BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 1972

Updated November 2026

A Renter-Safe Smart Home — No Drilling, No Damage

Smart upgrades with no drilling, no damage, and no lost deposit

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.

The 60-Second Version 3

You Don't Have to Own to Be Smart 4

Lights: The Easiest Win 4

Sensors and Cameras Without Drilling 5

The Smart Lock: The One to Clear 6

A Simple Way to Control It All 7

Leaving No Trace 8

Plain Questions and Answers 9

A Smart Home That Moves With You 10

Everyday Cheat Sheet 11

A Picture to Follow Along 12

A Second Look 13

A Note From Bill 13

Your Visit — and My Promise 14

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The 60-Second Version

The whole approach in a breath.

A renter can absolutely have a smart home, with no drilling and no damage, as long as you choose devices made to move with you. Start with the easiest wins: smart bulbs that screw into your existing light fixtures, and smart plugs that make any lamp or appliance controllable — both require no tools at all.

Add battery-powered sensors and cameras that stick on with removable adhesive or simply sit on a shelf, so there are no screws in the wall. The one upgrade that needs a conversation is a smart lock: the renter-friendly 'retrofit' kind replaces only the inside of your deadbolt and leaves the outside untouched, but you should still get your landlord's okay first.

Tie it all together with a small voice speaker rather than any wired-in hub. And when you move, remove everything, put the original bulbs and lock parts back, and peel off the adhesives carefully — so you leave no trace and keep your deposit. Smart home, renter-safe, deposit intact.

- Smart bulbs and plugs are the easiest no-tool upgrades.
- Battery sensors and cameras stick on or sit freestanding — no drilling.
- A retrofit smart lock leaves the outside alone — but ask your landlord first.
- When you move, remove it all and restore the originals to protect your deposit.

THE MYTH

2 You Don't Have to Own to Be Smart

Clearing up the big misconception.

The belief that keeps renters out of the smart home is that it all requires permanent changes — hard-wired switches, drilled-in cameras, a doorbell wired to the chime. Some professional installations are like that, but the whole consumer smart-home world has grown up around exactly the opposite: devices that are easy to install yourself, leave no mark, and come with you when you move. Those are a renter's bread and butter.

The guiding principle for everything in this guide is simple: choose devices that screw in, plug in, or stick on, and avoid anything that needs to be wired in or screwed through the wall. With that one rule, a surprising amount of the smart home opens up to you — lighting, security, sensors, voice control — with your walls and your deposit perfectly safe.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> A happy bonus of the renter approach is that these devices are yours and portable. The money you spend does not improve someone else's property and vanish when you leave — it moves to your next home with you. You are building your smart home, not your landlord's.

START HERE

3 Lights: The Easiest Win

Smart bulbs and plugs, no tools at all.

The simplest and most satisfying place to start is lighting, because it requires nothing but changing a bulb or using an outlet. There are two tools here, and between them they cover most of what people want.

Smart bulbs

A smart bulb screws into your existing light fixture exactly like an ordinary bulb — because that is what it is, with a little wireless smarts added. Once it is in and connected to your Wi-Fi, you can turn it on and off, dim it, set schedules, and often change its color or warmth, all from your phone or by voice. No wiring, no switch changes, nothing permanent. When you move, you unscrew it and screw your old bulb back in.

Smart plugs

A smart plug sits between the wall outlet and whatever you plug into it — a lamp, a fan, a coffee maker, holiday lights — and lets you switch that thing on and off remotely or on a schedule. It turns any ordinary lamp into a smart one without a smart bulb, and it is perfect for the floor and table lamps a renter relies on. Unplug it and take it with you when you go.

> **TIP**
>
> Keep your original bulbs in a labeled bag in a closet the moment you swap them out. When you move, you will want to put them back and take your smart bulbs with you — and a bag you can find beats hunting for the right bulbs on moving day.

NO SCREWS

4 Sensors and Cameras Without Drilling

Security and automation that leave no holes.

Security and sensors sound like they need mounting hardware, but the renter-friendly versions are battery-powered and attach with removable adhesive or simply sit on a surface — no screws, no holes.

Device	How it mounts	What it does
Motion sensors	Stick-on pad or magnetic bracket, or sit on a shelf	Trigger lights, send alerts

Contact sensors	Removable adhesive on a door or window	Tell you if a door or window opens
Indoor cameras	Sit on a shelf or table (plug-in)	Watch a room; alert on motion
Battery doorbell / peephole cam	Adhesive or existing fittings	See who's at the door

Battery-powered motion and contact sensors stick on with removable pads and peel off cleanly later; many just sit on a shelf. Indoor cameras can simply stand on a bookshelf and plug into an outlet — no mounting at all. For the front door, a battery-powered video doorbell avoids the wiring a traditional one needs, and peephole cameras fit an existing peephole. The whole kit watches your home and automates your lights, then packs up and moves with you.

