

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

- 1 The Roku Stick plugs into an HDMI port on your TV.
- 2 It needs your home Wi-Fi and a free Roku account to work.
- 3 The remote has a headphone jack for private listening.
- 4 The free Roku phone app works as a full spare remote.
- 5 Random reboots are almost always a power problem; use the wall brick.
- 6 Add apps from Streaming Channels on the home screen.

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Roku Streaming Stick — A Plain-English Guide

Streaming Stick Setup, remote, and Wi-Fi made simple

————— An Extended Guide · No. 177 —————

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Short on time? Here is the whole guide in a handful of checkmarks. Read these and you already know most of what matters.

- The Roku Stick plugs into an HDMI port on your TV.
- It needs your home Wi-Fi and a free Roku account to work.
- The remote has a headphone jack for private listening.
- The free Roku phone app works as a full spare remote.
- Random reboots are almost always a power problem; use the wall brick.
- Add apps from Streaming Channels on the home screen.
- A new \$35 Streaming Stick 4K brings back apps an old Roku lost.
- Install the phone app early. The free Roku app on your phone is a full remote. Set it up now and a lost or dead remote is never a problem.

WHAT THE ROKU IS

1. What the Roku Stick Actually Is

Let me start with plain words. The Roku Streaming Stick is a small device, about the size of a pack of gum, that adds streaming apps to a TV. It plugs into an HDMI port, the same kind of port a cable box or DVD player uses. Once it is on your Wi-Fi, its home screen holds all your apps: Netflix, Prime Video, YouTube, and hundreds more. It works on nearly any TV with an HDMI port, old or new.

- A small stick that plugs into an HDMI port.
- It turns almost any TV into a smart, streaming TV.
- It needs your home Wi-Fi to reach the apps.
- Its home screen is where all your apps live.
- It works on your old TV too. As long as the TV has an HDMI port, a Roku Stick brings modern apps to it, no new television required.

FIRST-TIME SETUP

2. Plugging In and Setting It Up

Setting up a Roku is mostly a matter of following the screen. Take it a step at a time; you cannot break anything by going too slow.

- Plug the stick into an HDMI port on the TV.
- Connect its power cable to the wall brick and plug that into an outlet.

- Turn on the TV and switch to that HDMI input.
- Follow the on-screen steps to join your Wi-Fi.
- Sign in with a free Roku account, or create one, to finish. You will need to create a free Roku account during setup. It ties your apps to you, so keep the email and password written down somewhere safe. Rather have it done for you? Full setup, training, and getting all your apps signed in is a standard \$99 flat visit, with 30 days of follow-up. (330) 200-8042.

CONNECTING TO WI-FI

3. Getting the Roku On Your Wi-Fi

The Roku pulls every show over your home Wi-Fi, so a solid connection is everything. You set it up once and it remembers your network.

- During setup, pick your Wi-Fi network from the list.
- Type the password carefully, watching your capital letters.
- Later, you can change it under Settings, Network, Set up connection.
- Wait for it to confirm it is connected before you move on. The password step trips up the most people, because Wi-Fi passwords are case-sensitive, meaning capital letters have to match exactly.
- The password is on the router. If you do not know your Wi-Fi password, it is often printed on a sticker on the router, the box from Spectrum or AT&T.

WI-FI KEEPS DROPPING

4. The Roku Keeps Disconnecting From Wi-Fi

Streaming sticks are sensitive to weak Wi-Fi. If yours keeps dropping out, it usually means the signal is thin where the TV sits. Try these in order.

- Go to Settings, Network, Check connection. Roku shows the signal strength.
- If it says Poor or Fair, the TV is too far from the router; move the router closer or add a mesh Wi-Fi setup.
- If the signal looks good but it still drops, go to Settings, System, System update, Check now. Software updates fix these drops surprisingly often, so do not skip that last step even when the signal seems fine. Wi-Fi trouble is usually a whole-house thing. If the Roku drops out, your phone probably struggles in that room too. I can survey the house and recommend the right fix. (330) 200-8042.

THE REMOTE

5. The Roku Remote and Its Buttons

The Roku remote is refreshingly simple. A few buttons handle nearly everything you do.

- The Home button, the house icon, always returns you to the app screen.
- The arrow ring moves around; the OK button in the middle selects.
- The back arrow steps you back one screen.
- Some remotes have shortcut buttons printed with app names like Netflix.
- Many remotes have a headphone jack on the side, covered next.
- Fresh batteries first. A laggy remote is very often just weak batteries. Two fresh AA batteries fix more remote problems than anything else.

