BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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The Picture's There but There's No Sound

A perfect picture and total silence — the calm, in-order checks that bring the sound back

Plain-English TV help from:
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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

No sound with a good picture almost always means the sound is muted, turned down, or sent to the wrong place — not a broken speaker. Check Mute and the volume first, on whichever device is meant to make the sound. If a soundbar stays silent, set the TV's Sound Output to the soundbar and use the HDMI port marked ARC.

The big gotcha: set the TV's digital audio output to “PCM,” which silent soundbars usually need. Watch for the TV sending sound to stray Bluetooth headphones, and use the “clear voice” setting if dialogue is hard to follow.

1 The Short Version

No sound with a good picture almost always means the sound is muted, turned down, or being routed somewhere you are not listening. It is rarely a blown speaker. A handful of calm checks — mute, volume, the right speaker choice, and one common audio setting — fix the great majority of cases.

Work down this list and stop as soon as you hear sound. Most people are back to normal within the first few checks.

- Check the obvious first: mute, volume, and which device the volume buttons control.
- If you use a soundbar, make sure the TV is set to send sound to it, not its own speakers.
- One wrong audio-format setting silences many soundbars — switching it to “PCM” often fixes it.
- No sound on just one app or input narrows the problem down nicely.

TIP

Make sure you are not muted, and that the volume is actually up on the device making the sound. It sounds too simple, but a muted TV or a soundbar turned all the way down is behind a remarkable number of “no sound” calls — always rule it out first.

2 Where Is the Sound Supposed to Come From?

The first question to settle is which device is meant to be making the sound. A TV on its own uses its built-in speakers. A TV with a soundbar or a receiver is usually set to send its sound out to that instead, and its own speakers go silent on purpose. Knowing which setup you have tells you where to look.

Many “no sound” problems are really “sound in the wrong place” problems — the TV is sending audio to a soundbar that is off, or to its own speakers when you expected the soundbar. Once you know where the sound should be coming from, you can check that that device is on, turned up, and selected.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you have a soundbar or receiver, its remote — not the TV's — usually controls that sound. A common tangle is turning up the TV's volume when the soundbar is the thing actually playing, so nothing changes. Make sure you are adjusting the device that is meant to be making the noise.

3 The 60-Second Checks

Most silent TVs come back with these simple checks. Do them in order and stop the moment you hear sound.

1. Press Mute once to make sure the TV is not silenced — look for a mute symbol on screen.

2. Turn the volume up well past a whisper, using the remote for whichever device makes the sound.
3. If you have a soundbar or receiver, confirm it is powered on and its own volume is up.
4. Try a different channel, app, or input — if sound returns, the silence was tied to just that one.
5. Restart the TV (and soundbar) by unplugging for a minute if the quick checks do not help.

> **TIP**
>
> Some remotes have two volume controls — one for the TV and one for a soundbar or cable box — and it is easy to reach for the wrong one. If pressing volume-up does nothing, check whether a second set of volume buttons on the same remote is the one that works.

4 Pick the Right Audio Output

If the sound is going to the wrong place, the fix is in the TV's audio settings, where you choose which speakers it uses. This is the single most common cause of a soundbar that stays silent.

1. Open the TV's Settings and find the Sound or Audio menu.
2. Look for “Sound Output,” “Speakers,” or “Audio Output.”
3. Choose your soundbar or receiver if that is what you listen through — often shown as “HDMI,” “ARC,” or “external speakers.”
4. Choose “TV Speakers” instead if you want sound from the TV itself.
5. Test after each change; the right choice makes sound appear at once.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The connection between a modern TV and a soundbar usually runs through a single HDMI port on the TV marked “ARC” or “eARC.” If your soundbar is plugged into a different HDMI port, the sound may not pass through — moving its cable to the ARC-marked port is often the whole fix.

5 The Audio-Format Setting That Silences Soundbars

Here is the gotcha that stumps almost everyone with a soundbar. TVs can send sound in a few different formats, and if the TV sends a fancy surround-sound format that your soundbar does not understand, the result is dead silence — even though everything is connected and selected correctly. It looks like a broken soundbar but is simply a mismatch.

The fix is to tell the TV to send sound in a simpler, universal format, usually labeled "PCM." Nearly every soundbar understands PCM, so switching to it restores the sound in most of these cases. You give up nothing for everyday watching.

1. In the TV's Sound settings, look for "Digital audio output," "audio format," or similar.
2. Change it from "Auto," "Dolby," or "Bitstream" to "PCM."
3. Test the sound — if it returns, the format mismatch was the culprit.

> **WATCH OUT**
> This one setting is behind a huge share of "my new soundbar has no sound" calls, and it is easy to miss because nothing looks wrong. If a soundbar is correctly connected and selected but stays silent, try PCM before assuming anything is broken.

6 Check the Cable Between TV and Soundbar

If the right output is chosen and the format is PCM but the soundbar is still silent, the cable carrying the sound may be loose, in the wrong port, or failing.

1. Press the HDMI or optical cable firmly into both the TV and the soundbar.
2. On the TV, make sure that cable is in the port marked ARC or eARC for a soundbar.
3. If you use an optical cable, check that the little red light shows at each end when connected.
4. Try a different cable if you have one — cables do fail and look exactly like no sound.

GOOD TO KNOW

Soundbars connect one of two ways: by an HDMI cable to the TV's ARC port, or by a thin optical cable. The HDMI way carries more and lets one remote control the volume; the optical way is simpler but older. Knowing which yours uses helps you check the right cable and port.

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.

7 No Sound on Just One App or Input

If everything is silent except one source — one app, one channel, one input — the problem is narrowed right down, and that is good news. It rules out the TV's speakers and the soundbar, and points at that one source.

