start makes it easy to run an engine near the house. If you have a garage attached to the house, put one near the door that joins them and another near the bedrooms. They cost about what a nice dinner out does and last for years. If one ever chirps or sounds, get everyone outside into fresh air and call for help — do not stop to investigate, and do not go back in until someone says it is safe. **WATCH OUT** Carbon monoxide has no smell and no color. A closed garage can fill with it in minutes. Never remote-start a gas car in one. **SAFETY FIRST**

15. The Car Locks Itself for a Reason Why a remote-started car stays locked. Here is a comforting bit of design. When you remote-start the car, it runs with the doors locked and it will not let anyone drive off. The engine is idling to warm up, but the car knows nobody has a key inside, so it refuses to shift into gear. That means a running car in your driveway is not an easy target for a thief, and a curious child cannot climb in and drive it away. When you finally get in with your key or fob in your pocket, you press the brake and the start button to take real control. Until then the car is just quietly warming itself, locked and going nowhere.

GOOD TO KNOW

11. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

Most cars also shut the engine off on their own after ten or fifteen minutes of remote running, so it will not idle all day if you forget it. **ELECTRIC CARS 16. Preconditioning an Electric Car** The smartest trick an EV owner has. If you drive an electric car, the app does something especially clever. You can warm or cool the cabin while the car is still plugged in, drawing from the wall instead of from the battery. That means you leave with a comfortable car and a full charge, because the heating and cooling came from the house, not from your driving range. In cold weather this matters a lot, since heating an electric car's cabin can otherwise eat into how far you go. Doing it on the plug is the difference between leaving warm with full range and leaving warm but with miles already spent. It is one of the real advantages of living with an electric car day to day. Precondition while plugged in to save the battery for driving. Cold weather especially rewards warming the cabin on the plug. You leave with a comfortable car and your full driving range intact. Set it to finish around the time you plan to leave. **ELECTRIC CARS 17. Watching the Charge From Your Phone** Peace of mind without a trip to the garage. With an electric car the app becomes part of your daily routine. You plug in at night, and in the morning you check the app from bed to see that it charged up as expected. Many apps let you set a charge limit, schedule charging for cheaper overnight hours, and alert you if the plug got knocked loose or the charge stopped. For someone new to electric driving, this window into the car is a great comfort. Instead of wondering and walking out to the cold garage to look, you glance at your phone and know in a second. It turns the mystery of a new electric car into something you can see and trust at a glance. Over time you stop thinking about it at all — plug in at night, check the app with your morning coffee, and head out with a full battery, the same easy rhythm that filling a gas tank used to be.

TIP

12. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

Set the app to alert you if charging stops unexpectedly. A bumped plug caught in the morning beats a dead car at noon. THE RANGE 18. How Far the App Can Reach The internet is the only limit. People often ask how close they need to be for the app to work, and the happy answer is: it does not matter. Because the signal travels over the internet and not over a short-range radio, you can start or check your car from the next room or the next state. What actually matters is signal on both ends. Your phone needs a working internet connection — cell data or Wi-Fi — and the car needs to be somewhere it can catch a cell signal. A car tucked deep in an underground concrete garage may be out of reach, not because you are far, but because the car itself cannot hear the network from down there. GOOD TO KNOW If the app cannot reach the car, the car is usually parked somewhere with no signal, like a deep parking garage, rather than too far away. THE RANGE 19. When the App Says 'Cannot Reach Vehicle' A common message that usually sorts itself out. Every car app shows this message now and then, and it is rarely cause for alarm. It simply means the phone could not get an answer from the car this time. The most common reasons are a car parked where there is no signal, a car that went into a deep sleep to save its battery after sitting for days, or a brief hiccup on the carmaker's end. The fix is usually patience. Try again in a minute or two. If the car has sat unused for a week or more, simply opening a door or starting it the normal way wakes it up and brings the app back to life. One failed tap is not a broken car.

