BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Stop Paying for Extra Cloud Storage — Clean Up First

Clear out the clutter online so you can drop back to a smaller, cheaper plan — safely

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A lot of the cloud storage you pay for is holding clutter — duplicate photos, backups of old phones, giant email attachments — not memories. Open your storage screen (iCloud: Settings your name iCloud; Google: one.google.com; Microsoft: onedrive.com) to see what's really using space. Trim videos and duplicates, delete backups of devices you no longer own, and clear big email attachments (then empty the Trash so the space frees up).

Before you downgrade, copy anything precious to a computer or drive as a second home. Once your usage is safely under a smaller plan's limit, drop down to it — or back to free — and keep the savings every month.

1 The Short Version

Cloud storage is the space online where your photos, files, and device backups are kept. When it fills up, the company nudges you to pay for more — and it's easy to just keep paying. But much of what's using that space is clutter you can safely clear, which often lets you drop to a cheaper plan or even back to the free tier.

The key word is safely. We'll clean out only the genuine junk — duplicates, old backups, huge attachments — and make sure everything you care about is kept before changing any plan.

- You're often paying for space taken by clutter, not memories.
- The big space hogs are photos/videos, old device backups, and email attachments.
- Clear the junk first, confirm your keepers are safe, THEN downgrade.
- Never downgrade a plan while you're still over the smaller limit — save files off first.

TIP

Start by looking at what's actually using the space before you delete or pay for anything. Each service has a storage screen that breaks it down by category, so you fix the real culprit instead of guessing.

2 What Cloud Storage Actually Is

Cloud storage is simply space on a company's computers, rented to you, where copies of your things live so they're safe and reachable from any device. Apple calls its version iCloud, Google calls it Google One (covering Drive, Gmail, and Photos), and Microsoft uses OneDrive.

You get a small amount free, and you pay monthly for more. Because photos and backups grow quietly over the years, people drift into paying for storage without ever realizing how much of it is clutter.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your free allowance is usually modest — a handful of gigabytes. A few years of phone photos and automatic backups fills that easily, which is why the "your storage is full, upgrade now" message appears. Clearing clutter often brings you back under the free limit.

3 See What's Really Using Your Space

Every service has a screen that shows your storage broken down by what's using it. This is the honest picture that tells you where to focus.

1. On an iPhone: Settings tap your name iCloud see the colored bar and "Manage Account Storage."
2. For Google: go to one.google.com and look at the storage breakdown by Drive, Gmail, and Photos.

3. For Microsoft: sign in at onedrive.com or open OneDrive settings to see what's used.
4. In each, note the biggest categories — those are where the savings are.

> **TIP**
> Nearly always, photos and videos are the largest slice, with old backups and email attachments close behind. Knowing this up front means you can go straight to the big wins instead of deleting little things that barely move the needle.

4 Safely Trim Photos and Videos

Photos and videos are usually the biggest space user, and also the ones people most fear touching. The trick is to remove only the clear junk and duplicates, keeping every real memory.

- Delete obvious throwaways: screenshots, blurry shots, accidental photos, near-identical bursts.
- Look for a "duplicates" feature — modern phones can find and merge copies for you.
- Clear long videos you don't need; a single video can outweigh hundreds of photos.
- Empty the "Recently Deleted" album afterward, or the space won't actually free up for weeks.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Deleting a photo from a synced service removes it everywhere — phone, computer, and cloud. So before a big cleanup, make sure anything you truly want is also saved somewhere separate (a later step covers this). Delete only what you're certain is junk.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

5 Clear Out Old Device Backups

A sneaky space hog is old backups — copies of phones and tablets you no longer use. If you upgraded your phone a couple of times, backups of the old ones may still be sitting in your storage, doing nothing but taking up room you pay for.

1. On an iPhone: Settings your name iCloud Manage Account Storage Backups.
2. Look at the list of devices backed up.
3. Identify any device you no longer own or use.
4. Delete the backups for those old devices only — keep the backup for your current one.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Keep the backup for the device you actually use — that's your safety net if it's ever lost or broken. It's only the backups of retired devices that are pure waste, and those can be surprisingly large.

6 Tackle Email Attachments and Big Files

Your email counts against storage on Google and Microsoft, and years of messages with large attachments quietly eat gigabytes. Clearing the heaviest ones can free a lot of space fast.

1. In Gmail, search "has:attachment larger:10M" to find the biggest messages.
2. Review them, save any attachments you need, then delete the bulky emails you don't.
3. Empty the Trash and Spam folders afterward so the space actually frees up.
4. In Drive or OneDrive, sort files by size and clear large ones you no longer need.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Don't forget the Trash, Spam, and "Recently Deleted" areas in every service. Items sit there taking up space for weeks after you delete them — emptying those is often the step that finally drops your usage below the limit.

7 Make Sure Your Keepers Are Safe First

Before you reduce a plan or do a deep cleanup, the golden rule is to have a second copy of anything precious. This is what lets you clean up and downgrade without a shred of worry.

- Copy your most treasured photos to a computer or an external drive as a second home.
- Make sure contacts and important documents exist somewhere besides the cloud.
- For a service you plan to leave entirely, download everything you want to keep first.
- Confirm the second copy actually opens before you delete or downgrade anything.

WATCH OUT

This matters most if you're thinking of leaving a cloud service completely, not just shrinking the plan. When you drop below a plan's limit, services can eventually remove what doesn't fit. A verified second copy means that can never cost you anything you care about.