REMOTE STOPPED WORKING

6. The Remote Stopped Working

Before you assume the remote has died, two quick things fix the large majority of Roku remote problems.

- Fresh batteries. Two AAs. Roku remotes start lagging before they fully die, so even if it still kind of works, new batteries often fix it.
- Re-pair the remote: open the battery compartment, hold the small pairing button inside for about 3 seconds while standing near the TV.
- The Roku shows a pairing message when it reconnects. And remember, the free Roku phone app works as a full remote in the meantime, so a stubborn remote never means a dark evening. Lost the remote entirely? I keep universal Roku-compatible remotes in the truck, or we can set up the phone app together. (330) 200-8042.

THE HEADPHONE TRICK

7. The One Trick I Tell Every Customer

This is the feature people love most once they know it exists. The Roku remote has a small headphone jack on the side, and it changes late-night TV completely. Plug any pair of wired headphones into that jack and the sound from your TV instantly switches to the headphones, leaving everyone else in the house in silence. It is wonderful for watching after your spouse has gone to bed, and a real gift if your hearing is not what it used to be.

- Plug wired headphones into the jack on the side of the remote.
- The TV audio moves to the headphones automatically.
- The TV's own speakers cut off on their own.

- Pull the headphones out and the TV speakers come right back.
- No settings to change. You do not touch any TV settings for this. Roku just routes the sound through the remote the moment you plug in.

THE PHONE APP

8. The Free Roku Phone App

Roku makes a free app for your phone that works as a full remote. It is worth installing as a backup even if your remote is working fine today.

- Install the free Roku app from your phone's app store.
- Sign in with the same Roku account and join the same Wi-Fi.
- Use the on-screen remote to control the Roku from your phone.
- Typing searches and passwords is far easier with the phone keyboard. There is no extra setup beyond logging in to your Roku account. When a remote goes missing or the batteries die, the app steps right in.
- A backup you will be glad you have. Set the app up now, while things work. A dead remote at 8 p.m. is a lot less stressful when your phone is already a remote.

ADDING APPS

9. Adding Apps to Your Roku

On Roku, apps are called channels, and adding one is quick. If Netflix or Prime is not on your home screen yet, here is how to put it there.

- Press Home on the remote.
- Scroll down to Streaming Channels on the left menu.
- Use the search to find the app you want.
- Highlight it and press OK, then choose Add channel.
- It installs and appears on your home screen with the others.
- Same login, no second bill. If you already pay for Netflix on your phone, the same username and password work on Roku. You do not pay twice.

SIGNING IN

10. Signing In to Your Streaming Services

Adding an app is only half the job; you still sign in to each service with the account you already have. This is where a lot of folks get stuck, so let me make it painless.

- Open the app after it installs.

- Choose Sign In and enter your existing username and password.
- Some apps show a code and a website to enter it on your phone, which is easier than typing on the TV.
- The Roku phone app's keyboard makes typing logins much faster. You only sign in once per app. After that, the app remembers you and opens straight to your shows.

WATCH OUT

No app charges to activate. A real streaming service never asks for a credit card just to sign in on the Roku. If a screen demands that, stop and call me.

RANDOM REBOOTS

11. The Roku Reboots on Its Own

If your Roku restarts itself for no clear reason, the cause is almost always power, not a broken stick. Roku sticks pull power from wherever you plugged the cable in, and some spots do not give enough.

- Unplug the USB power cable from the back of the TV.
- Use the wall power brick that came with the Roku instead, plugged into a regular outlet.
- If you cannot find the brick, any phone charger brick rated 5V works. The wall brick delivers steadier power than a TV's USB port, and that fixes the large majority of keeps-rebooting complaints. Still rebooting after the wall brick? It may be a hardware issue with the stick itself. A new one is \$35, sometimes simpler than chasing it. I keep spares on the truck. (330) 200-8042.

CHANNEL NOT AVAILABLE

12. An App Says This Channel Is No Longer Available

This message usually means the app maker ended support for your Roku model.

The Streaming Stick 4K is fairly new and gets all the apps, but older Roku models can lose access as services update. The fix is the same either way. Try re-installing it, and if it is simply gone for your model, that tells you the device is aging.

- Open Streaming Channels on the home screen.
- Search for the channel by name.
- If it appears, re-install it.
- If it does not appear at all, that app is gone for your Roku model. Not sure if your Roku is too old? Read me the model number off the back, or send a photo, and I will let you know. A current Streaming Stick 4K is \$35 and brings everything back. (330) 200-8042.

