BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Teaching or Tutoring Online for Pay — A Plain-English Guide

Share what you know, from your own chair — real platforms, real pay, and how to stay safe

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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What's Inside

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The 60-Second Version

The whole idea, if you only have a minute.

Teaching online for pay means meeting a student over a video call and helping them learn something you already know — a school subject, a language, an instrument, a craft, a computer skill. You can do it through a website that finds students for you and handles the money, or you can go fully independent with your own video calls and your own payment setup. Most people start on a platform and branch out later.

- The pay: on the big platforms you typically keep somewhere between two-thirds and four-fifths of what the student pays, because the platform takes a commission. Independent tutors keep all of it but do more of the work themselves.
- The gear: a computer with a webcam, a clear microphone, decent lighting, and a quiet room. Most people already own most of it.
- The catch: it is real work and it starts slowly. Your first students and first reviews are the hardest to get. Nobody earns a full-time income in week one.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> You do not need a teaching degree for most of this. Patience, a genuine command of your subject, and the ability to explain things simply matter far more than any certificate — though a few language and test-prep platforms do ask for credentials.

WHAT THIS REALLY IS

2 What Online Tutoring Really Is

An honest picture before you begin.

Online tutoring is simply the thing a good tutor has always done — sit with a learner, figure out where they are stuck, and walk them through it — moved onto a video call. Instead of driving to a library, you meet on a screen. You can share documents, draw on a digital whiteboard, and see each other's faces, all from home.

Who does well at it

The people who thrive are not always the ones with the fanciest resumes. They are the ones who are patient, reliable, and good at explaining one idea three different ways until it clicks. If you have ever helped a grandchild with fractions or taught a neighbor to use their phone, you already have the core skill.

What you can teach

- School subjects: math, reading, science, history, writing, test prep like the SAT or ACT.
- Languages: teaching English to learners abroad is a huge market, and so is teaching any language you speak well.
- Music and arts: piano, guitar, voice, drawing, painting.
- Skills and hobbies: cooking, chess, knitting, photography, basic computer help, bookkeeping, resume writing.

> *The best tutors I know aren't the smartest people in the room. They're the most patient. If you can stay calm while someone gets it wrong five times, you can do this.*

THE REAL PLATFORMS

3 The Platforms That Actually Exist

Where the students are, as of late 2026.

There are many tutoring websites, but a handful do most of the business. Here is an honest rundown of the active ones and how each one works. Last verified: November 2026 — always check the platform's own current terms before you sign up.

Marketplaces where you set your own rate

- Wyzant: a large, long-running United States marketplace covering hundreds of subjects. You build a profile, name your hourly rate, and students contact you. Strong for academics and test prep.
- Preply: a big international platform, especially for languages. You set your rate and students book you. Known for taking a larger cut from brand-new tutors.

- Outschool: live online classes for kids and teens, often in small groups rather than one-on-one. You design and price your own classes. Good if you enjoy teaching groups.

Services that set the pay for you

- Cambly: English conversation practice for learners worldwide, paid a fixed rate per minute of talking — no lesson planning, just friendly conversation. Modest pay, low bar to start, though it has at times limited new tutor sign-ups.
- Varsity Tutors (a Nerdy company): a larger service that matches you with students rather than letting you post and wait. It sets the pay rather than you naming a rate.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> You may still see TakeLessons mentioned in older articles. Microsoft, which owned it, shut it down in late 2024, so it is no longer an option. This is a good reminder that platforms come and go — never build your whole income on just one.

WHAT THEY PAY

4 What They Pay — and What They Take

The commission, in plain numbers.

Every platform earns its keep by taking a slice of what the student pays. That is fair — they bring you the students and handle the billing — but you should know the size of the slice before you decide. These figures are as of late 2026 and can change, so confirm the current terms yourself.

Platform	You keep	You set rate?
Wyzant	about 75%	Yes
Preply	about 67-82%	Yes
Outschool	about 70%	Yes
Cambly	fixed ~$10/hr	No

Varsity Tutors	a set hourly rate	No

What the numbers mean in practice

- Wyzant keeps roughly a quarter of your posted rate, so a $40 hour nets you about $30.
- Preply's cut is largest for new tutors — often around a third at first — and shrinks as you teach more hours on the platform. New tutors also commonly give the student's first trial lesson free.
- Outschool keeps about 30% of the class price you set.
- Cambly pays a flat rate per minute of actual talking time, which has recently been in the range of roughly ten dollars an hour for adult lessons — steady and simple, but modest.
- Varsity Tutors sets the pay; reviews commonly report figures in the rough range of fifteen to forty dollars an hour depending on subject and experience, with the top reserved for specialists.