- 1 Wait a minute and try the app again.
- 2 Check that your own phone has internet or cell signal.
- 3 If the car sat unused for days, open a door to wake it.
- 4 If it keeps failing after that, note it and give me a call.

OLDER CARS

13. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

20. Adding Phone Start to a Car That Did Not Come With It Yes, you can teach an old car a new trick. If your car is a few years older and never came with an app, do not feel left out. A good car-audio or electronics shop can install what is called an aftermarket remote-start system. This is a small kit added to your car that gives you remote start, and with the right option, control from a phone app too. It works on most gas cars with an automatic transmission and many with a manual, though a professional needs to confirm your exact car. It is not a do-it-yourself job for most people — it wires into the car's systems — but a reputable shop does these all day long and stands behind the work. **GOOD TO KNOW** Aftermarket means it was added later by a shop, not built in at the factory. It is a normal, well-established thing to install. **OLDER CARS** 21. The Aftermarket Brands to Know Names you will hear at the installer. When you visit a shop, a few names come up again and again. Compustar is a widely installed system that pairs a remote with an optional phone app. Viper is another well-known brand, and its phone side is called SmartStart. A related system you may hear about is DroneMobile, which adds the app control and often car-finding to boot. These systems usually carry their own small monthly or yearly fee for the phone features, much like the carmakers do, because they too keep a cell connection alive. The remote that comes in your hand, though, generally works with no fee. Ask the installer to spell out exactly what is free and what is paid before you buy. Compustar — common system with an optional phone app. Viper SmartStart — the phone side of the Viper brand. DroneMobile — adds app control and car locating. Expect a small fee for the phone features, like the carmakers charge. The handheld remote itself usually has no ongoing fee.

OLDER CARS

14. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

22. Choosing a Shop You Can Trust A good installer makes all the difference. Since an aftermarket system wires into your car, who installs it matters as much as which system you pick. Look for a shop that has been around a while, does this work regularly, and offers a warranty on both the parts and the labor. A sloppy install can drain your battery, trip warning lights, or cause odd electrical gremlins down the road, while a clean one will quietly serve you for years. Ask how long the job takes, what the total cost is including installation, whether it keeps your factory warranty intact, and what happens if something acts up a month later. A good shop answers all of that plainly, puts it in writing, and does not rush you toward a decision. If you would like a second set of eyes, I am glad to help you read over a quote or come along with the questions worth asking so you walk in knowing what good looks like. TIP Ask the shop for the total installed price, not just the price of the kit. Installation is a real part of the cost. DAILY LIFE 23. The Cold Ohio Morning This is the feature's finest hour. There is no better advertisement for remote start than a January morning in Portage County. The windshield is glazed with frost, the seats are stiff with cold, and the last thing you want is to sit shivering while the car slowly warms. With remote start you tap the button while you finish your coffee, and ten minutes later the cabin is warm, the glass is clearing, and the seats have taken the chill off. You step out of a warm house into a warm car. For anyone who finds cold hard on the joints, this is not a gadget — it is real comfort. Give it a good ten minutes on the bitter days to do its best work. TIP Leave the heater, rear defroster, and heated seats switched on when you park. Remote start brings them all back the next morning.

DAILY LIFE

15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

24. The Hot Summer Afternoon Cooling works just as well as heating. The same trick saves you in July. A car that has baked in a sunny lot all afternoon turns into an oven, and climbing into that heat is miserable. If you start the car from inside the store or the office a few minutes before you leave, the air conditioning gets a head start and chases out the worst of it. By the time you reach the car it is bearable instead of brutal, and the steering wheel is cool enough to hold. This is especially kind on hot days when getting into a scorching car is genuinely unpleasant, and even risky for folks who do not handle heat well or who have breathing trouble. A few minutes of cooling before you walk out makes a real difference, and in the depths of an Ohio summer it is every bit as welcome as the warm-up is in January. **WATCH OUT** Never leave a child or pet in a car you have remote-started, even with the air running. The cooling can stop when the engine times out. **GETTING SET UP** 25. Setting Up the App the First Time A little patience now, smooth sailing after. Getting the app working the first time is the only fussy part, and then it mostly just works. You download the carmaker's app, make an account with your email and a password, and link the car to that account. Linking usually means typing in the car's long identifying number, the VIN, or scanning a code, and then proving you are really the owner — often by a code that appears on the car's dashboard screen or by a call to the dealer. It feels like a lot of steps, but you only do it once. After that, opening the app and tapping a button is all there is to it. This first setup is exactly the sort of thing I am happy to sit down and do with you.