SOFTWARE UPDATES

13. Keeping the Roku Up to Date

Roku sends out free updates that fix bugs, add features, and, as we saw, cure a lot of Wi-Fi drops. It usually updates on its own, but you can check any time.

- Go to Settings, System, System update, Check now.
- If an update is waiting, let it download and install.
- The Roku restarts itself when it finishes; that is normal.
- Leave it powered during the update; do not unplug midway.
- Check for an update when things act up. Before you assume something is broken, run a quick update check. It clears up more glitches than you would expect.

THE HOME SCREEN

14. Getting Around the Home Screen

The Roku home screen is your starting point for everything. A little tidying makes it much easier to find what you actually watch.

- Press Home any time to return to this screen.
- Your apps sit in a grid; the arrow keys move the highlight around.
- To move an app, highlight it, press the star or options button, and choose Move.
- Put your most-watched apps in the top row so they are easy to reach.
- Arrange it for your habits. Move the two or three apps you use most to the very top. It saves you hunting every single night.

EASIER TO SEE AND HEAR

15. Making the Roku Easier to See and Hear

Roku has accessibility settings built in to help if the text is small or the sound is hard to follow. They are free and easy to turn off again. You will find these under Settings, then Accessibility, on the Roku home screen.

- A text-size option makes on-screen menus larger and easier to read.
- A screen reader can speak menu items aloud as you move.
- Captions put the words on screen for shows that offer them.
- Turn these on one at a time and keep only what helps you.
- Captions plus the headphone jack are a great pair. Turn on captions and use the remote's headphone jack, and even a hard-to-hear show becomes easy to follow.

EVERYDAY CARE

16. Everyday Care and Upkeep

A Roku Stick asks almost nothing of you once it is set up. A few small habits keep it happy for years.

- Use the wall brick for steady power instead of the TV's USB port.
- Give the stick a little air; tucked-in sticks can run warm.
- Let updates install so the apps keep working.
- After a power outage, check that it reconnected to Wi-Fi.
- Keep your Roku account email and password written down safely.

WATCH OUT

Check it after a storm. An Ohio storm can knock out power or Wi-Fi and leave the Roku offline. After an outage, make sure it reconnected before movie night.

ACCOUNTS AND PRIVACY

17. Your Roku Account and Staying Safe

Your free Roku account ties your apps to you, and a couple of simple habits keep it, and your wallet, safe.

- Keep your Roku account email and password written down safely.
- You can set a PIN so no one can add paid channels or make purchases without it.
- Ignore on-screen pop-ups that push you to call a support number.
- Only add channels through Roku's own Streaming Channels store. See a scary support pop-up or a surprise charge? Do not call the number on the screen; those are scams. Call me instead and I will tell you what is real. (330) 200-8042.

18. Finding a Remote That Has Wandered Off

Lost the remote in the couch cushions? Roku can help you find it.

A Roku remote has a way of disappearing between the sofa cushions, under a newspaper, or into the next room with a grandchild. The good news is that Roku built in a way to make certain remotes chirp out loud so you can follow the sound and dig them out. Whether your particular remote can do this depends on the model, but it costs you nothing to check, and when it works it is a small miracle.

The most dependable way to trigger it is the free Roku phone app. Once the app is connected to your Roku on the same Wi-Fi, open the Devices area, choose your Roku, and look for an option to ping or find the remote. If your remote has a little speaker built in, it will play a sound for up to a minute. When you hear it, press any button on the remote to make it hush.

- 1 Open the free Roku app on your phone, on the same Wi-Fi as the Roku.
- 2 Tap Devices, then tap your Roku.
- 3 Look for Ping Remote, or open the remote settings and choose Find Remote.
- 4 Follow the chirping sound until you find it, then press any button to stop it.

Some fancier Roku remotes, called the Voice Remote Pro, will also respond when you simply say, out loud, Hey Roku, where is my remote. And a few Roku players, like the Roku Ultra box, have a small physical button on the device itself that sets off the chirp. The plain remote that comes with a Streaming Stick usually does not have the speaker, so if nothing chirps, that is likely why.

GOOD TO KNOW

A dead battery means no chirp. The finder cannot make a remote beep if its batteries are flat or it is out of Wi-Fi range. If it stays silent, fall back on the phone app as your remote and buy fresh batteries.

19. Listening Privately Through Your Phone

No headphone jack on your remote? Your phone can still give you private sound.

We already talked about the headphone jack on the side of many Roku remotes. But not every Roku remote has that jack, and some folks would rather use the wireless earbuds they already own. There is a second way to get that lovely private late-night sound, and it runs through the free Roku app on your phone. Roku calls it Private Listening, and once you know it is there, you will use it often.