WATCH OUT

Be very skeptical of any platform or recruiter promising a high guaranteed income, charging you a large fee to join, or pressuring you to sign up fast. Legitimate platforms earn from a commission on lessons you actually teach — not from fees they collect from you up front.

GOING INDEPENDENT

5 Going Out on Your Own

Keeping the whole fee — and the whole job.

Once you have some experience and a few happy students, you can teach independently and keep every dollar. The trade-off is that you now do the jobs the platform used to do: finding students, scheduling, and collecting payment. Many tutors do both — a platform for new students, independent for their regulars.

The three tools you need

- A video-call tool: Zoom is the most common, and its free plan works for one-on-one lessons. Google Meet is a fine free alternative.
- A way to schedule: a simple booking page like Calendly lets students pick an open time without a flurry of emails.
- A way to get paid: see the payment chapter — the key is to use a proper business payment tool, never a personal check.

1. Decide your hourly rate and your available hours.
2. Set up a free Zoom or Google Meet account for the calls.
3. Create a simple booking page so students can reserve a time.
4. Choose a payment method that bills before or right after the lesson, so you are never chasing money.
5. Tell your existing students you now offer lessons directly, if the platform's rules allow it.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Many platforms have rules against taking a student you met there off-platform to avoid their fee, at least for a period of time. Read the terms. Breaking them can get you removed. It is cleaner to grow your independent students separately, through word of mouth and your own advertising.

YOUR EQUIPMENT

6 The Equipment You Actually Need

Less than you think, and better than a phone.

You do not need a studio. You need your student to see and hear you clearly, and to see whatever you are explaining. Here is the short list, in order of importance.

Gear	Why it matters
Clear microphone	Sound matters most; muddy audio loses students
Webcam	A steady, well-focused face builds trust
Good lighting	A lamp facing you beats a window behind you

Quiet room	No background noise, no interruptions
Whiteboard app	To write, draw, and show your work live

A few honest notes on each

- Microphone: the single biggest upgrade. A modest USB microphone or even good wired earbuds with a mic beats most built-in laptop mics. Students forgive a fuzzy picture; they leave over bad sound.
- Webcam: the camera built into a recent laptop is usually fine. A simple clip-on webcam helps if your computer's camera is old.
- Lighting: face a window or put a lamp behind your screen pointing at your face. Never sit with a bright window behind you, or you become a shadow.
- Whiteboard: a free tool like the whiteboard built into Zoom, or Google's Jamboard-style tools, lets you write out a math problem or sketch an idea as you talk.

TIP

Before your first paid lesson, do a test call with a friend or family member. Ask them plainly: can you see me clearly, and can you hear me clearly? Fix whatever they flag. Ten minutes of testing prevents a bad first impression.

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.

YOUR SPACE

7 Setting Up a Space That Works

Small touches that make you look professional.

Your student spends the whole lesson looking at you and your background. A calm, tidy, well-lit corner tells them you take this seriously — which helps them take it seriously too.

1. Pick a spot with a plain, uncluttered wall behind you.
2. Put your light in front of you, not behind, so your face is clear.
3. Raise your camera to roughly eye level — a few books under a laptop works — so you are not filming up your nose.
4. Close the door, silence your phone, and let others in the house know you are in a lesson.
5. Have water, your notes, and anything you will show the student within reach before you start.

Look at the camera, not the screen

This is the one habit that takes practice. When you look at the student's face on your screen, it appears to them as if you are looking down. Glancing at the little camera lens now and then, especially when you want to connect, makes it feel like real eye contact. You will get the hang of it within a few lessons.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A quiet, interruption-free half hour is worth more than any gadget. If the house is busy, a set lesson time when others are out, or a simple sign on the door, protects the one thing your student is paying for: your full attention.

GETTING STUDENTS

8 How Students Actually Find You

The slow, honest part — and how to speed it up.

This is where most people get discouraged, so let me be straight with you: the first few students are the hardest to get, and it can take weeks. Once you have a handful of good reviews, it gets much easier, because new students trust the word of old ones.

On a platform

- Write a warm, specific profile. 'Retired high-school math teacher, 35 years, patient with anxious students' beats 'experienced tutor.'
- Use a friendly, clear headshot — a real smile, good light, plain background.

- Respond to student messages quickly. Early on, fast and kind replies win the bookings.
- Ask every happy student for a review. Reviews are the currency that brings the next student.

On your own

- Tell everyone you know. Family, former colleagues, your church or community group, the library bulletin board.
- A simple one-page flyer or a post in a local online group can bring local students who prefer someone nearby.
- Word of mouth is the strongest force in tutoring. One delighted parent tells three others.

> *Your first review is worth more than your first ten dollars. Teach that first student like they're the only one who matters, because getting the next one depends on it.*

PRICING YOUR TIME

9 Setting a Rate You Are Happy With

Not too low, not too proud.