- 1 Download your carmaker's app from the phone's app store.
- 2 Create an account with your email and a password you will remember.
- 3 Add your car by its VIN or by scanning the code the app asks for.
- 4 Confirm you are the owner using the code on the dash or a call to the dealer.
- 5 Test remote start once while parked outside to be sure it works.

GETTING SET UP

16. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

26. Finding the VIN and Other Numbers Where to look for the numbers the app wants. The app often asks for the VIN, which stands for Vehicle Identification Number. It is a long string of letters and numbers unique to your car, like a fingerprint. You do not have to memorize it — you just need to find it to type it in once. The easiest spots are the lower corner of the windshield on the driver's side, where it shows through the glass, and a sticker inside the driver's door frame that you see when the door is open. It is also printed on your insurance card and your registration. Take your time copying it; one wrong letter will make the app grumble, so double-check each character. Lower driver's-side corner of the windshield, visible through the glass. A sticker on the driver's door frame, seen when the door is open. Your insurance card and vehicle registration. Copy it carefully — a single wrong character will reject it. Once the app is set up, a couple of easy habits keep it reliable for years. Try to stay signed in rather than logging out, so a single tap of the button is all it takes when you need it on a cold morning. Let the app update itself whenever the phone offers, since those updates quietly fix bugs and keep the app talking to the car the way it should. And if you ever get a new phone, you simply sign into the same account on it and your car comes right along — there is no need to set everything up from scratch. The one thing worth guarding is your account email and password, because that login is the real key to the whole thing. TIP Write your car-app email and password on a card kept somewhere safe at home. A new phone will ask for them, and they are easy to forget.

TROUBLE

17. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

27. When the Start Button Does Nothing Work through these before you worry. If you tap Start and nothing happens, do not assume the worst. Run through a short list first. The most common cause by far is a lapsed subscription — the free trial ended and the service switched off. After that, check that your phone actually has internet, and that the car is parked somewhere with a signal. Make sure the doors are shut and the car was properly turned off, since many cars refuse to remote-start if a door is ajar or the hood is up. A quick phone restart clears up odd app hiccups too. Most dead-button mysteries turn out to be one of these simple things rather than a fault in the car.

- 1 Check whether your subscription is still active in the app.
- 2 Confirm your phone has internet or cell signal.
- 3 Make sure all doors and the hood are fully shut.
- 4 Restart your phone and open the app fresh.
- 5 Try once more, parked outside, and watch for the lights to flash. **TROUBLE 28. Common Reasons a Start Request Fails** Little things the car checks before it will start. Cars are cautious about remote starting, and for good reason. They run through a short checklist and quietly refuse if anything looks off. If a door, the trunk, or the hood is open, the car usually will not start. If the car thinks it was left in gear, or if a warning light was on when you parked, it may decline. Very low fuel or a weak battery can stop it too. None of these mean the app is broken — the car is simply protecting itself. If a start keeps failing, walk out to the car and look it over: a door not fully latched or a popped hood is the usual culprit, and closing it up sets everything right. A door, trunk, or hood left open. The car not fully shut off, or thought to be in gear. A warning light that was on when you parked. Very low fuel or a weak or dying battery. The car asleep after sitting unused for many days.