- 1 Install the free Roku app on your phone and connect it to your Roku on the same Wi-Fi.
- 2 Open the app and tap the Remote button to bring up the on-screen remote.
- 3 Tap the headphones icon near the top.
- 4 Plug wired headphones into your phone, or connect your wireless earbuds to the phone first, and the TV sound comes through them.

The sound travels from the Roku, over your Wi-Fi, to your phone, and out to whatever headphones your phone is using. The TV speakers go quiet, just like with the remote jack.

A nice bonus: more than one person can do this at the same time, each with their own phone and earbuds, so two people can watch the same late show without waking the house.

Some newer Roku devices can also pair Bluetooth headphones directly, without the phone in the middle. If yours supports it, you will find it under Settings, then Remotes and devices, then a wireless headphones or Bluetooth option. If that menu is not there, your model simply does not offer it, and the phone-app method works just as well.

WATCH OUT

A tiny delay with wireless. Wireless earbuds can lag a split second behind the picture, so lips may look slightly out of sync. Wired headphones, in the phone or the remote jack, stay perfectly in time.

20. Searching by Voice and Finding Something to Watch

Stop pecking out letters. Just press the button and say what you want.

Typing a show name one letter at a time with the arrow keys is nobody's idea of fun. Most Roku remotes have a microphone built in so you can just say what you are after. If your remote has a microphone button, usually marked with a small microphone picture, press and hold it, say the name of a show, an actor, or even a kind of movie, and let it go. Roku shows you where that title is playing.

You do not have to talk like a robot. Try plain requests such as Find westerns, Play the news, or Show me Tom Hanks movies. Roku searches across the apps you have, so it might tell you a film is on Netflix and also free on The Roku Channel. That is handy, because the same movie can cost money in one app and be free in another.

- Press and hold the microphone button, then speak naturally.
- Roku searches across many apps at once and lists where each title plays.
- You can also ask it to open an app, turn on captions, or jump to a channel.
- If your remote has no microphone, the free phone app has a voice search button instead.

When you are not sure what to watch, the left-hand menu has a What to Watch area and The Roku Channel, which carries a large library of free, ad-supported movies and shows, plus some free live channels. It costs nothing and needs no extra sign-in. It is a pleasant place to land on a quiet evening when nothing on your paid apps appeals.

GOOD TO KNOW

Free does not mean a catch. The Roku Channel is genuinely free and built in. It pays its way with commercials, the same as old-fashioned broadcast TV, so there is no bill and no card to enter.

21. Making the Roku Remote Run Your TV Too

One remote for power and volume means one less clicker on the coffee table.

Here is a trick that clears clutter off the coffee table. Many Roku remotes, the ones with a power button and a volume rocker on the side, can control your television directly. That means one remote turns the TV on, adjusts the volume, and runs your streaming, so the TV's own remote can go in a drawer. If your Roku remote has those extra buttons, it is worth setting up.

- 1 Go to Settings, then Remotes and devices, then Remotes.
- 2 Choose your remote, then pick Set up remote for TV control.
- 3 Follow the prompts; Roku will ask you to confirm it can change the volume and turn the TV off and on.
- 4 Once set, the power and volume buttons on the Roku remote control the TV itself. Once this is working, pressing the power button usually wakes both the TV and the Roku together, and drops you right on your apps. Many TVs also switch themselves to the Roku's input automatically when it wakes up, so you skip the whole input-hunting dance. This relies on a feature your TV may call 1-Touch Play, Anynet+, Bravia Sync, or simply HDMI-CEC, and it is usually turned on in the TV's own settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

The plain remote without side buttons. The simplest Roku remotes have no volume or power buttons at all. If yours does not, it cannot run the TV, and that is normal, not a fault.

22. Restarting the Roku and a Full Reset

A fresh restart fixes many glitches. A full reset is for a clean start.

When an app acts strangely, the picture stutters, or the Roku just feels slow, a simple restart clears most of it. A restart does not sign you out of anything or lose your apps; it just gives the little computer a fresh start, the way turning a cranky device off and on so often does. You never need to pull the plug for this; there is a menu for it.

- 1 Press Home, then go to Settings.
- 2 Choose System, then System restart.
- 3 Confirm, and let the Roku power down and come back on its own.
- 4 Give it a minute to reconnect to Wi-Fi before you start watching.

A full factory reset is a different, bigger step. It wipes everything, your Wi-Fi, your account link, and all your signed-in apps, and returns the stick to how it came from the store. You only need this if you are giving the Roku away, selling it, or passing on a TV that has it plugged in, so the next person starts clean and your logins do not travel with it.