New tutors almost always price themselves too low out of nerves. A rate that is too cheap can even scare serious students off, because they assume you are inexperienced. Here is a sensible way to land on a number.

1. Look at what other tutors in your subject charge on the same platform, and find the middle of the range.
2. Start slightly below the middle while you gather your first reviews — a modest introductory rate, not a bargain-bin one.
3. Once you have several good reviews and a waiting list forming, raise your rate in small steps.
4. Remember the platform's cut when you set the number, so your take-home is what you actually want.

Charge for your preparation, within reason

If a student needs custom materials or heavy planning, it is fair to reflect that in your rate. Most routine tutoring, though, is priced simply by the hour of live time. Keep it simple at first.

> **TIP**
>
> It is far easier to raise a rate than to lower one. Start reasonable, deliver genuinely good lessons, and let your reviews earn you the right to charge more. Steady, fair pricing builds a reputation faster than a cut-rate special ever will.

GETTING PAID AND TAXES

10 Getting Paid and Handling Taxes

You are self-employed now — here is what that means.

When you tutor for pay, the government treats you as self-employed, whether you work through a platform or on your own. That is not scary, but it does mean a little bookkeeping and no taxes withheld for you. Plan for it from your first dollar.

- On a platform: the platform collects from the student and pays you, usually to a bank account or a service like PayPal, on a set schedule.
- On your own: use a proper business payment tool — a service like PayPal, Venmo, Square, or Stripe set up for your tutoring — so there is a clean record of every payment.
- Either way, keep your own simple log of who paid you, when, and how much.

The tax side, in plain terms

Tutoring income is taxable, and because no one withholds taxes for you, you are responsible for setting money aside. A common rule of thumb is to save roughly a quarter to a third of what you earn for taxes, including self-employment tax. Platforms and payment services will typically send you and the government a 1099 form summarizing what you were paid, so report it honestly.

GOOD TO KNOW

Keep receipts for things you buy for tutoring — a webcam, a microphone, part of your internet bill. Many of these can be legitimate business expenses that reduce your taxable income. A shoebox of receipts and a simple spreadsheet is enough to start.

WATCH OUT

I am not a tax adviser, and the rules change. When your tutoring income becomes more than pocket money, spend an hour with a local tax professional. It is cheap insurance against a surprise bill, and they will show you exactly what to set aside for your situation.

SCAMS TO AVOID

11 Scams That Target Tutors

A short list that will save you real money.

Wherever there are people trying to earn honestly, there are crooks trying to take it. Tutors get targeted by a few specific schemes. Learn them once and you will spot them a mile away.

The overpayment and fake-check scam

This is the big one. A 'new student' or a 'parent' contacts you, often with an odd, over-eager story, and insists on paying up front — frequently by mailed check or for far more than the lessons cost. Then they ask you to refund the difference, or to forward some money to a 'materials supplier' or another tutor. The check is fake. It may clear at first, then bounce days later — and the money you sent back is gone, out of your own pocket.

- Never accept a personal or cashier's check from someone you do not know. Let the platform or a business payment tool handle money.
- Never refund an 'overpayment' or forward money to a third party. No real student does this.
- Be wary of anyone who pays before any lesson, pushes you to move to texting or a strange app immediately, or writes in rushed, pressuring language.

- If a payment seems too generous or too complicated, it is a scam. Walk away.

WATCH OUT

A bank saying a check 'cleared' does not mean it is good. Fake checks can take days or weeks to be discovered, and when they bounce, you owe the bank every dollar. Never send money back against a check you were just handed.

GOOD TO KNOW

Also watch for fake job offers that ask you to buy equipment or 'training' with your own money up front, or that ask for your bank login or Social Security number before you have taught a single lesson. Real platforms never work that way. When in doubt, stop and ask someone you trust.

COMMON QUESTIONS

12 Common Questions

The things people ask me most.

Am I too old to start?

Not at all. Many students specifically want a patient, experienced teacher, and 'retired professional with decades in the field' is a selling point, not a drawback. Your experience is the product.

Do I need a teaching certificate?

For most subjects, no. A deep, genuine command of what you teach and the patience to explain it matter most. Some language and formal test-prep platforms do ask for a degree or a teaching credential — check each one's requirements.

How much can I realistically earn?

Honestly, it starts small and grows slowly. Early on you may teach a few hours a week. Tutors who stick with it, gather reviews, and raise their rates can build a steady part-time income. Treat big income promises as the warning sign they are.

What if I am not very technical?

The tools are simpler than they look, and you only need to learn a few. If joining a video call, sharing your screen, and using a booking page feels daunting, that is exactly the kind of thing a patient person can set up with you in an afternoon.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The surest path is unglamorous: pick one subject, join one platform, teach your first students exceptionally well, collect honest reviews, and grow from there. Slow and real beats fast and fake every time.