TROUBLE**18. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

29. The App Shows the Wrong Information When the app and the car disagree. Sometimes the app insists the car is unlocked when you know you locked it, or shows an old fuel reading. This is usually just the app being a step behind. The car only reports in now and then to save its battery, so the app can show a snapshot from a little while ago rather than this exact second. Pull down to refresh the screen, or close the app and open it again, and it will go ask the car for a fresh answer. If the numbers still look plainly wrong after a refresh, note what you are seeing and when, and we can look into it together. A once-in-a-while stale reading, though, is normal and nothing to fret over. **GOOD TO KNOW** The app often shows the car's last report, not this very second. A quick refresh asks the car for an up-to-date answer. **TROUBLE 30. Protecting Your Account and Your Car** The app is a key, so treat it like one. Because the app can unlock and start your car, your account is worth guarding. Use a password that is not the same as the ones you use everywhere else, and if the app offers to lock itself behind your fingerprint or face, say yes — that way a lost phone does not hand someone the keys. Never share your car-app login with anyone you would not hand a spare key. If you sell the car, be sure to remove it from your account and let the new owner set up their own, so you are not still able to start a car that is no longer yours. These are small steps, and they keep the convenience from turning into a worry. **WATCH OUT** If you sell or trade in the car, remove it from your app account. Otherwise your old app may still be linked to a car you no longer own.

COSTS**19. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

31. Thinking About the Whole Bill What you are really paying for, all told. When you weigh whether to keep a connected-services plan, look at the whole bundle rather than the Start button alone. These plans usually fold in several things: remote start, lock and unlock, car finding, and often safety features like automatic crash notification and stolen-vehicle help. Some also throw in Wi-Fi for the car or maintenance reminders. If you use several of those, the plan earns its keep. If all you want is to warm the car and you already have a fob that does it, you may be paying for a lot you never touch. Read the list of what your plan includes, cross off what you will never use, and decide from there. **GOOD TO KNOW** Prices and plan names change often, so I will not print a number that might be wrong. Check the current cost right in your app or on the carmaker's site. **COSTS** 32. How to Cancel or Change a Plan You are never stuck with a plan you do not want. If you decide a plan is not for you, backing out is usually straightforward. Most carmakers let you manage the subscription right in the app, under Account or Subscriptions, where you can cancel or switch to a cheaper tier. If the app makes it hard to find, a phone call to the brand's customer line or to your dealer gets it done. When you cancel, the paid features simply switch off at the end of the period you already paid for — the car is fine, it just goes back to the free basics and the fob. You can always sign back up later if you miss it. Nothing about this locks you in for good.

- 1** Open the app and go to Account or Subscriptions.
- 2** Choose to cancel or switch to a lower plan.
- 3** If you cannot find it, call the brand's customer line or your dealer.
- 4** Note the date the paid features will switch off.

QUICK ANSWERS

20. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

33. Common Questions, Short Answers The things people ask me most. Let me gather a few quick answers to the questions I hear over and over. These are the short versions — any one of them I am glad to go into more deeply if you call. Does the fob start cost money? No — the fob start has no subscription. Can I start it from inside a store? Yes, if both your phone and the car have signal. Will it idle all day if I forget? No — it shuts off on its own after ten or fifteen minutes. Can someone drive off with it running? No — it stays locked and will not go into gear. Can I add this to my older car? Yes — a shop can install an aftermarket kit. Is it safe in the garage? Only with the garage door fully open, and never for a gas car otherwise. GET HELP 34. When to Call Bill You do not have to sort this out alone. If any of this feels like a lot, that is perfectly normal, and it is exactly what I am here for. I have spent more than thirty years helping folks make peace with their gadgets, and car apps are no different from the rest. In a short visit to your home or right in the driveway, I can set up the app, link it to your car, walk you through starting and locking it, and show you how to check your subscription so there are no surprises. If you are thinking about adding remote start to an older car, I will help you weigh a shop's quote and the right questions to ask. There is never any pressure, and I stand behind my work with a friendly guarantee. Give me a call at (330) 200-8042. My assistant Sophie or I will find a time that suits you, anywhere in Portage County. You do not have to remember all of this — that is what I am for. We will get your car answering to your phone, and we will do it at a pace that feels comfortable to you.

