



An Extended Guide · No. 1611

Managing Loads During a Run

Taking turns so a
smaller unit does more

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — size for safety, not just comfort

Getting the size right is not only about comfort — it is about safety, too. An undersized unit gets overloaded and pushed harder than it should be: it runs hot, it strains, and a motor that can't get the surge it needs can hum, overheat, and be damaged. So take the size seriously and always leave yourself a margin — a little extra room — rather than sizing right to the edge. And one safety rule never changes: any fuel-burning generator gives off carbon monoxide, an invisible, deadly gas, so it runs **OUTDOORS ONLY**, well away from the house (the safety agencies say at least 20 feet), never in a garage or on a porch even with the door open. A battery or power station makes no exhaust and is safe to use indoors. Managing loads by hand means adding them one at a time and turning big things off before you connect them — habits that keep the unit from being overloaded and strained.

Take turns, and a smaller unit does more

Here's a happy secret the ads rarely mention: you don't have to run everything at once. Take turns with your loads and a modest unit can cover a list that looks far too big for it.

I'm Bill. Folks often assume they must buy a generator big enough for the worst possible moment — every motor, every appliance, all at the same instant. But you're the one deciding what's on, and a little hands-on managing lets you size for the moment you'll actually create, not the worst one you can imagine.

This guide teaches that skill: the order to plug things in, when to cycle, when to shed a load, and how to keep it all safe. None of it is hard, and every bit of it lets you buy smaller, lighter, and thriftier.

★ I'll walk you through it in your own kitchen

Managing loads is easiest to learn with someone beside you. I'll show you the startup order and the cycling rhythm, hands-on. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, free, with nothing to sell you.

The whole idea, on one page

If you remember only this page, you already know how to stretch a small unit a long way.

- ❑ Start with nothing plugged in, then add loads one at a time so their surges don't stack up.
- ❑ Turn the unit or the load off before connecting or disconnecting anything big.
- ❑ Cycle between the fridge and the freezer — they hold their cold, so they needn't run at once.
- ❑ Run heavy things one at a time: the microwave, then the hair dryer, then the coffee maker.
- ❑ Watch for strain — bogging, dimming, a tripped breaker — and shed a load before trying again.
- ❑ This hand-managing lets you buy for the managed case, not the worst case — a smaller unit.

✓ The one-sentence version

Add loads one at a time, take turns among the big ones, and shed if it strains — and a modest unit covers a real house.

Buy for the managed case, not the worst case

The whole reason this works comes down to one shift in thinking about what you're sizing for.

Size for the worst case — everything you own running at the same instant, every motor starting together — and you'll buy a big, heavy, thirsty unit for a moment that never actually happens. Size for the managed case — what you'll really have on at any one time, because you're taking turns — and a far smaller unit does the job.

You are the load manager. Every big thing you're willing to run one at a time is a thing you don't have to size for all at once. That choice, made over and over during a run, is what lets a modest generator punch above its weight.

✓ You decide what's on

A generator doesn't turn everything on by itself — you do. So the question isn't 'what could run at once?' but 'what will I choose to run at once?' Manage that, and you can buy smaller.

Move one: add loads one at a time

The single most useful habit is also the simplest: bring things on one at a time, not all in a rush.

Start with nothing plugged in and the unit running steadily. Then add one load, let it settle, and add the next. Motors draw a big jolt the instant they start, so if you switch several on together their surges stack up and can overwhelm a unit that would run them all just fine once they're going.

By adding them singly, each jolt passes before the next arrives, and the unit only ever faces one surge at a time. Our [running-watts-versus-starting](#) guide explains why that starting jolt is so much bigger than the steady draw.

✓ Let each thing settle before the next

A few seconds' pause between loads is all it takes. Plug in the fridge, wait for it to settle, then add the lamps — calm and unhurried beats a handful of cords all at once.

Move two: off before you connect big loads

A small safety habit that spares your gear and your nerves: switch things off before you plug or unplug anything big.

Before connecting or disconnecting a heavy load, turn the appliance off — or the unit, for the biggest ones — so power isn't flowing through the plug at the moment it meets the socket. That avoids a sharp spark and spares both the appliance and the generator the little shock of a live connection.

Then switch the load on once it's connected and settled. It's the same courtesy you'd give any motor: don't slam it on mid-stream.

! Connect cold, then switch on

Make the plug connection with the load switched off, then turn it on. Pulling a live, heavy plug can spark and pit the contacts — and startle you. Off first, every time.

