BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2097

Updated November 2026

The "Turn It Off and Back On" Guide — and Why It Really Works

The oldest advice in tech is also the best — here's how to do it right, and why it fixes so much

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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

When a device misbehaves, turning it off and back on clears the invisible clutter that builds up while it runs, and it never erases your photos, messages, or settings. Do it the gentle way through the buttons or menu while the screen still works; for the internet, unplug the modem and router, wait 30 seconds, and bring the modem back first.

The one rule: never interrupt a device that says it is updating or "do not turn off." A restart is different from a reset — a reset erases, a restart doesn't. If the same trouble keeps returning after each restart, that is the sign to call for a proper look.

1 The Short Version

A restart is the single most powerful thing you can do when a device is acting strangely, and it is almost impossible to do any harm with it. A huge share of the problems people call about — a frozen app, a slow computer, a TV that won't load, a phone that won't send a text — clear up the moment the device is switched off and on again.

You do not need to understand what is happening inside to benefit from it. Think of a restart as letting the device take a fresh breath. This guide shows you how to do it properly on everything in the house, and the rare times you should pause instead.

- A restart clears the temporary clutter that builds up while a device runs.
- It is safe: it does not erase your photos, messages, documents, or settings.
- "Restart" is different from "reset" — a reset can erase things, a restart never does.
- If a restart fixes it once but the trouble keeps coming back, that is worth a call.

WATCH OUT

When in doubt, restart first and ask questions later. It costs you two minutes, it never loses your data, and it solves more problems than any other single step. If someone on the phone asks you to try things, this is almost always the first thing they will have you do anyway.

2 Why a Restart Fixes So Much

While a device is switched on, it is constantly juggling dozens of small invisible jobs — remembering where you were, holding little scraps of information in its short-term memory, keeping connections open to Wi-Fi and to apps. Over hours and days, some of those little jobs get stuck, tangled, or left half-finished, and the device starts to stumble.

Turning it off clears all of that temporary clutter away. When it comes back on, it starts every one of those jobs fresh, cleanly, from the beginning — the way it did when it was new. Nothing you care about is touched, because your photos, messages, and settings live in long-term memory that a restart leaves completely alone.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is why a restart can fix a problem even when no one can explain what the problem was. You are not diagnosing anything — you are simply clearing the slate so the device can sort itself out. That is also why it so often works on the very first try.

3 Restart vs. Reset — Know the Difference

These two words sound almost the same and mean opposite things, so it is worth getting them straight before you touch anything. Getting them mixed up is one of the few ways a simple fix can turn into a bad afternoon.

- A RESTART (also called "reboot") simply switches the device off and on. It changes nothing you own. This is the safe, everyday fix in this guide.
- A RESET (often "factory reset" or "reset all settings") wipes the device back to how it came from the store — erasing your data. That is a last resort, not a first step.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> If a screen ever offers you "reset," "erase," "factory," or "restore," stop and do not tap it just to fix a small glitch. Those words mean erase. A plain restart never uses those words — it just says "restart," "reboot," or shows a power symbol.

4 Restarting a Phone or Tablet

The gentle way to restart a phone or tablet is through its own buttons, while the screen is still working. This is the one to use for everyday slowness or a misbehaving app.

1. On an iPhone or iPad: press and hold the side button together with either volume button until a slider appears, then slide it to power off. Wait ten seconds, then hold the side button again to turn it back on.
2. On many Android phones: press and hold the power button (or power and volume-up together) until a menu appears, then tap Restart or Power Off.
3. If you only see "Power Off," use it, wait ten seconds, then press the power button to turn the device back on.
4. Give it a minute or two to fully wake up before you judge whether it worked.

> **TIP**
>
> If the screen is completely frozen and these buttons do nothing, you need a "force restart," which uses a different button combination. That has its own guide — it is still safe, just a firmer version of the same idea.

5 Restarting a Computer

On a computer, there is an important difference between "Restart" and "Shut Down," and for fixing problems you want Restart. Restart does a cleaner job of clearing things out than shutting down and starting again, especially on Windows.

1. On Windows: click the Start button, choose the power icon, and pick Restart (not Shut down) — it closes everything cleanly and comes back fresh.
2. On a Mac: click the Apple menu in the top-left corner and choose Restart.
3. Save any open documents first — a restart closes your programs, though it will often offer to reopen them.
4. Let it come all the way back to the desktop before you start using it again.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Many people never truly restart their computer — they only close the lid or let it sleep, which is not the same thing. If your computer has felt slow for weeks, a real Restart is often all it needs, and doing one about once a week keeps it sprightly.

