



An Extended Guide · No. 1950

The Buttons on Your Monitor

Brightness, input, and 'No
Signal' — without the panic

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

Free & printable — share it with someone who needs it



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

★ Read this first — you really can't break anything

Before we start, a promise: you cannot break anything just by reading, looking, or trying a setting. Screens, keyboards, and cables are made to be plugged and unplugged, and almost anything you change can be changed right back. Go at your own pace, skip to the page you need, and if you ever feel stuck, that is exactly what I am here for — there is no such thing as a silly question. The little buttons on a monitor can feel like a mystery, but there are only a handful of them and none of them can harm your screen. We'll find them together, one at a time.

Let's make friends with those little buttons

Every monitor has a few buttons — for brightness, for choosing which device shows on screen, and for a menu — and they are almost always hidden somewhere that isn't obvious. This guide shows you where they hide and what each one does, in plain English.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks feel at ease with the gear in their homes. A huge number of the 'my screen is broken' calls I get turn out to be a button, a menu, or a loose cable — not a broken screen at all.

So take a breath. You cannot wear these buttons out, and anything you change by accident can be changed right back. We'll go slowly, and by the end you'll know how to brighten the screen, switch what it's showing, and calmly escape any menu you wander into.

★ A black screen is rarely a dead screen

If your monitor shows nothing, or the words 'No Signal,' please don't assume the worst. Nine times out of ten it's a cable or a button, and we'll walk through it. If you'd like a hand, call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — no charge to talk it through.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, the buttons on your monitor will never fluster you again.

- ❑ The buttons are usually hidden — underneath the bottom edge, around the back-right corner, or they're a single little joystick you nudge.
- ❑ Brightness lives in the on-screen menu; you open the menu, find the brightness item, and nudge it up or down.
- ❑ 'No Signal' almost always means the screen is set to the wrong INPUT, or a cable is loose — not that the screen is broken.
- ❑ Switching the INPUT (also called the 'source') tells the screen which socket — and which device — to listen to.
- ❑ If you ever get lost in a menu, press the button marked Exit, Back, or Menu until it closes. Nothing bad happens.
- ❑ There's a 'factory reset' hidden in the menu that undoes every change at once — your safety net.

✓ One idea to hold onto

You cannot break the screen with these buttons. The worst that happens is a setting looks odd for a moment — and a reset or a change-it-back fixes it instantly. Press with confidence.

Where on earth are the buttons?

Makers tuck the buttons out of sight to keep the screen looking tidy. That's handsome to look at and maddening to use. Here's where to feel for them.

Run a finger gently along the **bottom edge** of the screen, underneath the frame. On many monitors the buttons are hiding right there, facing down, so you feel them before you see them. Some are on the **back**, near the lower-right corner, facing away from you.

Sometimes there are little printed symbols on the front edge — a sun for brightness, a square or a boxed arrow for input, lines for the menu — that line up with buttons behind them. If you can't read the symbols, a flashlight and a slow look from the side usually reveals them.

A quick way to find them

Press any button you can feel. A little menu or a row of icons will pop up on the screen and often shows which button does what, right along the edge next to each one. That on-screen guide is your map.

✓ Feel, don't force

These buttons are small and sometimes stiff, but a firm, deliberate press is all they need. If one won't budge, you may be pressing the frame instead of the button — slide over a hair and try again.

The single little joystick (or 'nub')

Many newer monitors replace the row of buttons with one tiny joystick. It feels strange at first, but it's actually the easier kind.

Reach around to the **back** of the screen, usually near the lower-right, and feel for a small bump or stick about the size of a pencil eraser. That one control does everything. You **press it in** like a button, and you **nudge it** up, down, left, or right.

Press it in once and the menu appears. Nudge up or down to move through the choices, nudge right (or press in) to open one, and nudge left to go back. It's a bit like steering a tiny cursor with your fingertip.

✓ Lost with the joystick? Just hold still and look

When the menu is open, the screen usually shows little arrows telling you which way to nudge for each action. Read those on-screen hints rather than guessing. Nudge left or press-and-hold to back all the way out.