Move three: cycle the fridge and freezer

Your fridge and freezer are secretly patient. They hold their cold for a good while, which lets you take turns instead of running both nonstop.

Because a closed fridge or freezer coasts on the cold it already has, you can run one for a spell, then switch to the other. Keep the doors shut while they're off and they'll hold temperature far longer than folks expect. That means two big compressors never have to run on your unit at the same moment.

Our guide on sizing for your refrigerator and freezer covers how long each stays safely cold — a fridge for a few hours, a full freezer far longer — so you can cycle with confidence and keep your food safe.

✓ Doors shut, cold kept

The golden rule while cycling is simple: keep the doors closed. Every peek lets cold out and shortens how long each can safely coast with the power off.

Move four: run heavy things one at a time

The big power-hungry helpers around the house are fine on a modest unit — as long as you don't run two of them together.

A microwave, a hair dryer, a coffee maker, a toaster, an iron, a portable heater — each can lean hard on a small unit for the few minutes it's on. Run them one at a time and each has all the room it needs. Try two at once and you may tip the unit over its limit.

So make it a rhythm: heat your coffee, then dry your hair, then make the toast — in sequence, not all together. A few minutes' patience is a small price for a smaller generator.

✓ One heavy helper at a time

Before you switch on a second power-hungry appliance, ask whether the first has finished. Taking turns among the heavy hitters is where a lot of the savings live.

Move five: shed a load when it strains

Even with careful planning, now and then you'll ask a bit too much. The unit will tell you — and the fix is quick.

- ❑ The engine bogs down or the note changes to a labored growl.
- ❑ The lights dim or flicker when a motor tries to start.
- ❑ A breaker on the unit trips, or a power station flashes an overload warning.
- ❑ A motor hums and struggles instead of catching.

! Shed first, then try again — don't force it

At any of these signs, turn something off to free up room, then try the stubborn load again. Forcing a strained unit over and over can overheat it and the motor it's fighting to start. If it keeps happening even with little else on, the unit may simply be too small.

What an evening of taking turns looks like

It sounds like a lot to keep track of, but in practice it settles into an easy rhythm. Here's a typical evening.

- You start the unit outside, well away from the house, and bring in one heavy-duty cord.
- First the fridge goes on. You let it settle, then add a couple of lamps and the internet box.
- Supper time: you pause anything heavy, run the microwave on its own, then switch back.
- Overnight, you let the freezer coast with its door shut and keep just a light and the furnace going.
- Morning: coffee maker first, then — once it's done — the hair dryer, one after the other.

✓ It becomes second nature fast

The first evening takes a little thought; by the second, you're taking turns without noticing. It's a rhythm, not a chore.

By hand versus automatic

What you're doing by hand is exactly what an expensive standby system does on its own. Knowing the difference helps you choose.

A whole-home standby generator uses automatic load management — smart modules or a clever transfer switch that briefly drop or stagger big loads so they never all run at once. That's the same taking-turns idea, done by machinery instead of by you, which is why a right-sized standby can serve a big house.

Managing by hand is the do-it-yourself version: a little attention in exchange for a much smaller, less expensive unit. Our guide on sizing a standby generator with load management covers the automatic route, if hands-off is worth it to you.

✓ Same idea, different helper

Whether a person or a module does the shedding, the principle is identical: don't let the big loads pile on all at once. You can buy the automation, or you can be it.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Taking turns looks a little different in town than out on a well — and on a well, one clever move does most of the heavy lifting.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or a tighter suburban lot, cycling is mostly about the kitchen and comfort. City water keeps flowing, so there's no pump to juggle — just the fridge, the freezer, and the occasional heavy helper.

- Cycle the fridge and freezer, and run the microwave or a window air conditioner one at a time.
- Keep a couple of lamps and the internet box going steadily — they draw little and never surge.
- Save the coffee maker and hair dryer for their own turn, not alongside another heavy load.
- A modest portable or a good-sized battery covers this easily when you take turns.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a well, the big move is 'fill and coast': run the well pump to fill the pressure tank, then shut it off and run other things while the tank feeds the house. That single habit lets a modest unit serve a well home.

- Run the pump on its own to pressurize the tank, then switch it off before starting the microwave or dryer.
- The pressure tank feeds your taps for a while with the pump resting, so you rarely need the pump and a heavy load together.
- Cycle the chest freezer alongside, and keep the furnace blower going through a cold night.
- Our well-pump guide covers the pump's big surge; managing it by hand is how a smaller unit copes.

