

Free Classes for Older Adults

THE QUICK VERSION

- 1 Look up Senior Planet (from OATS, an AARP affiliate) for free online classes made for older adults.
- 2 Sign up for a beginners' class on a computer or tablet — or join some sessions by regular telephone.
- 3 Note Senior Planet's free technology help hotline so a real person is a phone call away.
- 4 Browse AARP's free how-to articles, webinars, and scam-safety help — much is open to all.
- 5 Ask your library or senior center about free in-person classes close to home.
- 6 It is all free — the real programs never ask for a credit card to teach you.

Stuck? Call or text Bill — real help, no rushing.

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Senior Planet & AARP: Free Tech and Life Classes for Older Adults

Senior Planet and AARP -- free, patient technology and life classes made just for you

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1914 · NO. LE-24 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

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WELCOME

1. Read this first — these classes are free, and they are for you

There are whole organizations whose job is to teach older adults technology, patiently and for free — no sales pitch, no catch.

Here is the one idea this whole guide rests on: you do not have to figure technology out alone, and you do not have to pay to learn it. There are respected organizations — Senior Planet and AARP chief among them — that offer free classes, free phone help, and friendly events designed from the ground up for older adults. Not rushed, not condescending, just patient teaching.

Everything in this guide is genuinely free. These are nonprofits and member organizations doing exactly what they set out to do: help older adults feel confident and capable with phones, computers, and the internet. There is no trick, no credit card, and no judgment for any question you might ask.

I am Bill, from Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I love teaching folks one-on-one, but I cannot be everywhere — and these free programs are a wonderful companion to a home visit. This guide shows you what they offer and how to join in, all without spending a dime or leaving your chair.

TIP

If you have ever felt too shy to ask a 'silly' question about your phone or computer, these programs are built precisely for you. There are no silly questions here — that is the whole point of them.

THE SHORT VERSION

2. The short version

A few free ways to learn, from a live class to a phone call.

- 1 Senior Planet (from Older Adults Technology Services, an AARP affiliate) runs free online classes on phones, computers, and the internet.
- 2 You can join a Senior Planet class on a computer or tablet, or in some cases listen by regular telephone.
- 3 Senior Planet also runs a free technology help hotline you can call to ask a question.
- 4 AARP offers free tech help, how-to articles, and webinars through its website — membership is not required for much of it.
- 5 Your public library and local senior center very likely offer free in-person tech classes too.
- 6 All of it is free; the genuine programs never ask you for a credit card to learn.

GOOD TO KNOW

Schedules, class lists, and phone numbers change over time, so the surest way to find the current offerings is the Senior Planet and AARP websites, or a quick call to your local library or senior center.

WHO THEY ARE

3. Who Senior Planet and AARP are

Two trusted names, both on your side.

Senior Planet is a program of Older Adults Technology Services, known as OATS, which is an affiliate of AARP. Its whole mission is helping people age with confidence using technology, and it has been doing it for years through free classes, articles, and community programs made specifically for older adults.

AARP, which many people know for its magazine and member benefits, also puts a great deal into helping older adults with technology — free how-to guides, online workshops, and tech-help resources. A good deal of this is open to everyone, member or not. Between the two, there is a large, trustworthy body of free help aimed squarely at folks who did not grow up with this stuff.

Because these are established, reputable organizations rather than random websites, you can trust that they are genuinely trying to help you — not to sell you something or get at your information.

WHAT SENIOR PLANET OFFERS

4. What Senior Planet offers

Free classes, live and friendly, on the things that trip people up.

Senior Planet's heart is its free classes. They cover the everyday things people most want help with: getting comfortable with a smartphone or tablet, using the internet safely, video-calling the grandchildren, online banking without worry, fitness, and more. The classes are taught gently, at a pace meant for learning, not for showing off.

Classes are typically offered live and online, so you can join from home, and many are part of a series so you can build up skill over several sessions. There are also articles and recorded sessions you can read or watch on your own schedule. The emphasis throughout is on patience and dignity — nobody is made to feel behind.

TIP

If a live class feels like a lot to jump into, start with Senior Planet's written articles or a recorded session. You can watch quietly on your own and join a live class once you feel ready.

THE FREE HOTLINE

5. The free technology help hotline

A real person, on the phone, for your tech question.

One of the most useful things Senior Planet offers is a free technology help hotline — a number you can call to ask a trained person about a tech problem or question. For anyone who finds websites and apps overwhelming, being able to simply pick up the phone and talk to a patient human is a genuine comfort.