CHEAT SHEET**21. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Everyday Cheat Sheet Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task. I want to... Do this I want to warm up the car from indoors Open the car's app, tap Start or Remote Start I want to check if I locked it Open the app and look at the lock status I forgot where I parked Use the car finder or Last Parked map in the app My free trial ended and Start quit You likely need the paid connected-services plan I only have a key-fob remote start That keeps working with no subscription or app I want phone start on an older car Ask a shop about an aftermarket remote-start kit My car is electric Precondition the cabin while it is still plugged in Nothing works and I am stuck Call me at (330) 200-8042 Get help Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

HOW I CAN HELP**22. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

Your Visit — and My Promise In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included. Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo). 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. Call or text (330) 200-8042 · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

How a phone start works

What happens when you tap the button.

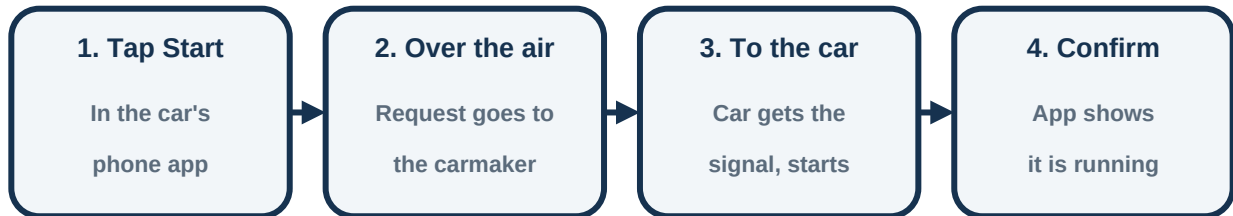


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

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

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

What the app can do

The four everyday jobs.

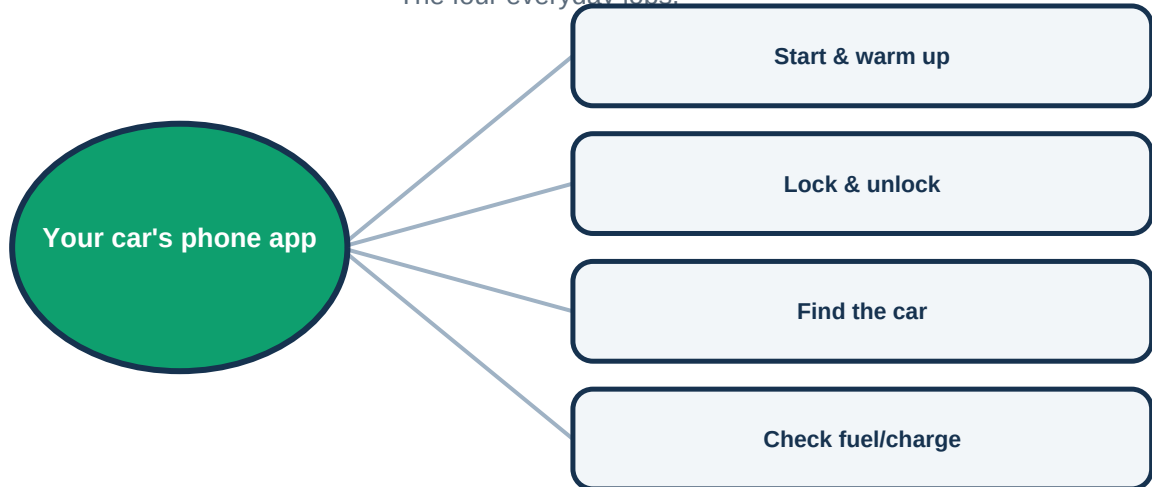


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

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

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

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.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.