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.

6 Restarting Your Internet (Router and Modem)

When the whole house loses internet, or everything is crawling, restarting your internet equipment fixes it more often than anything else. The order matters, because one box feeds the other.

1. Unplug the power from your modem and your router (if they are two separate boxes; many homes have one combined box).
2. Wait a full 30 seconds — this really matters, as it lets the connection fully let go.

3. Plug the modem back in first and wait two to three minutes until its lights settle into their normal pattern.
4. Plug the router back in and give it another two minutes.
5. Try a web page or an app to confirm the internet is back.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Look for a small recessed "reset" button on the router and do NOT press it — that erases your Wi-Fi name and password and knocks the whole house offline. To restart, you simply unplug the power; you never press that button.

7 Restarting a TV, Streaming Box, or Smart Speaker

Streaming sticks, cable boxes, smart TVs, and speakers all benefit from the same fresh breath. For most of them, the surest restart is simply pulling the power for a moment.

- Streaming stick or box (Roku, Fire TV, Apple TV): unplug it from power, wait ten seconds, and plug it back in. Many also have a Restart option in their Settings menu.
- Smart TV: unplug the TV itself from the wall for 30 seconds — this clears far more than the remote's power button does.
- Cable or satellite box: unplug it, wait a minute, and plug it back in; it may take a few minutes to reload the channel guide.
- Smart speaker (Alexa, Google): unplug it, count to ten, and plug it back in.

> **TIP**
>
> For a TV, pulling the plug for a full 30 seconds does something the remote's power button cannot — the remote only puts the TV to sleep, while unplugging truly clears it. This alone fixes a surprising number of "my TV is acting up" problems.

8 When a Restart Is the WRONG Move

Restarts are safe in almost every case, but there are a few moments to pause. Interrupting the device in the middle of certain jobs can cause the very problem you are trying to avoid.

- While it is installing an update — a screen that says "updating," "do not turn off," or shows a progress bar. Let it finish, even if it takes a long time.
- While a backup is actively running, to avoid leaving the backup half-done.
- If a device is hot, swollen, or smells odd — that is a hardware concern, not a restart one; unplug it and set it aside.
- If you are not sure whether the screen says "restart" or "reset" — read it twice first.

WATCH OUT

The phrase "Do not turn off" on a screen means exactly that. An update that gets interrupted partway can leave a device stuck, and that is one of the few self-inflicted problems that is genuinely hard to undo at home. When you see those words, walk away and let it work.

9 How Often Should You Restart Things?

You do not need a strict schedule, but a little routine prevents most slow-creeping problems before they start. Devices that run for weeks on end are the ones that get sluggish and glitchy.

- Phone and tablet: once a week is plenty, and it keeps them snappy.
- Computer: a true Restart about once a week, more if it feels slow.
- Router and internet box: only when the internet acts up — no need otherwise.
- Streaming box and smart speaker: only when they misbehave.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you can't remember the last time a device was fully off, that is usually a sign it is overdue. A phone left on for a month is a very common cause of "it's just not working right lately."

10 If the Restart Didn't Help

A restart solves a great many things, but not everything, and that is useful information rather than a dead end. If you restarted properly and the trouble is still there, the problem is something a restart can't reach — and knowing that saves you from going in circles.

1. Make sure the device actually restarted — a frozen one may have only slept. If the screen never went dark, try again or use a force restart.
2. Restart the related equipment too — for an internet problem, that means the router; for a printer, the computer as well.
3. Note exactly what the trouble is and when it started — that detail helps whoever helps you next.
4. If it keeps coming back after each restart, that points to a deeper cause worth a proper look.

TIP

A problem that a restart fixes for a day and then returns is telling you something — usually that a particular app, setting, or piece of equipment is the real culprit. That pattern is exactly the kind of thing I can track down on a visit.

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11 The Right Order for a Whole-House Problem

When it feels like everything broke at once — the TV won't stream, the tablet won't load pages, the smart speaker went silent — the culprit is almost always the internet, not each separate gadget. Restarting a dozen devices one by one is exhausting and usually pointless, because they are all just waiting on the one box that feeds them.