Because phone numbers and hours can change, look up the current Senior Planet hotline number on their website, or ask your library to help you find it. When you call, have your device nearby and do not be shy about describing the problem in your own words — they are used to every kind of question.

GOOD TO KNOW

Keep the current hotline number written on a card by your phone once you look it up. Having it to hand turns a frustrating tech moment into a quick phone call.

WHAT AARP OFFERS

6. What AARP offers for technology

Guides, workshops, and help, much of it open to all.

AARP's technology resources are broad. On its website you will find plain-language how-to articles on phones, computers, scams, and online safety, along with free online workshops and webinars you can attend from home. There are also videos that walk through common tasks step by step.

AARP is especially strong on staying safe from scams and fraud, which matters enormously for older adults — it runs a well-known fraud-watch resource and a helpline for people worried they have been targeted. Much of this material is available to anyone, not only paying members, so it is worth a look regardless of whether you carry an AARP card.

JOINING A CLASS

7. How to join an online class

Easier than it sounds — usually just a link and a click.

Joining an online class is simpler than many people fear. When you sign up, the organization e-mails you a link. At class time, you click that link, and it opens the class on your computer or tablet — often using a video program like Zoom, where you can see and hear the teacher and they can see and hear you if you wish.

You do not need any special equipment beyond a computer, tablet, or smartphone with an internet connection. You can usually choose whether to turn your own camera on; if you would rather just watch and listen, that is perfectly fine. And if clicking a class link feels daunting the first time, that is exactly the sort of thing I am glad to help you set up.

TIP

Do a practice run before your first class: click the link the organization sends a few minutes early, so you can sort out any sound or camera questions calmly rather than at the last second.

JOINING BY PHONE

8. Joining by telephone if you prefer

No computer? Some classes come to you by phone.

Not everyone has or wants a computer, and these programs know it. Some Senior Planet sessions can be joined by regular telephone — you call a number and listen in, taking part by phone. It is a thoughtful option for anyone who is not ready for video classes but still wants to learn and connect.

Availability of phone-in options varies by class and changes over time, so check when you sign up. Either way, the lesson is the same — the only difference is how you tune in. The important thing is that lacking a computer does not shut you out.

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

9. Learning to stay safe from scams

Among the most valuable free lessons you can take.

A large part of what both Senior Planet and AARP teach is how to stay safe online — how to spot a scam call or e-mail, how to shop and bank without being fooled, and what to do if you think you have been targeted. For older adults, who are too often the target of fraud, these are some of the most valuable free classes there are.

AARP's fraud-watch resources and Senior Planet's safety classes both aim to leave you more confident and less fearful, which is exactly the right goal. Knowing the handful of common tricks takes most of their power away, and these programs teach them plainly, without trying to frighten you.

WATCH OUT

Ironically, scammers sometimes pose as 'tech support' or even as these very organizations. The real programs reach you through their official websites and published numbers — never through a surprise pop-up, a cold call, or a link in a strange e-mail.

LEARNING AT YOUR OWN PACE

10. Learning on your own schedule

Live classes are lovely, but you can also learn alone and unhurried.

Not everyone wants a scheduled class, and that is fine. Both organizations keep large collections of written guides and recorded videos you can go through whenever suits you — at breakfast, late at night, or a little at a time. You can pause, re-read, and repeat as often as you like, with nobody waiting on you.

This self-paced route pairs beautifully with the daily-habit idea from elsewhere in this series: a single short article or video a day builds real confidence over a month without ever feeling like a class. Choose whichever suits your temperament — live and social, or quiet and solo; both lead to the same place.

LOCAL CLASSES TOO

11. Free local classes close to home

Your library and senior center are quietly in this business too.

Alongside the national programs, do not overlook what is right down the road. Public libraries very often run free technology classes and one-on-one 'tech help' appointments, and local senior centers frequently do the same. These have the added warmth of being in person, with a real neighbor to help you.

Here in our area, it is well worth a call to Portage County District Library or your nearest senior center to ask what free tech classes or help sessions they offer. Combining a national program like Senior Planet with a local class or a visit from someone like me gives you help from every angle.

GOOD TO KNOW

Call your local library and simply ask, 'Do you offer any free computer or phone classes, or one-on-one tech help?' Many do, and they are delighted when someone asks.

WHAT YOU NEED**12. What you will need to take part**

Less than you might think — and help to get it if you lack it.

For the online classes and resources, you need a computer, tablet, or smartphone with an internet connection — and a willingness to try, which you clearly have, or you would not be reading this. For the phone-in options, an ordinary telephone is enough. That is the whole list.