WATCH OUT

Place cameras thoughtfully and lawfully: indoors in your own space, not pointed into a neighbor's windows or shared areas in ways that invade others' privacy. Be mindful of what a camera can see, and of any building rules about cameras in shared hallways.

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.

ASK FIRST

5 The Smart Lock: The One to Clear

Renter-friendly, but get permission.

A smart lock is the one upgrade that touches something the landlord cares about — the door lock — so it is the one to handle thoughtfully. The good news is that there is a renter-friendly kind, and with a quick okay from your landlord it is very doable.

The retrofit lock

The renter-friendly option is a 'retrofit' smart lock that replaces only the inside portion of your existing deadbolt — the thumb-turn you flip by hand — and leaves the outside of the lock, and the key, completely unchanged. Your existing keys still work, the hallway side looks identical, and you gain the ability to lock and unlock from your phone. Because only the inside changes, it is simpler and far less intrusive than replacing the whole lock.

1. Confirm your deadbolt is a compatible type for a retrofit lock — the makers list what fits.
2. Ask your landlord for permission before changing anything on the lock, and keep that okay in writing (an email is fine).
3. Keep all the original lock parts you remove, bagged and labeled, to put back when you leave.
4. Install the inside piece per the instructions — usually just a few screws into the existing lock, no door drilling.
5. When you move, swap the original thumb-turn back and take your smart piece with you.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Always get the landlord's approval before altering the lock, even a renter-friendly retrofit, and keep it in writing. Locks are a sensitive point in a lease — some landlords require a key, or forbid changes — so a quick, documented okay protects you and keeps the relationship easy.

TYING IT TOGETHER

6 A Simple Way to Control It All

No wired hub, no drilling.

Once you have a few smart devices, you will want an easy way to control them together — and here too, the renter-friendly path avoids anything permanent. You do not need a hub wired into your home; a small, plug-in smart speaker does the job beautifully.

A little voice speaker — the kind that sits on a counter and plugs into an outlet — connects to your Wi-Fi and becomes the control center for your lights, plugs and more. You can say 'turn off the living room' or 'lock the door' and it happens, and you can set up routines like all the lights coming on at sunset.

It sets up in minutes, needs no installation, and unplugs to move with you. Many of these devices do not even need a separate hub at all — they connect straight to your Wi-Fi.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Start simple and add as you go. One smart speaker and a couple of smart bulbs is a genuine, useful smart home — you can control the lights by voice from your chair. You do not have to buy a whole system at once; grow it piece by piece as you find what you actually use.

MOVING OUT

7 Leaving No Trace

The part that protects your deposit.

The whole renter approach only pays off if you can take it all down cleanly when you leave — getting your devices and your deposit both. A little care on the way out is what makes that certain.

1. Remove every smart device: unscrew smart bulbs and screw your original bulbs back in, unplug smart plugs and the speaker, take down cameras and sensors.
2. Put the original lock parts back if you installed a retrofit lock, and take your smart piece with you.
3. Peel off adhesive mounts slowly and carefully — warming them gently with a hairdryer helps them release without pulling paint.
4. Clean off any adhesive residue, and check walls and fixtures look as they did when you arrived.
5. Take all your devices with you — they are yours, and they will work in the next place.

WATCH OUT

Test any adhesive on a hidden spot before trusting it on a visible wall, and remove it gently. Even 'removable' mounting tape can lift paint if yanked off fast or left for years. Slow and warm is the way to a clean wall and a full deposit.

QUESTIONS

8 Plain Questions and Answers

The things renters ask most.

"Do I need my landlord's permission for any of this?"

For bulbs, plugs, freestanding cameras and stick-on sensors, generally no — nothing permanent changes. The one to ask about is the lock, since that alters the door hardware. When in doubt, a quick, friendly heads-up to the landlord costs nothing and avoids trouble.

"Will smart bulbs work with my normal light switch?"

Yes, with one habit: the wall switch needs to stay on for the smart bulb to receive power and respond to your phone or voice. Many people leave the switch on and control the bulb through the app or speaker. If someone flips the wall switch off, the bulb goes fully dark until it is switched back on.

"Is my smart-home data and camera footage private?"

It depends on the device and brand. Stick to reputable makers, use strong passwords and two-factor sign-in on the apps, and check where camera footage is stored. For an indoor camera especially, know who can see it and consider turning it off when you are home.

"What happens to my devices when I move?"

They come with you — that is the beauty of the renter approach. You unplug and unscrew everything, restore the originals, and set your smart devices up again in your new place. Nothing is wasted on a property you are leaving.

WRAP UP

9 A Smart Home That Moves With You

No holes, no damage, no lost deposit.

Renting is no barrier to a smart home — you just build it from devices that screw in, plug in, or stick on, and skip anything that needs drilling or wiring. Start with smart bulbs and plugs for easy lighting, add battery sensors and freestanding or stick-on cameras for security, and tie it together with a small plug-in voice speaker.