★ On a well, 'fill and coast' is the whole trick

Running the pump to fill the tank, then shutting it off to run other things, is the move that lets a modest unit serve a well home. Tell me your setup and I'll help you build the rhythm. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Fill and coast — the well-home move

This one deserves its own page, because for a home on a well it's the difference between a small unit that copes and one that can't.

Your well system has a pressure tank that holds water under pressure. When you run the pump, it fills and pressurizes that tank; once it's full, the tank keeps water flowing to your taps for a while with the pump switched off. So you don't need the pump running constantly — you need it now and then to top the tank up.

The move, then, is to run the pump by itself to fill the tank, shut it off, and only then fire up the microwave, the dryer, or another heavy load. The pump's big surge and your other big loads never have to land on the unit at the same moment.

✓ Top up, shut off, then carry on

Think of the pressure tank as a bucket you fill when the coast is clear. Fill it with the pump alone, shut the pump off, and run everything else while the bucket lasts.

What managing loads buys you in sizing

All this taking turns has a concrete payoff at the store: it shrinks the unit you need to buy.

Because you never demand your whole list at once, you can size for the managed case — and that means a smaller, lighter, quieter generator, one that's easier to move, cheaper to buy, and thriftier with fuel. Or a battery with a more modest power rating. The attention you spend during a run is money and muscle saved up front.

It pairs naturally with leaving a sensible cushion. You still want a little headroom above the managed case, so a surprise motor doesn't tip you over — our margin-and-headroom guide covers finding that comfortable middle.

✓ Attention now, savings up front

A willingness to take turns is worth real money and real weight. It's the closest thing to a free upgrade in the whole sizing business.

The honest cost: a little attention

Managing loads isn't free — it asks something of you during an outage. It's worth being honest about whether that trade suits you.

Taking turns means being present and hands-on: plugging things in, switching between the fridge and freezer, remembering to fill the tank before the dryer. For most folks that's an easy trade for a smaller, cheaper unit. But if bending to reach cords is hard, or you're often away, or you'd simply rather not think about it, that changes the math.

If hands-on isn't for you, that's a fair reason to size up to run more at once, or to consider managed circuits or an automatic standby. There's no wrong answer — only the one that fits your life.

✓ Be honest about your own comfort

If the taking-turns rhythm sounds tiring rather than simple, factor that in. A slightly bigger unit — or automation — may be worth it for the ease during an outage.

Keeping the whole routine safe

Managing loads means heading out to the unit and back through the run, so a couple of safety habits deserve a place in the rhythm.

Every trip out to add or shed a load is a reminder of the one rule that never changes for a fuel-burning unit, and of the small habit that spares your gear.

! Outdoors only, and connect cold

A fuel-burning generator gives off carbon monoxide — invisible and deadly — so it runs outdoors only, well away from the house (the safety agencies say at least 20 feet), never in a garage or on a porch even with the door open. And switch big loads off before you connect them. A battery or power station makes no exhaust and is safe indoors.

With those two habits in place, taking turns is calm, quiet work — the good kind of routine.

Common load-managing mistakes

A handful of slip-ups undo the benefit of taking turns. Now you'll spot them coming.

- **Plugging everything in at once**, so a pile of surges hits the unit together and trips it.
- **Running the well pump and a heavy load together**, instead of filling the tank first.
- **Running both the fridge and freezer nonstop**, when cycling would free up room.
- **Connecting big loads live**, instead of switching them off before the plug goes in.
- **Forcing a stubborn start** again and again, rather than shedding a load and easing the unit.

! Forcing an overloaded unit is the costly one

Repeatedly starting a load an overworked unit can't handle can overheat both the unit and the motor. Shed first, then try again — and if it keeps straining, the unit may be undersized for even the managed case.

Handy habits worth building

A few small routines make taking turns effortless. These are the ones I share most often.

Q: What order should I bring things on?

Steady, gentle loads first — lights, the internet box, the fridge — then heavy or motor-driven things one at a time. Big surges last and singly, so nothing has to start against a full load.

Q: How do I remember to cycle the fridge and freezer?

Pick a rhythm you'll keep — switch at meals, say — and keep the doors shut in between. They coast on their cold, so exact timing matters less than not running both at once.

Q: What if two big things really must run together?

Then that pair is your managed-case worst moment, and you size for it. If it happens often, it may be worth a slightly bigger unit or automatic load management.

Q: Can I write myself a cheat sheet?