So when trouble is everywhere, start at the source and work outward. Fix the internet first, give everything a minute to find it again, and most of your "broken" devices quietly come back on their own without any further fuss from you.

1. Restart the internet box first: unplug the modem and router, wait 30 seconds, plug the modem back in, then the router.
2. Wait a full three to five minutes for the internet to come fully back and the lights to settle.
3. Check one device — a phone or the TV. If it works now, most of the others will too.
4. Only if a single device is still stuck after the internet is healthy do you restart that one device by itself.
5. Give each device a moment to reconnect before deciding it is still broken.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> This "source first" habit saves enormous time and worry. Nine times out of ten, when many things fail together, they recover together the instant the internet does — so you never have to touch most of them at all.

12 Sleep, Shut Down, and Restart Are Not the Same

Three things look similar but do very different amounts of good, and knowing the difference explains why "I turn it off every night" sometimes isn't enough. Many devices only ever sleep, which is why they can feel sluggish even though you think you shut them down.

- SLEEP (closing a laptop lid, tapping a phone's side button, the TV remote's power button): the device dozes but keeps everything running. It barely clears anything — convenient, but not a fix.
- SHUT DOWN: the device truly powers off. Good, but on Windows especially it can keep some clutter for faster start-up.
- RESTART: the device powers all the way down and comes back fresh. This is the one that actually fixes things — always choose it when something is misbehaving.

The practical takeaway is simple. For everyday convenience, sleep is fine. But when something is acting up, don't just put it to sleep and hope — choose a full Restart, which is the only one of the three that reliably clears the slate.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> On a laptop, closing the lid only puts it to sleep. If your laptop has felt off for a while, choose Restart from the menu rather than just shutting the lid — you may never have truly restarted it.

13 What a Restart Simply Cannot Fix

A restart is a wonderful first move, but it is not magic, and it helps to know its limits so you don't keep trying the same thing. A restart clears temporary clutter — it does not repair a broken part, mend a frayed cable, pay a lapsed bill, or undo a mistyped password.

- A physical problem — a dead battery, a cracked screen, a cable that only works when wiggled — won't change after a restart.
- A service that is down at the company's end (your email provider, a streaming service) comes back when they fix it, not when you restart.
- A wrong password or an expired subscription needs the password or the bill sorted, not a reboot.
- A setting someone changed by accident stays changed until it is changed back.

GOOD TO KNOW

Knowing what a restart can't fix is half the battle. If you have restarted properly twice and nothing improved, the cause is one of these deeper things — and that is the moment to stop rebooting and look at the real culprit instead.

14 Keep It Simple: Your Restart Habit

If you remember nothing else, remember this: when something misbehaves, restart it before you do anything more complicated. It is free, it is safe, and it works more often than any other single step you can take.

> *Turn it off, count to ten, turn it on. Nine times out of ten, that is the whole fix.*

Build the habit and you will solve most of your own small problems in two minutes flat, and you will know, when a restart doesn't do it, that it is time to bring in help rather than keep wrestling.

15 When to Call Bill

Restarting is the safest first step there is, so there is no harm in trying it yourself. But if the same problem keeps returning after every restart, if you are unsure whether a screen is asking you to restart or to erase, or if a device won't turn back on at all, you do not need to puzzle over it alone.

I come to you here in Portage County, find the real cause behind a problem a restart only patches, and set things up so it stays fixed. I will also show you exactly how to restart each of your own devices, so the simple fixes stay in your hands.

- The trouble comes right back after every restart.

- A device won't turn back on, or won't fully start up.
- You are not sure whether a screen means "restart" or "reset / erase."
- You would simply rather have someone confirm it is safe before you press anything.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. When something acts up, restart it first — it's safe and it fixes most things.

I want to…	Do this…
Restart a phone/tablet	Hold the side/power button, choose Power Off, wait 10 seconds, turn back on
Restart a computer	Use Restart (not just Shut Down): Windows Start power Restart; Mac Apple menu Restart
Restart the internet	Unplug modem and router, wait 30 seconds, modem back first, then router
Restart a TV	Unplug the TV from the wall for 30 seconds (the remote's power button isn't enough)
Restart a streaming box	Unplug it, wait 10 seconds, plug back in
Know when NOT to	Never interrupt a screen that says "updating" or "do not turn off"
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.

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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