IS IT FOR YOU

13

Is Teaching Online Right for You?

A simple, honest gut-check.

Here is the short version of how I help folks decide. It comes down to a few plain questions you can answer today.

- Do you know a subject or skill well enough to explain it simply? Then you have something to sell.
- Are you patient when someone struggles? That is the real job.
- Can you commit to reliable, set times? Students value a tutor they can count on.
- Are you comfortable starting small and building slowly? Because that is how this works.

If most of those are a yes, give it a real try. Start on one platform, teach a handful of students, and see how it feels before you invest in anything. The only honest way to find out if you like teaching online is to teach a few lessons.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you would like a hand, I am glad to help you get set up — testing your camera and microphone, arranging a tidy, well-lit spot, walking through how the video calls and booking pages work, and making sure your payment and safety basics are solid before your first student arrives. The goal is for you to spend your energy teaching, not wrestling with the technology.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

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

I want to...	Do this...
Pick what to teach	Choose a subject or skill you can explain patiently and clearly
Try a platform first	Start on Wyzant, Preply, or Outschool to get early students
Understand the cut	Platforms keep roughly 18-33% of what the student pays
Set up your space	A decent webcam, a clear mic, good light, and a quiet room
Get paid safely	Let the platform handle money; never accept a personal check
Handle taxes	Set aside part of every payment; you are self-employed now
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

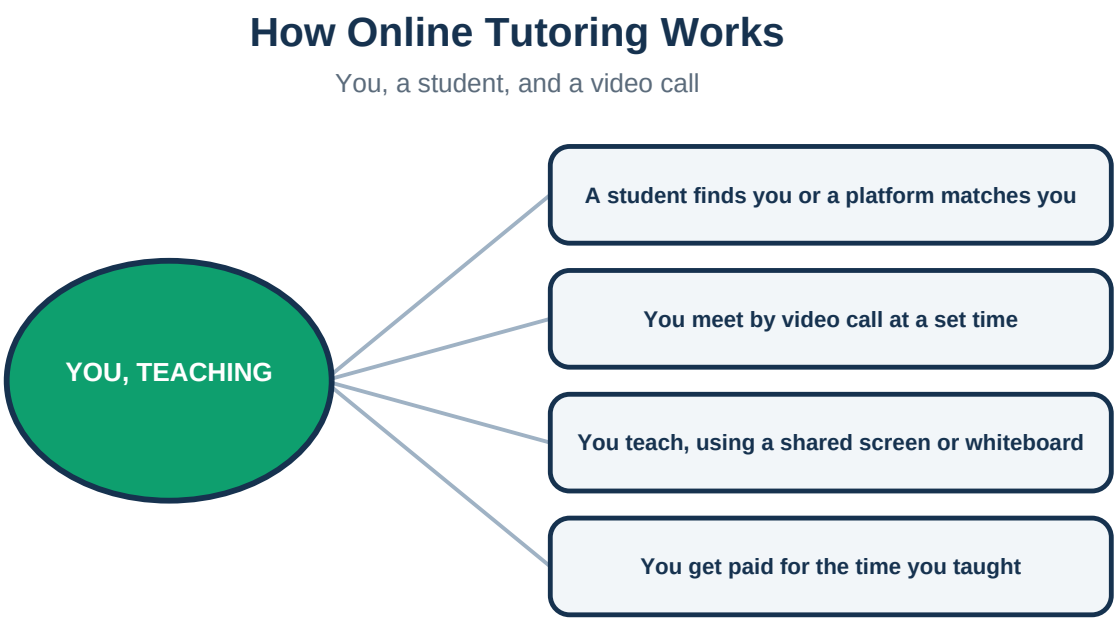


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Your First Month, Step by Step

Start small, build from there

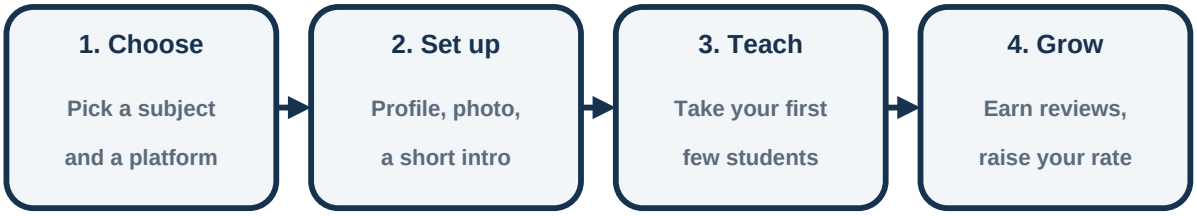


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

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

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

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

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

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

KEY SPECS

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

GOOD TO KNOW

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

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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