Absolutely — and I'd encourage it. A short list taped inside a cabinet — startup order, what to cycle, fill the tank first — takes the thinking out of the next outage.

✓ There's no silly question

If the rhythm still feels like a lot to track, that's normal at first. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll practice it together.

A quick self-check at your kitchen table

You can pressure-test your load-managing plan in about a minute with these questions.

- ☐ Do I know the order I'll bring loads on — gentle first, heavy singly?
- ☐ Have I a plan to cycle the fridge and freezer with the doors shut?
- ☐ On a well, will I fill the pressure tank before running heavy loads?
- ☐ Do I know the signs of strain and what I'd turn off first?
- ☐ Am I comfortable with the hands-on part — or should I size up a little?

✓ **If any answer is 'not sure', that's fine**

That's exactly what this guide, and a friendly phone call, are for. Reach me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll build your rhythm together.

Common Questions

The load-managing questions I hear most, answered plainly.

Q: How does taking turns let me buy a smaller generator?

Because you never make it power everything at once. Adding loads one at a time and cycling the big ones means you only ever ask for a slice of your full list — so a smaller, cheaper, thriftier unit covers it.

Q: Why add loads one at a time instead of all together?

Motors draw a big jolt the instant they start. One at a time, each jolt passes before the next — so the surges don't stack up and trip a unit that could easily run them steadily.

Q: What's the single best move for a home on a well?

Fill and coast: run the pump alone to fill the pressure tank, shut it off, then run other heavy things. The pump's big surge and your other loads never land together.

Q: What do I do the moment the unit starts to strain?

Turn something off to free up room, then try the stubborn load again. Don't force it — repeated forcing can overheat the unit and the motor it's fighting to start.

Q: Isn't this just what a standby generator does by itself?

Yes. A standby uses automatic load management to shed and stagger big loads for you. Doing it by hand is the same idea for far less money — see our standby-load-management guide for the automatic version.

★ Want to practice the rhythm together?

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and I'll walk you through startup order, cycling, and fill-and-coast right in your kitchen — with nothing to sell you.

When taking turns isn't enough

Hand-managing does a lot, but it has limits. It's worth knowing when to size up or automate instead.

If two big loads truly must run together often, if reaching cords is hard on you, or if you're frequently away when outages strike, leaning on constant attention isn't fair to yourself. That's the moment to size the unit a little larger, wire up managed circuits, or consider an automatic standby that sheds loads on its own.

Our essentials-versus-whole-home guide weighs those bigger scopes, and our standby-load-management guide covers hands-off automation. Taking turns is a wonderful tool — just not the only one.

★ Not sure where your limit is?

Tell me your loads and how hands-on you want to be, and I'll help you decide whether to manage by hand, size up, or automate. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Bringing it all together

Managing loads by hand turns sizing from 'buy for the worst case' into 'buy for the managed case' — and a smaller unit covers a bigger list.

Start with nothing on, add loads one at a time, connect big things cold, cycle the fridge and freezer, run heavy helpers singly, and shed a load if it strains. On a well, fill and coast. It becomes second nature faster than you'd think.

Our running-watts-versus-starting guide explains the surges you're spacing out, our fridge-and-freezer guide covers cycling the cold safely, and our standby-load-management guide shows the automatic version if hands-off is worth it to you.

★ Let's build your rhythm together

If you'd rather learn it hands-on than read it, that's exactly what I'm here for. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll practice taking turns in your own kitchen — free, with nothing to sell you.

You don't have to do this alone

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

I hope this guide made managing your loads during a generator run 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 don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's 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 don't 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 don't do the licensed electrical or gas work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

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're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