The one upgrade to clear with your landlord is a smart lock, and even that has a renter-friendly retrofit version that leaves the outside and your keys untouched. Keep your originals, mount things with removable adhesive, and when you move, take it all down carefully and restore the place. The result is a genuinely smart home that costs you no holes, no damage, and no deposit — and that packs up and moves to wherever you live next.

- Choose devices that screw in, plug in, or stick on — nothing permanent.
- Smart bulbs and plugs for lights; battery sensors and placed cameras for security.
- A retrofit smart lock leaves the outside alone — but ask the landlord first.
- A small plug-in speaker controls it all, no wired hub needed.
- On moving day, restore the originals and remove adhesives gently to keep your deposit.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you would like a hand setting up a renter-friendly smart home — picking devices that will not risk your deposit, getting the bulbs and speaker talking to each other, and sorting out the lock question with your landlord — I am glad to help you build something that genuinely makes life easier and comes right along to your next place.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
Start with bulbs and plugs	Smart bulbs screw into existing fixtures; plugs run any lamp
Add sensors without screws	Battery sensors stick on or sit on a shelf — no drilling
Add cameras that move with you	Battery or plug-in cameras you place, not mount permanently
Ask before changing the lock	A retrofit lock needs landlord approval — but leaves the outside
Tie it together simply	A small voice speaker controls everything, no hub drilling
Leave no trace	Keep original bulbs; test adhesives; remove it all when you go
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

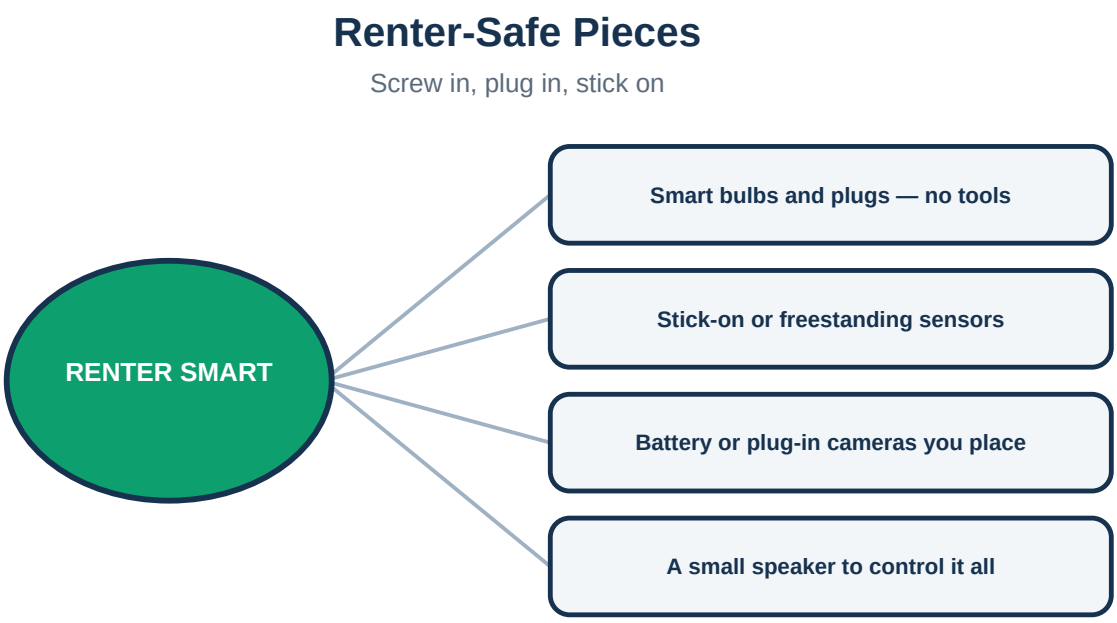


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Building It (and Undoing It)

Four steps

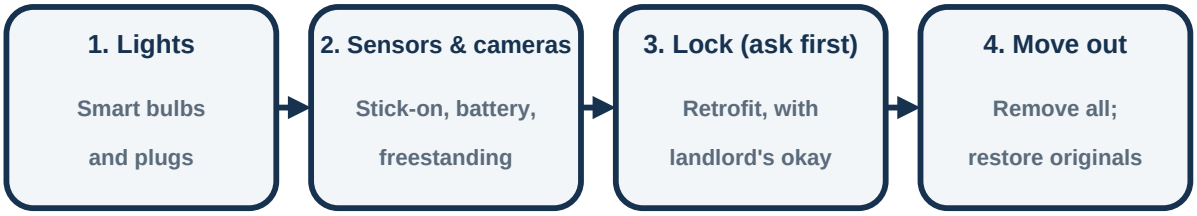


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

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

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

Call or text (330) 200-8042 · 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.