Turning the brightness up or down

A screen that's too bright tires the eyes; too dim and you squint. Here's how to set it just right — it's one of the easiest things to do.

Open the menu with a button or the joystick. Look for an item called **Brightness** — sometimes shown as a little sun symbol. Open it, and you'll see a sliding bar. Nudge it up to brighten, down to dim, and the screen changes as you go so you can watch for the comfortable spot.

A good rule of thumb: the screen should be about as bright as a sheet of white paper held next to it in the same room light. If the screen glows much brighter than everything around it, bring it down a touch; your eyes will thank you by the end of the day.

Contrast, while you're in there

Nearby you may see **Contrast**, which sets the gap between the darkest and lightest parts. Most people are happiest leaving contrast near the middle and adjusting brightness to taste. If you nudge it and dislike it, just nudge it back — or use the reset we cover later.

✓ Revisit brightness with the seasons

A setting that feels right in a bright summer room can feel glaring on a dark winter evening. It's perfectly normal to dim the screen at night and brighten it by day. Change it as often as you like.

Opening and reading the on-screen menu

That menu — some folks call it the 'settings' or by its initials, the OSD — is just a list of choices painted over your screen. Let's demystify it.

Press the Menu button (often marked with three little lines or the word Menu), or press the joystick in. A panel of choices appears. You move through them with the up and down buttons (or by nudging the joystick), and you open a choice with the button marked Enter, OK, or a right-arrow.

The wording differs from maker to maker, but the common items are Brightness, Contrast, color settings, Input or Source, Language, and a Reset. You don't need to understand every item — you only need the two or three you'll actually use.

- **Menu / three lines:** opens and closes the list of choices.
- **Up and down:** move the highlight from one item to the next.
- **Enter / OK / right-arrow:** open the highlighted item.
- **Exit / Back / left-arrow:** step back out, one level at a time.

✓ The menu times out on its own

If you open the menu and then do nothing, it usually disappears by itself after a few seconds and changes nothing. So feel free to open it just to look around — it's a safe place to explore.

Switching the INPUT (the 'source')

This is the single most useful button to understand, because getting it wrong is the number-one reason a perfectly good screen shows nothing.

A monitor usually has several sockets on the back — you may have heard of HDMI, DisplayPort, or USB-C. Your computer's cable plugs into one of them. The **Input** setting simply tells the screen which socket to pay attention to. If it's listening to the wrong socket, it sees nothing and says so.

Look for a button or menu item called **Input** or **Source**, sometimes a little boxed-arrow symbol. Press it and you'll get a short list — HDMI 1, HDMI 2, DisplayPort, USB-C, and so on. Step through them and pick the one your computer is actually plugged into. The picture usually pops back the instant you land on the right one.

Which one is my computer using?

If you're not sure, just try each input in turn, pausing a few seconds on each to let the screen wake up. You cannot hurt anything by trying them all. When the picture appears, you've found it.

✓ Note which input you landed on

Once the picture comes back, remember (or jot down) which input it was — say, 'HDMI 1.' Next time the screen goes dark, you'll know exactly where to point it, and you'll save yourself the hunt.

'No Signal' — please don't panic

Those two words scare a lot of people into thinking the screen has died. It almost never has. Here's what it really means.

'No Signal' (or 'No Input,' or 'Check Cable') is the screen's way of saying: 'I'm working fine, but I'm not receiving a picture on the socket I'm set to.' It's a message FROM a healthy screen — a dead screen wouldn't be able to show you words at all.

There are really only a few causes, and all of them are easy to fix:

- **Wrong input chosen** — the screen is listening to an empty socket. Switch the input, as we just covered.
- **A loose or half-seated cable** — unplug it at both ends and press it firmly back in until it seats with a gentle click or stop.
- **The computer is asleep or off** — wiggle the mouse, tap a key, or check that the computer itself is actually powered on.
- **A tired cable or adapter** — if you have a spare, swapping the cable is a quick way to rule it out.

! Before you ever think 'I need a new monitor'

A 'No Signal' message is not a broken screen — it's a screen asking for a picture. Check the input and reseat the cables first. I've saved many a monitor from the curb with nothing but a firmer push on a loose cable. If it still won't show, call me at (330) 200-8042 before you spend a dime.