The Three Moves

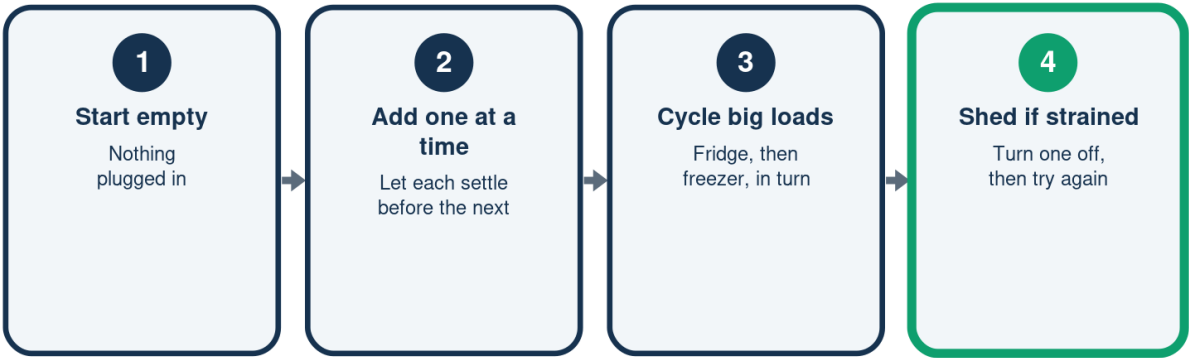
How to make a smaller unit do more

	What you do	Why it helps
Add one at a time	Plug in singly	Surges don't stack
Cycle big loads	Take turns	They hold a while
Shed on strain	Turn one off	Keeps unit happy

Three small habits let a modest unit cover a bigger list.

The Order of a Run

Start empty, then build up gently



Switch big loads off before you connect or disconnect them.

All at Once vs. Taking Turns

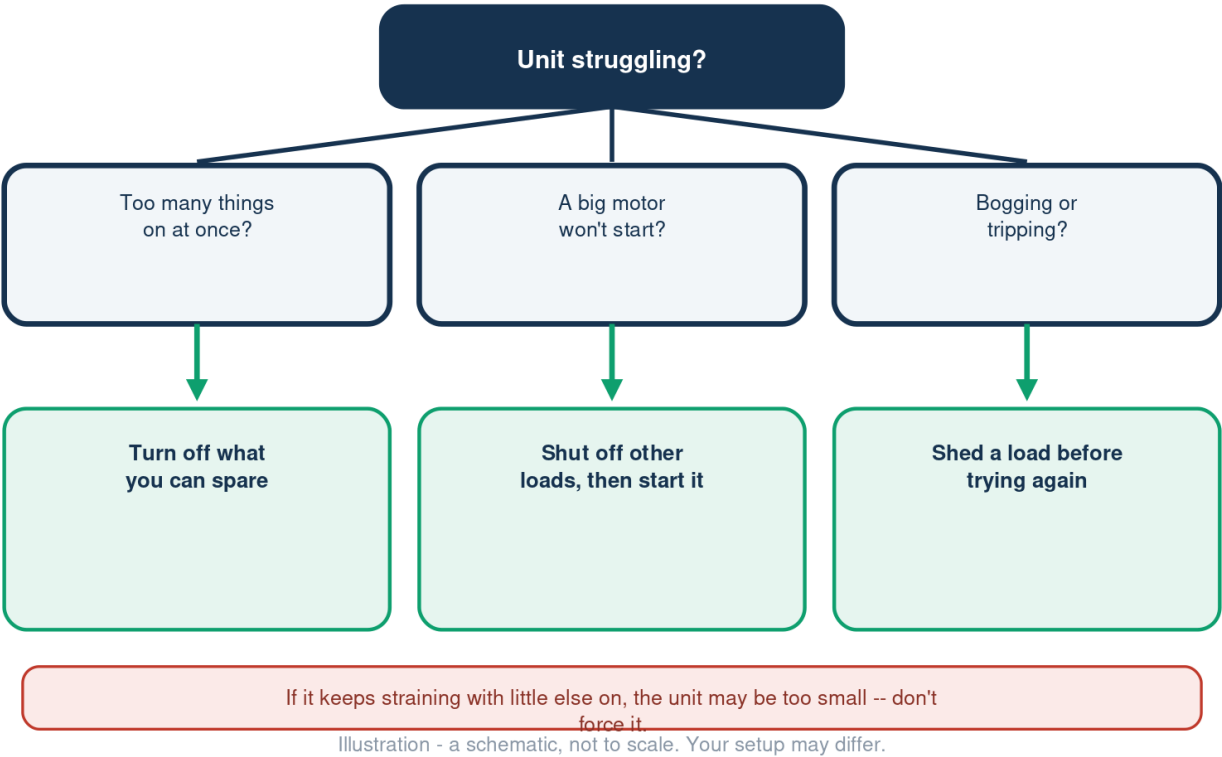
The same list, a very different unit

	All at once	Taking turns
Unit needed	Large	Smaller
Surges	Can stack up	One at a time
Fuel or energy	More	Less
Your effort	None	A little

Managing by hand trades a little attention for a smaller unit.

The Unit Is Struggling -- What Now?

Let the symptom point to the fix





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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 comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

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