If you are missing a device or home internet, your public library fills the gap with free public computers and wifi, and the staff will help you use them. So please do not let 'I do not have the right equipment' talk you out of this. There is a path in for everyone, and these programs have thought hard about making sure of it.

TWO WAYS IN**13. Two ways people come to this — and both are fine**

Building confidence, or chasing one specific skill.

Some folks come to these free classes to build broad, everyday confidence with technology; others come with one specific thing they want to conquer. The programs serve both, so it helps to know which you are as you choose where to start.

If you want general confidence

Technology as a whole feels shaky, and you would like to feel steadier across the board.

- Start with a Senior Planet beginners' series on smartphones or computers and follow it through.
- Add the online-safety classes early — confidence and safety go hand in hand.
- Keep the free hotline number handy for the small questions that come up along the way.

If you have one specific goal

There is a single task — video calls, online banking, a new phone — you want to master.

- Search the class lists and articles for that exact topic and start right there.
- Use the written step-by-step guides so you can follow along at your own device.
- Call the hotline, or me, for the one sticking point that a class does not quite cover.

GOOD TO KNOW

Whichever you are, remember these programs expect beginners. Starting 'behind' is normal here; it is who the classes are made for.

HELPING A RELATIVE

14. Pointing a parent toward free help

A gentle introduction can open a whole new world.

If you have a parent who is nervous with technology and lives too far for you to help in person, these programs are a godsend. Help them find a beginners' class that interests them, get them signed up, and do a practice run of clicking the class link together over the phone. After that, they can attend on their own.

Write the Senior Planet hotline number on a card by their phone, and show them one AARP how-to article so they see how friendly the material is. Knowing there is patient, free help a phone call away does wonders for a parent's confidence — and takes a quiet worry off your shoulders too.

GOOD TO KNOW

The best gift here is often not teaching the skill yourself, but connecting a parent to steady, patient, ongoing help they can reach any time — so they are never stuck and alone.

WHAT THE CLASSES COVER

15. The sorts of things the classes cover

The everyday tasks that trip most of us up.

The classes focus on the things people most often get stuck on, rather than anything fancy. Common topics include getting comfortable with a smartphone or tablet, sending and organizing e-mail, making video calls to family, browsing the internet safely, online shopping and banking without worry, managing photos, and understanding the settings that make a device easier to see and hear.

Because the topics are chosen from what real older adults ask about, you are unlikely to find a class that is over your head or beside the point. If there is a particular task you want to master, search the class lists and articles for it by name — there is very often a session or a written guide devoted to exactly that.

TIP

Make a short list of the specific things you wish you could do — 'video-call my grandson,' 'pay a bill online' — and look for a class or article on each. Naming the goal makes the right class easy to spot.

CLASSES ARE SOCIAL

16. The quiet gift of company

These classes connect you as well as teach you.

There is more to these programs than skills. Joining a class, even online, puts you among other people who are learning the same things, asking the same questions, and sharing the same small triumphs. For anyone who feels a bit isolated, that gentle sense of company can matter as much as the lesson itself.

Senior Planet in particular has long understood that technology is really about staying connected — to family, to interests, to the wider world. So do not be surprised if a class meant to teach you about your phone also leaves you feeling a little less alone. That is by design, and it is a lovely part of the bargain.

RECORDED & WRITTEN

17. Recorded classes and written guides

Learn quietly on your own, any time.

Alongside the live classes, both Senior Planet and AARP keep large libraries of written how-to articles and, often, recorded sessions you can read or watch whenever suits you. If a live class at a set time does not fit your week, or simply feels like too much, these let you learn alone and unhurried.

The written guides are especially handy to keep open beside you while you try a task on your own device — read a step, do it, read the next. You can go as slowly as you like and repeat anything as often as you need, with nobody waiting. Many people warm up with the articles and join a live class only once they feel ready.

TAKING NOTES

18. Getting the most from a class

A pen and a little preparation go a long way.

You will get more from a class if you come to it with your device in hand and a pen and paper beside you. When the teacher shows a step, try it yourself on your own phone or computer as you watch, and jot a quick note for the steps you want to remember. Doing a thing, not just watching it, is what makes it stick.

Do not worry about catching everything the first time; that is what the recordings and articles are for, and you can always take the same class again. The aim is not a perfect performance but a little more confidence than you had before — and that grows class by class.

CONFIDENCE OVER TIME

19. How confidence grows

Each small win makes the next one easier.

The real gift of these programs is not any single skill but the confidence that builds as you go. The first class or call may feel like a big step; the fifth will feel ordinary. Each small success — a video call that works, a scam e-mail you spotted, a photo you shared — quietly teaches you that you can do this, which makes the next thing easier to try.