You will find it under Settings, then System, then Advanced system settings, then Factory reset. It asks you to confirm, sometimes with a code on screen, so it cannot happen by accident. After a reset the Roku starts over at the very first setup screen, exactly like a brand-new one out of the box.

WATCH OUT

Do not factory reset to fix a glitch. A factory reset means signing back in to every app from scratch. For everyday problems, a plain System restart is almost always the right tool. Save the full reset for giving the device away.

23. Keeping the Bill Down and Setting a Spending PIN

A few settings stop surprise charges and keep little hands from running up a tab.

The Roku store makes it very easy to rent a movie or sign up for a channel with one press of a button. That is convenient, but it also means a curious grandchild, or an accidental press, can start a charge. Roku lets you lock purchases behind a PIN, a short number only you know, so nothing gets bought or added without it. This is one of the smartest five minutes you can spend.

The PIN is set on the Roku website, not on the TV, under your account's PIN preferences. You can require the PIN for every purchase, or for purchases and adding any channel. Pick whichever fits your household. Once it is on, the Roku asks for those numbers before any money changes hands, which is a quiet relief when the family visits.

- Sign in at the Roku account website and open the PIN preferences.
- Choose to require a PIN for purchases, or for purchases and adding channels.
- Write the PIN down somewhere safe, apart from the TV.
- Remember that many channels have their own separate subscription you manage inside that app.

It also pays to know the difference between free and paid channels in the store. Adding Netflix or Prime to your Roku costs nothing; you only pay those services their own monthly fee, through them, as you always have. But some channels in the store are subscriptions Roku can bill you for directly. The PIN is what keeps those from slipping on unnoticed.

TIP

Check your subscriptions now and then. On the Roku website, under your account, you can see every channel you are paying for through Roku. It is a good yearly habit to glance at that list and cancel anything you no longer watch.

24. Saving Data, the Screen Saver, and Bandwidth

A few quiet settings that help a slower internet connection keep up.

If your internet is on the slower side, or the picture keeps stopping to buffer, a couple of settings can ease the strain. Roku has a Bandwidth saver that gently lowers how much internet a show pulls, which can mean the difference between smooth watching and constant spinning circles on a thin connection. It trades a little picture sharpness for far fewer interruptions, a bargain most people are happy to make.

- Bandwidth saver lives under Settings, then Network; turning it on helps a slow connection.
 - The screen saver, under Settings, Theme or Screen saver, protects the TV when the Roku sits idle.
 - You can set how long the Roku waits before the screen saver starts.
 - Auto power savings can put the Roku to sleep after a set time to save a little electricity.
- The screen saver is worth a mention of its own. When you pause a show and step away, or leave the Roku sitting on a menu, the screen saver drifts in after a few minutes. This is not just pretty; on some televisions it helps avoid a faint ghost of a still image getting burned into the screen. You can choose from different screen savers, including a tidy clock, under the Theme settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

Buffering is usually the internet, not the Roku. When a show keeps pausing to load, the stick is almost never broken. It is waiting on your Wi-Fi. Bandwidth saver, moving the router closer, or a wired connection all help.

25. Taking Your Roku on the Road

A Roku Stick travels well, but hotel Wi-Fi needs one extra step.

A Roku Streaming Stick is small enough to toss in a bag, and it can turn a hotel-room or vacation-rental TV into your own familiar setup, with all your apps and logins. There is just one wrinkle. Hotel and many public Wi-Fi networks do not let you simply type a password; they first show a page in a web browser where you agree to terms or enter a room number. A TV cannot easily show that page, so Roku has a special Hotel and dorm connect mode for exactly this.

- 1 Plug the Roku into the hotel TV's HDMI port and switch to that input.
- 2 When it asks about Wi-Fi, choose the Hotel and dorm connect option.
- 3 The Roku shows a web address and a code; open that address on your phone or laptop.
- 4 Finish the hotel's sign-in page there, and the Roku joins the network.

A few practical notes. The hotel TV must have an HDMI port you can reach, and some wall-mounted hotel sets hide or lock their ports. Bring the wall power brick, since many hotel TVs have no spare USB port. And your streaming apps will still want you signed in, so having the phone app handy for typing passwords makes the whole thing painless.

WATCH OUT

Sign out before you leave a shared TV. If you ever use your Roku account on a TV that is not yours, remember your logins stay signed in. Take your own stick home, and never leave your accounts behind on someone else's set.

26. When the Picture Is Fuzzy or Not as Sharp as It Should Be

A 4K Roku deserves a 4K picture. A couple of checks make sure you are getting it.