8 Now Step Down to a Smaller Plan

Once your usage is comfortably under a smaller plan's limit, you can downgrade and keep the savings every month. Do this only after the cleanup, never before.

1. Check your current usage against the next plan down — make sure you're safely under it.
2. iCloud: Settings your name iCloud Manage Account Storage Change Storage Plan Downgrade.
3. Google One: at one.google.com, open your plan and choose a smaller one or cancel.
4. Microsoft: manage your plan at your Microsoft account's services and subscriptions page.
5. Confirm the change and note the date it takes effect.

GOOD TO KNOW

Downgrades usually take effect at the end of your current billing period, and you keep the extra space until then. So there's no rush and no risk in choosing the smaller plan as soon as your cleanup is done.

9 Decide: Clean Up, Downgrade, or Keep Paying

Sometimes paying for storage is genuinely worth it — if you have a large, irreplaceable photo library and value having it safely backed up, a modest monthly fee is cheap insurance. The goal isn't to stop paying no matter what; it's to pay only for what you actually use.

Your situation	The sensible move
Mostly clutter is filling the space	Clean up and drop to free or a smaller plan
A big, precious photo library you use	A small paid plan may be worth it — but trim the junk first
Paying for space but barely over free	Clean up; you'll likely fit in the free tier
Two services doing the same job	Pick one, move your files, stop paying for the other

TIP

If you're paying for storage on two services at once — say iCloud and Google One — you're likely paying twice for the same job. Consolidating onto one is a common, painless saving.

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10 Keep It From Filling Up Again

A few settings and habits keep your storage lean so you don't drift back into paying for clutter.

- Turn on your phone's "optimize storage" option so full-size photos live in the cloud and smaller ones on the phone.
- Periodically clear screenshots and burst shots, which pile up fastest.
- Empty Trash/Recently Deleted every so often.
- Do a quick storage glance once or twice a year.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Optimize storage" is a genuinely useful setting, but it's separate from paying for a plan — it manages space on your device, not in the cloud. The cleanup habits here are what keep the cloud bill down.

11 How Much Free Space You Get to Start

Each service gives you an amount of free storage, and if your cleaned-up collection fits within it, you may not need to pay at all. The free amounts are modest, which is why a few years of photos tends to overflow them — but after a good cleanup, many people fit back inside the free tier.

- Apple's iCloud gives a small free allowance to every account.
- Google's free space is shared across Drive, Gmail, and Photos together.
- Microsoft's OneDrive includes a free amount with a Microsoft account.
- Check your current usage against the free amount after cleaning up.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because Google's free space is shared across Gmail, Drive, and Photos, a stuffed email inbox can push you over the limit just as easily as photos can. Clearing big old attachments often frees enough to drop back to free — which is why the email cleanup earlier is worth doing.

12 A One-Time Drive vs. a Monthly Bill

If you have a large photo collection, there's an alternative to paying every month forever: a one-time purchase of an external drive or a USB stick, where you keep your own copy. It's not a replacement for a backup, but it can be a smart part of the picture.

Paying monthly for cloud	Buying a drive once
Automatic, reachable anywhere	You control it; it sits at home
Costs the same every month, forever	A single purchase, no recurring charge
Protected if your house is damaged	Vulnerable if lost, stolen, or damaged
Good for "I want it safe and synced"	Good for "I want my own copy I'm not renting"

TIP

The safest setup for irreplaceable photos is actually both: a copy on a drive you own and a copy somewhere online, so no single mishap loses everything. But if you're only paying for cloud to store photos you rarely touch, a one-time drive can end the monthly bill for good.

13 Leaving a Cloud Service for Good — Safely

If you've decided to leave a storage service entirely rather than just shrink it, the one rule that matters is: get everything out first. Once you stop paying and drop below the free limit, the service can eventually remove what doesn't fit.

1. Make a complete download of everything you want to keep from the service.
2. Save it to a computer, an external drive, or another service you're keeping.
3. Open a few of the downloaded files to confirm they actually work.
4. Only then cancel the plan or close the account.
5. Keep your downloaded copy safe — it's now your only copy from that service.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Never close a cloud account or let it lapse until you've confirmed your downloaded copy opens correctly. A download that failed partway, or a file that won't open, is exactly the kind of thing that turns "saving money" into "losing photos" — so check before you cancel.

14 When to Call Bill

Cleaning up cloud storage safely is very doable, and the savings are real and recurring. But the fear of deleting the wrong thing stops a lot of people cold, and that fear is reasonable. If you'd like a careful hand to make sure nothing precious is lost, this is a perfect visit.

I'll go through your storage with you, show you exactly what's clutter and what's a keeper, make certain your treasured photos have a safe second copy, clear the junk, and step you down to the right plan — so you stop overpaying without ever risking a memory. It's one of the most reassuring cleanups I do.

- You want to clear space but are afraid of deleting something you can't get back.
- You're not sure which backups or files are safe to remove.
- You want your precious photos copied somewhere safe before any cleanup.

- You'd like help choosing and switching to the right, cheaper plan.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Clean up first, confirm your keepers are safe, THEN downgrade.

I want to...	Do this...
See what's using space	iCloud: Settings your name iCloud. Google: one.google.com. Microsoft: onedrive.com
Free the most space fast	Trim videos and duplicate photos; clear old device backups
Clear email bloat	Gmail: search 'has:attachment larger:10M', delete big ones, empty Trash
Protect your memories	Copy precious photos to a computer or drive before deleting anything
Drop to a cheaper plan	Only once you're safely under the smaller limit, then downgrade in settings
Stop paying twice	If you pay for two storage services, consolidate onto one
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

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