So give yourself credit for starting, and be patient with the pace. Nobody masters technology in an afternoon, and these programs do not expect you to. Little by little, the shaky feeling gives way to a steady one, and that steadiness is worth far more than any single trick.

OTHER FREE HELP

20. Other free help worth knowing

The help does not stop at these two.

Senior Planet and AARP are the big names, but they are not the only free help. Many public libraries and senior centers run their own technology classes and one-on-one sessions, community centers sometimes host them, and some phone and internet companies offer free basic help to their customers. It is worth asking around locally as well as looking at the national programs.

The point is simply this: free, patient help with technology is more available than most people realize, from more directions than they expect. If one source is not a fit, another very likely is — and a neighbor like me is always an option for help right at your kitchen table.

COMMON MISTAKES

21. Common mistakes

Avoid these and the free help works beautifully.

The few things that trip people up with these programs are all easy to avoid once you know them.

- Assuming the classes cost money and never looking — the genuine ones are free.
- Feeling too embarrassed to join because you think you are 'behind' — that is exactly who they are for.
- Using an old phone number or class list — schedules change, so check the current website.
- Mistaking a scam 'tech support' call for these programs — the real ones use published numbers and sites.
- Trying to learn everything at once instead of one friendly class or article at a time.

TIP

Bookmark the Senior Planet and AARP technology pages on your computer or tablet so you always return to the real sites rather than guessing at an address or trusting a search ad.

COMMON QUESTIONS

22. Common questions

The questions I hear most about these free programs.

Here are the ones that come up most at the kitchen table.

If yours is not here, it is very likely a short answer — and you are always welcome to call and ask me.

QUESTIONS

23. Are these classes really free?

Yes — genuinely free, with no catch.

Senior Planet's classes and hotline are free, and a great deal of AARP's technology material is free to everyone, member or not. These are nonprofits and member organizations doing their stated mission. You never need a credit card to take a class or call the hotline; anything claiming otherwise is not the real program.

QUESTIONS

24. Do I have to be an AARP member?

Not for much of it.

A good deal of AARP's technology how-to material, articles, and many webinars are open to anyone. Senior Planet is a separate program, also free, and does not require AARP membership. Some specific member benefits exist, but you do not need to join anything to start learning from the free resources.

QUESTIONS

25. I am not good with computers. Will I be lost?

No — these are built for beginners.

These programs exist precisely because so many older adults feel exactly that way. The classes assume you are starting fresh, move at a gentle pace, and welcome every question. You will not be the only beginner, and the teachers are chosen for patience. If anything, you are their ideal student.

QUESTIONS

26. What if I do not have a computer?

There is still a way in.

Some Senior Planet sessions can be joined by regular telephone, and your public library offers free computers and wifi along with staff to help you use them. A missing computer is not a locked door here. And for getting set up at home, that is just the sort of thing a visit from me can take care of.

QUESTIONS

27. How do I find the current schedule or phone number?

Go straight to the official websites.

Because class lists, schedules, and phone numbers change over time, the surest source is always the official Senior Planet and AARP websites. If searching for them feels uncertain, your library can help you reach the right pages safely, or I can set up bookmarks so you always land on the real sites.

QUESTIONS

28. Can I take a class with a friend?

Yes — and it often makes it more fun.

Nothing stops two friends or a couple from signing up for the same class and taking it together, each on your own device or side by side on one. Many people find it less daunting and more enjoyable with a companion, and you can help each other remember the steps afterward. Learning alongside someone you know is a fine way to begin.

QUESTIONS

29. What if English is not my first language?

Look for help in your language.

Many resources offer material in more than one language, and some programs run classes or keep guides aimed at particular communities. If English is not your first language, it is worth searching the organizations' sites for your language, or asking your local library, which often knows about multilingual help in the area. You should not have to struggle with both the technology and the language at once.

QUESTIONS

30. Is everything online, or are there in-person options?

Both — and in person is often nearby.

The national programs are largely online, which lets you join from home, but in-person learning is very much alive at the local level. Public libraries and senior centers frequently hold classes and one-on-one help sessions in the building, with a real person beside you. A quick call to your library or senior center will tell you what is offered close to home.

FOR CAREGIVERS

31. A note for family caregivers

These programs lighten your load, too.

If you are the one a parent or relative calls every time the phone acts up, these programs are as much a gift to you as to them. By connecting your loved one to patient, ongoing, free help, you give them a resource that does not depend solely on you — and you take a quiet, recurring worry off your own plate.