If you bought a Streaming Stick 4K and the picture looks soft, or no better than before, a few things are usually behind it. First, the television itself has to be a 4K set, sometimes called Ultra HD, to show the sharpest picture; a 4K stick in an older regular HD TV still works beautifully but cannot make the TV sharper than it was built to be. That is not a fault, just the limit of the screen.

Second, the Roku has a display check that confirms it is sending the best picture your TV can take. It is worth running once, right after setup, so you know you are getting everything you paid for. The Roku looks at the HDMI port and the TV and tells you plainly what it can

do.

- 1 Press Home, go to Settings, then Display type.
- 2 Let the Roku auto-detect, and read what it reports, such as 4K HDR.
- 3 If it did not land on the best setting, choose it manually and check the picture.
- 4 Go to Settings, then System, then Advanced, and run the 4K or HDR connection check if offered.

Third, a tired or very cheap HDMI cable or port can hold things back, though with a stick that plugs straight in, the port matters more than a cable. On many TVs only one or two HDMI ports fully support 4K, sometimes labeled with words like HDMI 1 (4K) on the back. If the picture is soft, trying a different HDMI port can genuinely help.

GOOD TO KNOW

Buffering is not the same as fuzzy. A show that starts blurry and then sharpens after a few seconds is your internet catching up, not a setting. That clears on its own; a steadily soft picture is what the checks above are for.

27. A Few More Honest Answers

The smaller questions about the Roku that come up again and again.

Q: Does the Roku cost a monthly fee by itself? No. The Roku device and its own home screen are free to use. You only pay for the streaming services you choose, like Netflix or Prime, and those are billed by them, not by Roku. Plenty of people happily run a Roku on nothing but free apps like The Roku Channel, Tubi, Pluto, and YouTube.

Q: Will a Roku work on my old tube television? Most likely not on its own. A Roku needs an HDMI port, the slim rectangular connector found on flat-screen TVs made in roughly the last fifteen years. The very old sets with only round red, white, and yellow plugs do not have HDMI, so a Roku stick cannot plug in without an adapter that often is not worth the bother.

- Q: Can two people use the same Roku? Yes. One Roku account serves the whole household, and each streaming app keeps its own profiles inside it.
- Q: Why did an app move or disappear from my grid? Apps can update or be retired; re-adding it from Streaming Channels usually brings it back.
- Q: Do I need the newest Streaming Stick? Not if yours still gets its apps. Upgrade when an app is retired for your model or it feels sluggish.

- Q: Is a Roku account safe to make? Yes, it is Roku's own free account; just use a password you keep written down safely.

Q: My Roku shows a screen asking for a credit card to continue, is that real? Be very careful here. Roku itself may ask for a card once, when you set up your account, to make renting easy, and you can often skip that. But a pop-up demanding payment to unlock the device, or a phone number to call for support, is a scam. When in doubt, stop and call me.

TIP

When something seems wrong, start simple. Four out of five Roku problems clear up with fresh batteries, a System restart, or moving the stick closer to the router. Try those before you ever assume the device has failed.

28. Getting Back Online After New Internet or a New Router

When your internet company swaps the box, the Roku needs its new Wi-Fi name and password.

One of the most common calls I get sounds like a mystery: the Roku worked fine for years, and now it will not load a thing. Nine times out of ten, the internet company sent a new modem or router, and the Wi-Fi name or password changed with it. The Roku is still looking for the old network, which no longer exists, so it simply cannot reach your shows.

The fix is to point the Roku at the new network. You do not reset the whole device or lose any of your apps. You just teach it the new Wi-Fi, the same way you did when it was brand new. Have the new network name and password in hand before you start; they are usually printed on a sticker on the new box.

- 1 Press Home, then open Settings and choose Network.
 - 2 Choose Set up connection, then Wireless.
 - 3 Pick your new Wi-Fi network name from the list.
 - 4 Type the new password carefully, minding your capital letters, and wait for it to confirm.
- If the old network name still shows in the list and will not connect, that is normal; just select the new one instead. Your apps, logins, and Roku account are all tied to the device, not the Wi-Fi, so none of that is affected. Once it connects to the new network, everything comes right back exactly as it was.

WATCH OUT

Keep the same name to skip all of this. If you ever replace a router yourself, ask the installer to set the new Wi-Fi name and password to match the old one. Then every device in the house, Roku included, reconnects on its own with nothing to change.

29. Turning On Captions and Making Them Easy to Read

Words on the screen, in a size and style that suits your eyes, for any show that offers them.