Getting out of a menu or mode you didn't mean to open

Everyone wanders into a menu by accident. Here's the calm way out, so a stray press never leaves you stuck.

If you find yourself in a menu you didn't mean to open, the way out is almost always a button marked **Exit**, **Back**, or **Menu** — or, on a joystick, nudging **left** or pressing and holding. Press it once to step back a level, and again to close the menu entirely. You can press it as many times as you need.

If a setting changed and you don't like it, you have two easy fixes: nudge that same setting back the way it was, or use the Reset we cover shortly, which puts everything back at once. Either way, nothing is stuck or permanent.

And if the menu is just in your way, do nothing at all. As we noted, it clears itself off the screen after a few idle seconds, leaving your settings exactly as they were.

✓ When in doubt, walk away for ten seconds

Can't find the Exit? Simply take your hands off and wait. The menu will almost always disappear on its own, and you can start fresh with a clear head. There is no timer you have to beat.

Two ways people come to this

Monitor buttons trip up two kinds of folks: someone learning their own screen, and an adult child trying to fix a parent's screen over the phone. The buttons are the same; the approach differs.

If you're setting this up for yourself

You have the screen right in front of you, so you can take your time, feel for the buttons, and watch the picture change as you press. There's no rush and no audience.

- Find and press any button to pop up the on-screen guide — let it show you what each button does.
- Practice opening the menu and backing out a few times so it feels routine, not scary.
- Learn your Input button and note which input your computer uses.
- Set the brightness to a comfortable level while you're in there.

If you're setting it up for a parent or loved one

You're often talking a parent through it from across town, unable to see the screen yourself. Your job is to give calm, one-step-at-a-time directions and to resist the urge to say 'just press the buttons.'

- Ask them to feel along the bottom edge and the back-right corner, and describe what they find before pressing.
- Have them read the on-screen words aloud so you can picture the menu.
- Walk them through switching inputs one at a time, pausing on each.
- Teach them Exit/Back first — knowing how to escape removes the fear.

★ Talking a parent through a black screen?

This is one of the most common calls I get. If a phone call isn't getting there, I can often hop onto the computer's screen remotely for \$49 and sort the input or cable out, or come by in person. Call (330) 200-8042.

A gentle tour of the rest of the menu

Beyond brightness and input, the menu holds a few more items. You don't need most of them, but it helps to know what they are so they don't worry you.

- **Color or color temperature:** makes the picture warmer (more yellow) or cooler (more blue). A 'warm' or 'reading' setting is easy on the eyes in the evening.
- **Brightness and contrast:** the two we've met; by far the most useful day to day.
- **Input / Source:** which socket the screen listens to.
- **Language:** handy if the menu ever shows up in the wrong one.
- **Reset / Factory settings:** undoes every change at once.
- **Information:** shows harmless details like the current input — useful when you're troubleshooting.

If an item has a name you don't recognize, you're free to leave it alone. The screen came set up to work out of the box, so the fewer things you change, the simpler your life.

✓ You can always put it all back

Nothing in this menu is a one-way door. Every single item can be changed back, and the Reset puts the whole lot to how it left the factory. Explore as much as you like.

When the screen is black: a calm checklist

A dark screen feels alarming, but a short, orderly check almost always finds the cause. Work down this list, one step at a time.

- ❑ Is the monitor's own power light on? If it's off, press the monitor's power button and check its power cord at both ends.
- ❑ Is the computer actually on and awake? Wiggle the mouse or tap a key; listen for its fan or look for its lights.
- ❑ Does it say 'No Signal'? If so, switch the Input to the socket your computer is plugged into.
- ❑ Reseat the video cable — firmly unplug and replug it at both the computer and the monitor.
- ❑ Try a different socket and matching input if your screen has more than one.
- ❑ If you have a spare cable, swap it in to rule out a tired one.

★ Still dark after all that?