Help them get set up once — find a class, note the hotline number, bookmark the official sites — and then let the programs carry some of the load. You remain their favorite helper, of course, but you no longer have to be their only one, which is better for everyone.

QUESTIONS

32. What topics do the classes actually cover?

The everyday things, not the fancy stuff.

The classes focus on practical, everyday tasks: using a smartphone or tablet, e-mail, video calls, the internet, online shopping and banking, photos, staying safe from scams, and the settings that make a device easier to see and hear. They are chosen from what older adults most often ask about, so you are unlikely to find one over your head or beside the point. If you want a specific skill, search the class list for it by name.

QUESTIONS

33. Will I be embarrassed if I am slow?

Not at all — that is who the classes are for.

These programs exist precisely for people who feel slow or behind with technology, so you will be in good, patient company. The teachers are chosen for their patience, the pace is gentle, and every question is welcome. Far from being embarrassed, most people come away surprised at how capable they are once someone explains things kindly and without rushing.

A GOOD FIRST STEP

34. A gentle first step to take today

Start small — one article or one sign-up.

If all of this feels like a lot, take just one small step today. Look up the Senior Planet website and read a single article that interests you, or find one upcoming free class and sign up for it. That is enough for now. You do not need to absorb everything at once; you only need to open one door.

Once you have taken that first small step and seen how friendly and free it all is, the next one comes easily. Confidence is built one gentle step at a time, and the first step — today — is the one that matters most.

GOOD TO KNOW

One small action today — reading one article or signing up for one free class — is worth more than a grand plan for someday. Open one door, and the rest get easier.

KEEP THE INFO HANDY

35. Keeping the key details to hand

A little card by the phone saves a lot of fuss.

Because schedules and numbers change over time, and because a tech question tends to arise at an inconvenient moment, it helps to keep the key details written down where you will find them. Once you look them up, jot the Senior Planet hotline number, the website addresses, and any class times on a card and keep it by the phone or the computer.

That small habit turns a moment of frustration into a quick glance and a phone call, rather than a hunt through the internet when you are already annoyed. Having patient, free help a known phone call away is a real comfort — so make it easy on yourself to reach.

QUESTIONS

36. How much does it all cost in the end?

Nothing — and that is the honest answer.

The Senior Planet classes and hotline are free, and a great deal of AARP's technology material is free to everyone. Your library and senior center classes are free as well. There is no hidden fee waiting at the end, no credit card required to take a class or make a call. Anything presenting itself as these programs and asking for payment is not the real thing — the genuine help is, and stays, free.

A FINAL WORD

37. One gentle last thought

You deserve patient help — and it is out there, for free.

If you take nothing else from this guide, take this: you are not too old, too far behind, or too 'bad with computers' to learn. You simply were not taught this the way younger folks were, and these programs exist to teach it kindly, at your pace, for free. Needing a little help is not a failing; it is the most ordinary thing in the world.

So be gentle with yourself, pick one small thing you would like to feel more confident about, and let Senior Planet, AARP, your library, or a neighbor like me help you with it. Step by patient step, technology stops being a source of worry and becomes just another tool that

works for you — and that steadiness is yours to claim, starting today.

QUICK RECAP

38. The quick recap

The whole guide in one glance.

- Senior Planet (from OATS, an AARP affiliate) offers free online classes for older adults on phones, computers, and the internet.
- Senior Planet also runs a free technology help hotline — a real person on the phone.
- AARP offers free how-to articles, webinars, and scam-safety help, much of it open to all.
- Join classes on a computer or tablet, and sometimes by regular telephone.
- Your library and senior center very likely offer free in-person classes too — just ask.
- It is all free and judgment-free; the real programs never ask for a credit card to teach you.

GOOD TO KNOW

You never have to face technology alone. Between Senior Planet, AARP, your library, and a neighbor like me, there is patient, free help in every direction — you only have to reach for it.

BILL'S HERE TO HELP

39. You do not have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made these free classes and resources feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and do not worry for a moment about memorizing anything.

When you would rather have a hand, that is exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that do not need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I am a patient tech helper, so for getting you signed up and into your first free class I will happily sit with you until it all just works.

GOOD TO KNOW

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you are ever not 100% happy with a visit, I will make it right or refund it. That is a promise. — Bill

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Four Free Ways to Learn

From a live class to a friendly phone call



All free and judgment-free -- made for older adults.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Senior Planet vs. AARP

Two trusted sources of free help

	Senior Planet	AARP
Best for	Live classes	How-to articles
Phone help	Free hotline	Fraud helpline
Join	Online or phone	Website, webinars
Cost	Free	Much free to all

Use both -- plus your local library -- for help from every angle.

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.

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