Captions put the spoken words on screen as text, and they help far more people than just those who are hard of hearing. Fast talkers, mumbled lines, heavy accents, and noisy scenes all become easy to follow. The Roku can turn captions on for everything, and, better still, it lets you make them bigger, bolder, and easier on the eyes.

There are two parts to this. First you switch captions on, and then, if the standard small white text is hard to read, you change how they look. Both live in the same corner of the settings, and you can adjust them while a show plays so you see the change right away. Nothing here costs anything or is hard to undo.

- 1 Press Home, open Settings, then Accessibility, then Captions mode.
- 2 Choose On always, so captions show whenever a program offers them.
- 3 Go to Caption style to change the text size, color, and background.
- 4 Try a larger size and a solid dark background behind the words for the clearest reading.

A few shows have their own separate caption switch inside the app, so if captions do not appear on one particular service, look in that app's own playback menu too. But the Roku-wide setting covers the large majority of what you watch, and once you tune the style to your liking, it stays that way for good.

TIP

Captions and the headphone jack together. Turn on captions and plug wired headphones into the remote's jack, and a hard-to-hear show becomes easy twice over: loud and clear in your ears, and spelled out on the screen.

30. Sending Photos, Music, and Video From Your Phone

The free Roku app can throw your own pictures and videos up onto the big screen.

The free Roku phone app does more than work as a spare remote. It has a feature called Play on Roku that sends your own photos, music, and home videos from the phone straight to the television. It is a lovely way to share grandchildren's pictures or a vacation video with everyone in the room, instead of passing a small phone around the couch.

- 1 Open the free Roku app on your phone, connected to the same Wi-Fi as the Roku.
- 2 Look for the Photos+ or Play on Roku button in the app.
- 3 Choose photos, a video, or music from your phone.
- 4 It plays on the TV; use the phone to move between pictures or pause.

The phone becomes the controller once it is playing. You swipe to the next photo, start and stop a video, or skip a song, all from your hand while the TV does the showing. Your phone and the Roku must be on the same home Wi-Fi for the two to find each other, which is the one thing people most often miss.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is not the same as the apps. Play on Roku shows your own personal photos and videos. It does not sign you in to Netflix or anything else. Think of it as holding up your phone's picture album on the big screen for the whole room to enjoy.

31. Free Live Channels and the Live TV Guide

The Roku has a cable-style channel guide of free, no-sign-in live channels built right in.

Many Roku owners never notice that their device carries a generous helping of free live television. Through The Roku Channel, there is a Live TV area with a channel guide that works much like the old cable lineup, a grid showing what is on now and next. There are news channels, old shows, movies, weather, and more, and it costs nothing and needs no account.

It is paid for by commercials, exactly like broadcast television always has been, which is why there is no bill and no card to enter. For folks who miss the simple pleasure of flipping through channels to see what is on, rather than hunting through apps, this feels familiar and comfortable. It is a fine place to land on a quiet evening.

- Open The Roku Channel from the home screen, or look for a Live TV row.
- Scroll the on-screen guide to see channels and what is playing now.

- Highlight a channel and press OK to start watching it.
- There is no sign-in and no cost; the channels are supported by ads.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not the same as an antenna. These live channels come over your Wi-Fi, not through an antenna in the attic. The lineup changes over time as channels come and go, and it needs a working internet connection to play, unlike over-the-air local stations.

32. Picking Up Where You Left Off and Saving for Later

The Roku remembers what you started, and can hold a list of things you mean to watch.

Say you fell asleep halfway through a movie, or you spotted a show you want to watch but not tonight. The Roku has two helpers for exactly these moments, both found in the What to Watch area on the home screen. One remembers what you have already started, and the other keeps a list of things you have set aside for later.

The first is a Continue Watching row. It gathers up films and shows you began but did not finish, pulled from the apps that take part, so you can jump straight back to where you stopped without hunting through each app. No more scrolling Netflix trying to remember which episode you were on; it is waiting for you in one place.

- Open What to Watch from the home screen menu.
- The Continue Watching row holds shows you started but have not finished.
- A Save List holds titles you have marked to watch another time.
- To save something, highlight a movie and look for a Save or bookmark option.

The Save List is your own shelf of things to get to eventually. When a trailer or a title catches your eye, save it, and it waits on your list rather than being forgotten by bedtime. You can even add to the list from the Roku phone app, so a film a friend recommends goes on the shelf the moment you hear about it.

TIP

Saving is not buying. Adding a title to your Save List only makes a note to watch it later. It does not rent or buy anything and costs nothing. You still choose where and when to watch when the time comes.