If you've worked the list and the screen is still blank, that's a fine time to call me rather than wrestle with it. Often it's a quick fix I can spot in minutes. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The power light and 'sleep'

That little glowing dot on the front tells you more than you'd think. Learning to read it saves a lot of worry.

A **steady** light usually means the monitor is on and receiving a picture. A **slow blink**, or a color change to amber or orange, usually means the screen is on but getting no picture — it has dozed off to save power because the computer is asleep or the input is wrong. No light at all means the monitor itself is off or unplugged.

So a blinking or amber light is good news: the screen is alive and simply waiting for something to show. Wake the computer, check the input, and the light should go steady as the picture returns.

✓ Don't confuse the two power buttons

The monitor has its own power button, separate from the computer's. If the monitor's light is completely off, press the monitor's button first — you may have only turned off the screen, not the computer.

If the buttons are hard to see or reach

Tiny, unlabeled buttons in awkward spots are a real nuisance, especially for stiff hands or tired eyes. A few tricks make them easier.

- **Use a flashlight** — the one on your phone works — and look at the edge from the side to catch the shadows of the buttons.
- **Turn the screen** on its stand, or tip it forward, so you can see or reach the back buttons without stretching.
- **Press deliberately** with the pad of a finger; a fingernail or the eraser end of a pencil can help with a recessed button.
- **Go slowly.** Press one button, watch the screen, then decide the next press. There's no need to hurry.

If reaching behind the screen is genuinely difficult, that's worth solving once rather than fighting every time. A better-placed screen, or a monitor arm that lets it swing out, can bring the buttons within easy reach — we cover arms in the sit-stand and monitor-arm guide.

✓ No shame in a helper for the first setup

Getting brightness and input set once, by someone who can see the buttons, means you rarely have to touch them again. It's fine to ask for that one bit of help up front.

Marking your buttons so they're easy next time

A two-minute labeling job today can spare you a lot of squinting later. Here's a simple way to make your own buttons obvious.

Once you've worked out which button does what, make yourself a little map. A small sticky note on the desk or the side of the screen — 'left button = menu, sun = brightness, boxed arrow = input' — turns a guessing game into a glance.

Some folks put a tiny dab of a raised sticker, or a bump of a hobby-store 'bump dot,' next to the one or two buttons they use most, so they can find them by touch in dim light. Keep it simple; you really only need brightness and input at your fingertips.

✓ Write down your input while you're at it

On that same note, record which input your computer uses — 'HDMI 1,' for example. That one line is the fastest cure for a future 'No Signal' scare.

The factory reset — your safety net

If you ever feel you've changed too much and lost track, there's one button that fixes everything at once. Knowing it's there makes all the rest feel safe.

In the menu, look for **Reset**, **Factory Reset**, or 'Restore Defaults.' Choosing it puts every picture setting — brightness, contrast, color, all of it — back exactly as the screen came from the factory. It does not harm the screen, erase anything on your computer, or touch your files; it only resets the screen's own settings.

So if you've been nudging settings and the picture looks strange — too dark, too blue, too anything — don't try to remember what you changed. Just reset, and start fresh from a known-good picture.

✓ **Reset first, fiddle second**

When a screen's colors or brightness look 'off' and you don't know why, a factory reset is often the fastest fix of all. It's the undo button for the whole menu.

When the buttons can't fix it

Most screen troubles live in the buttons or the cable, but a few don't. Here's how to tell when the monitor isn't the thing to blame.

If the menu itself appears fine — crisp and correct — but your computer's picture is missing, wrong-sized, or frozen, the trouble is usually on the computer's side, not the screen's. The fact that the menu looks right is proof the screen is healthy.

Likewise, if the text is tiny or the picture is stretched, that's usually the computer's resolution or text-size setting, not a button on the monitor. We cover those settings in the guides on resolution and scaling and on choosing a monitor for aging eyes.

✓ A healthy menu is a healthy screen

If you can bring up the monitor's own menu and it looks clear and normal, the screen is almost certainly fine. Point your troubleshooting at the cable or the computer instead.

A few good habits with the buttons

None of this needs to be a chore. A handful of easy habits keep the buttons from ever becoming a source of worry.