- Some shows or ads are simply mixed quietly, or a particular app has its own volume turned down.
- A streaming app can have a muted or low in-app volume separate from the TV's.
- A specific input with no sound may have a loose cable or a device set to the wrong audio out.
- If a headphone or Bluetooth connection is active, the TV may be sending sound there instead.

TIP

Check whether the TV has quietly connected to a pair of Bluetooth headphones or earbuds left switched on nearby — if so, it is sending the sound to them and the room stays silent. Turning the headphones off, or disconnecting them in the TV's Bluetooth settings, brings the sound back to the speakers.

8 Private Listening and Stray Bluetooth

A whole category of “no sound” turns out to be sound going quietly to headphones or earbuds instead of the room. Modern TVs and streaming boxes can send their audio to Bluetooth headphones for private listening, which is a lovely feature — until a forgotten pair switches on across the room and silently steals the sound without anyone realizing.

If the picture plays but the speakers are silent for no clear reason, it is well worth checking whether the TV has connected to a Bluetooth device. The fix is simply to disconnect it or switch those headphones off, and the sound returns to the speakers at once. This is an easy thing to overlook precisely because nothing on the picture suggests it.

1. Open the TV's or streaming device's Bluetooth or Sound settings.
2. Look for any connected headphones, earbuds, or speakers and disconnect them.
3. Switch off any nearby Bluetooth headphones that may have powered on by themselves.
4. Test the sound — it should come back to the room speakers right away.

> **TIP**
>
> If you do enjoy private listening — for late-night watching without disturbing anyone — it is a genuinely useful feature once it is set up deliberately. The trouble only comes when it connects by accident, so knowing where that setting lives lets you use it on purpose and switch it off when you are done.

9 Dialogue Too Quiet, Everything Else Too Loud

A close cousin of no sound is sound you can hear but cannot understand — the music and effects boom while the dialogue is a mumble. This is a real and common complaint, especially as our hearing changes, and modern TVs have settings made exactly for it.

- Look for a “clear voice,” “dialogue enhancement,” or “voice boost” setting in the Sound menu.
- Choosing a “Standard” or “Speech” sound mode instead of “Movie” or “Cinema” often lifts the voices.
- Some soundbars have their own night or voice mode that makes speech clearer.
- Turning off heavy surround or “virtual” sound effects can make dialogue easier to follow.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> This is covered in full in its own guide, but it is worth knowing here: quiet dialogue is almost never a hearing problem you must simply live with. A couple of settings genuinely make a difference, and they are easy to turn on.

10 When Sound Vanishes After a Change

Sound very often disappears right after something changed — a power cut, a new soundbar, a swapped cable, or an internet-company visit. That timing is a strong clue, because it means a setting was reset or a connection was disturbed rather than anything wearing out. Thinking back to what changed just before the silence usually points straight at the cause.

After a power cut, a TV can forget its audio-output choice and fall back to its own speakers, or lose the PCM setting that kept a soundbar happy — so re-checking those two settings is the first move. After a new soundbar or a swapped cable, the likeliest culprit is the cable being in the wrong HDMI port, or the audio format now mismatched. And after an internet-company visit, a new cable box may be sending sound in a format the soundbar cannot read, which the PCM setting again resolves.

- After a power cut: re-check the Sound Output choice and the PCM setting, which can reset.
- After a new soundbar: confirm the cable is in the TV's ARC port and the format is PCM.
- After a swapped cable: make sure the new cable is fully seated and actually works.

- After a cable-box change: the new box's audio format may need setting to PCM or stereo.

> **WATCH OUT**
> When sound disappears the same day something was installed or there was a power cut, do not assume the worst — a reset setting is far more likely than broken hardware. Retracing that one change is usually quicker than working through everything from scratch.

11 Rule Out a Real Hardware Fault

Only after the settings are ruled out is it worth suspecting the hardware, and even then it is usually a cable or a soundbar rather than the TV. A simple test tells you a great deal.

1. Set the TV's output to “TV Speakers” and test — if the TV's own speakers work, the TV's sound is fine and the trouble is the soundbar or its cable.
2. If even the TV's own speakers are silent after all the checks, the TV may need a professional look.
3. Try the soundbar with a different source if it has one, to see whether it makes any sound at all.

> **WATCH OUT**
> A TV whose own speakers are completely dead after every setting has been checked is unusual, and worth having looked at rather than guessed at. More often, though, I find a silent system comes down to the PCM setting or a cable in the wrong port — a five-minute fix on a visit.

12 When to Call Bill

Most silent TVs come back with a mute check, the right output, and the PCM setting, and this guide gets most people there. But soundbars and receivers add connections and settings that are easy to tangle, and if the sound will not return no matter what you try, you do not have to keep digging through menus.

I come to you, trace the sound from the source all the way to the speakers, and find exactly where it drops out — output setting, audio format, cable, or port. I set it right, make sure one remote controls the volume, and tune the dialogue clarity while I am at it, so your shows are not just audible but easy to follow.

- The soundbar stays silent even after choosing it and trying the PCM setting.
- You are not sure which cable or port the soundbar should use.
- The volume is controlled by the wrong remote and you want it simplified.
- Even the TV's own speakers are silent after every check.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the TV. Try these in order; stop as soon as you hear sound.

I want to...	Do this...
Bring sound back fast	Check Mute, turn the volume up on the device that makes the sound
Fix a silent soundbar	TV Settings Sound Sound Output choose the soundbar (HDMI/ARC)
Fix the silent-soundbar gotcha	Set the TV's digital audio output to “PCM”
Check the connection	Press the cable in firmly; use the TV's ARC/eARC port for a soundbar
Make voices clearer	Turn on “clear voice” / dialogue enhancement, or use Standard sound mode
Catch a stray link	Turn off any Bluetooth headphones the TV may be sending sound to
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

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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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