33. Guest Mode: Letting Visitors Sign In Safely

A clever setting lets a houseguest use their own apps, then wipes their logins on a set date.

Here is a thoughtful feature for anyone who hosts family, rents out a room, or has a Roku in a guest house. Guest Mode lets a visitor sign in to their own Netflix or Prime on your Roku, watch their shows during their stay, and then be signed out automatically on a date you choose, taking all their logins and history with them. Your own setup is never touched.

You turn it on from the settings, and the Roku asks for a PIN so a guest cannot switch it off. When the checkout date you picked arrives, the Roku signs the guest out and clears everything they added, their accounts, their viewing history, any apps they installed, so the next person, or you, starts clean. It is privacy and tidiness in one.

- 1 Press Home, open Settings, and look for Guest Mode, sometimes called Auto Sign Out.
- 2 Turn it on and set or enter your Roku PIN.
- 3 When a guest uses the TV, they pick their own checkout date and sign in to their apps.
- 4 On that date, the Roku signs them out and erases their logins and history on its own.

If a guest leaves earlier than planned, you can sign them out ahead of time, either from the TV or from your account on the Roku website. This keeps a guest's streaming accounts from lingering on a television after they have gone home, which is the kind of loose end that is easy to forget and awkward to discover later.

GOOD TO KNOW

Handy for a vacation rental. If you own a cabin or rent a room, Guest Mode means each visitor enjoys their own apps without you sharing your accounts, and everything clears itself when they check out. Set it up once and it quietly minds itself.

WHEN TO CALL BILL**34. When to Skip the DIY and Just Call**

Most of this you can do yourself with a little patience. But some days you would rather just hand it off, and that is perfectly fine. Here are the situations I help with most. Q: I just got a Roku and want it all set up. I will plug it in, get it on Wi-Fi, sign in to all your apps, and show you how to use it. Q: My Roku keeps dropping off Wi-Fi. That is usually a whole-house signal issue. I will survey it and recommend the right fix. Q: It keeps rebooting on its own. Almost always a power issue. I will switch it to a proper wall brick, or swap in a new \$35 stick if needed. Q: My old Roku lost some apps. A current Streaming Stick 4K is \$35 and brings them back. I keep spares on the truck. Flat \$99, and it works before I leave. Whatever the Roku trouble is, I will sort it at your kitchen table. Flat \$99 first visit, 30-day follow-up included. Call (330) 200-8042.

CHEAT SHEET**Everyday Cheat Sheet**

Clip this to the fridge. It is the quick answer to the Roku questions that come up most. I want to... Do this Listen privately Plug wired headphones into the remote's jack Use my phone as a remote Install the free Roku app Add an app Home, Streaming Channels, search, Add channel Fix random reboots Use the wall power brick, not the TV's USB Fix Wi-Fi drops Settings, Network, Check connection, then update Re-pair the remote Hold the pairing button inside the battery door Get help Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

The Five Common Fixes

Most Roku gripes end in the first two.

- 1 Remote dead: new batteries, then re-pair it
- 2 Wi-Fi drops: move the stick closer, restart router
- 3 Missing an app: add it from the Roku Channel Store
- 4 **Random reboots: power it from the wall, not TV USB**
- 5 'Channel unavailable': the app was retired — replace it

Weak power from a TV USB port causes most random reboots.

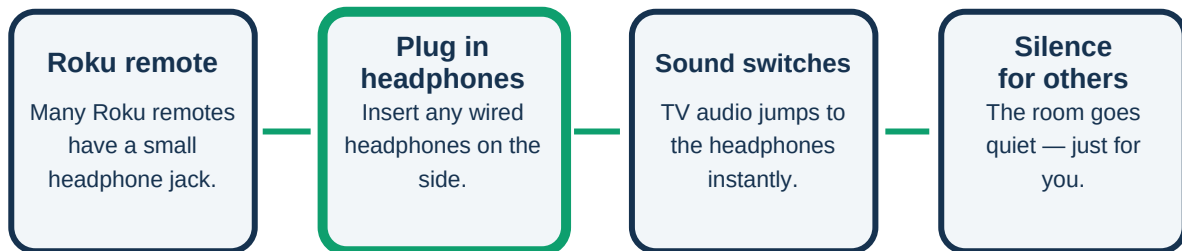
Illustration — steps and menus vary by device. Follow your own on-screen prompts.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

The One Trick: Private Listening

The feature your spouse will love.



One jack turns late-night TV into a private show.

Illustration — details vary by model, home, and app version. Confirm with your own screen.

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**

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