- **Learn just three:** the Menu, the Input, and the way to Exit. Those three handle nearly everything.
- **Keep your little note** of which input you use and which button is which, somewhere you'll find it.
- **Adjust brightness to the room**, not to a number — dimmer in the evening, brighter by day.
- **Don't fear the menu.** Open it, look around, and let it time out. Exploring teaches you more than reading can.

Confidence with these buttons is mostly about knowing you can't do harm. Once that sinks in, you'll press them as freely as the buttons on your microwave.

✓ Practice when nothing is wrong

The best time to learn the buttons is a calm afternoon when the screen is working fine — not during a panic over a black screen. Spend five minutes now and you'll be ready later.

Questions worth asking yourself

When the screen acts up, these quick questions usually point straight at the answer.

Q: Does the monitor's power light show any sign of life?

If it's steady or blinking, the screen is alive — look to the input and cable. If it's completely dark, start with the monitor's own power button and cord.

Q: Does it actually say 'No Signal'?

If so, the screen is healthy and just isn't getting a picture. Switch the input and reseal the cables before anything else.

Q: Can I open the monitor's menu?

If the menu comes up and looks normal, the screen is fine. The trouble is in the cable or the computer, not the monitor.

Q: Did I change a setting and now it looks odd?

Don't try to remember every change — just use the factory reset in the menu and start from a clean, correct picture.

✓ There's no silly question

If any of this leaves you unsure, that's normal, and it's exactly what I'm here for. A plain answer to a plain question is always worth asking for.

The short version, one more time

If you take nothing else from this guide, take these. They cover almost everything the buttons will ever ask of you.

The buttons hide under the bottom edge or around the back-right, or they're a single joystick you press and nudge. Press one and let the on-screen guide show you the rest.

Brightness lives in the menu; set it to match the room. The Input setting chooses which socket the screen listens to, and a 'No Signal' message almost always means the wrong input or a loose cable — not a broken screen. Exit, Back, or a left nudge gets you out of any menu, and a factory reset undoes everything at once.

★ Keep this page handy

Tuck this guide in a drawer with your other home papers. When a screen frightens you, this page and a calm minute will usually settle it — and if not, I'm a phone call away at (330) 200-8042.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks puzzling over those little monitor buttons, answered plainly.

Q: My screen says 'No Signal.' Is it broken?

Almost certainly not — a broken screen couldn't show you words at all. It means the screen isn't getting a picture on the input it's set to. Switch the input and reseal the cable, and it usually comes right back.

Q: I can't find any buttons. Where are they?

Feel along the bottom edge underneath the frame, and around the lower-right of the back. Many newer screens use one small joystick on the back instead of a row of buttons. A flashlight helps.

Q: I pressed something and now the picture looks wrong. Did I ruin it?

No. Nothing you press can harm the screen. Open the menu, choose Reset or Factory Settings, and every picture setting goes back to how it started.

Q: How do I make the screen less bright?

Open the menu, find Brightness (often a sun symbol), and nudge the bar down until it's comfortable — about as bright as white paper in the same room light.

★ Still stuck on a button or a black screen?

Don't wrestle with it alone. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll sort it out calmly — often right over the phone, with nothing to buy.

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 the buttons on your monitor 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. For anything that calls for licensed electrical work, 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

Where the Buttons Hide

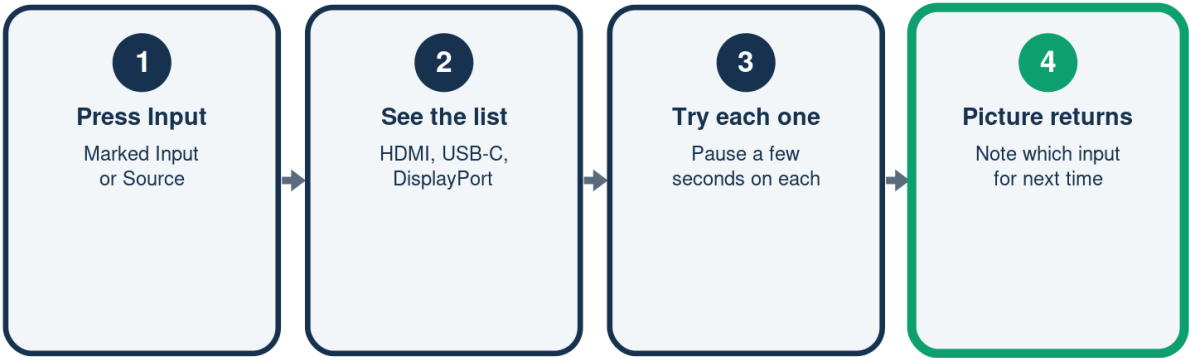
Three common places -- feel before you look

	Where to feel	What you'll find
Bottom edge	Under the frame	Facing down
Back-right	Lower corner	Facing away
One joystick	A small nub	Press and nudge

Press any one and the on-screen guide shows what each does.

Switching the Input

The calm way to bring a black screen back



You cannot harm anything by trying each input in turn.

What 'No Signal' Really Means

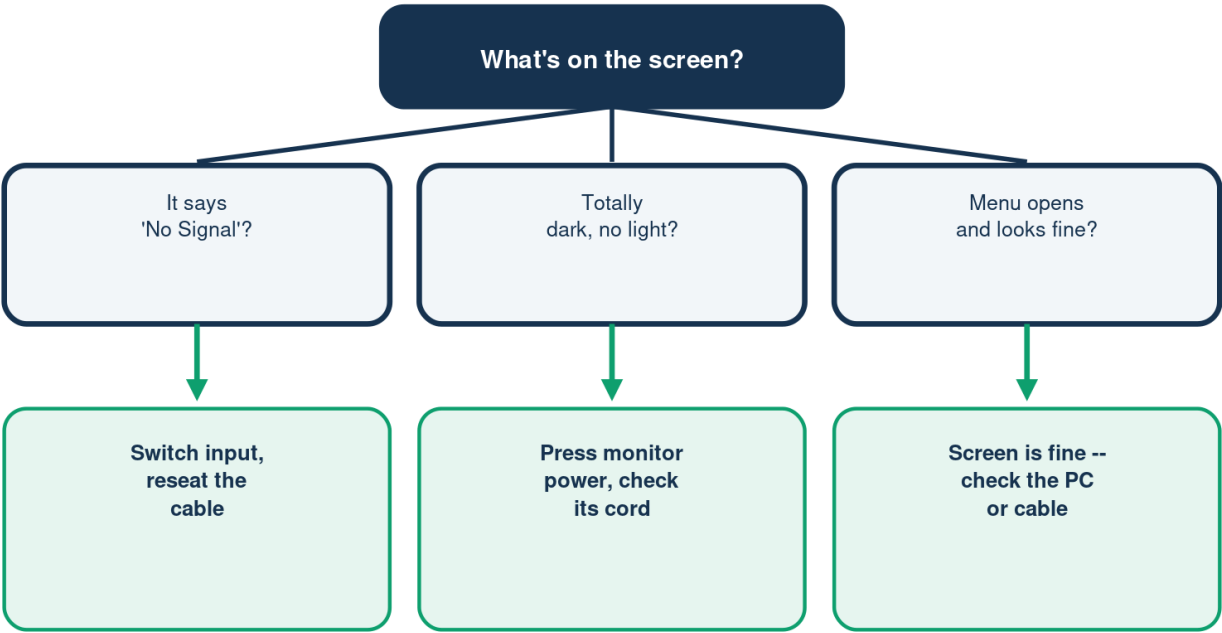
A message from a healthy screen -- and the fix

	What it means	What to do
Wrong input	Empty socket	Switch the input
Loose cable	Not seated	Reseat both ends
PC asleep	No picture sent	Wake the computer

A screen showing words is a working screen -- don't replace it yet.

Screen Showing Nothing?

Let what you see point the way



'No Signal' is never a broken screen -- it is a screen asking for a picture.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness, no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



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.

— *Bill*



Book a visit —
billshometech.com/book

Use of these guides is subject to our Terms of Use (billshometech.com/terms-of-use).

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

For general information only — not professional advice. Use at your own risk. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech