BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Tracking Mileage and Expenses for Gig Work — A Plain-English Guide

Keep the records that lower your gig-work taxes

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 thing in a breath.

If you do gig work with your own car and supplies — rideshare, delivery, or similar — tracking your mileage and expenses is one of the most valuable things you can do, because those miles and costs are generally tax-deductible and tracking them can substantially lower the tax you owe on your gig income. As an independent contractor (a '1099' worker), no employer tracks this for you — it's entirely on you, and not tracking means paying more tax than you have to.

The biggest single deduction for most drivers is mileage: the IRS lets you deduct a set rate for each business mile you drive (the 'standard mileage rate'), and because gig drivers rack up a lot of miles, this adds up fast — but only if you've recorded those miles. That rate is set by the IRS and changes over time (it's even been adjusted mid-year), so always use the current rate from IRS.gov.

Beyond mileage, other business expenses — things like phone costs, supplies, and certain fees tied to your gig work — can also be deductible. The good news is that tracking is now easy: mileage-tracker apps run in the background and log your drives automatically, and let you snap photos of receipts, so you're not scribbling in a notebook.

The keys are to track consistently (every business mile and expense, as you go), keep your records (mileage logs and receipts, held for years in case the IRS ever asks), and not mix business with personal — only business miles and genuine business expenses count. Do this, and you keep more of what you earn while staying on the right side of the rules. (General information, not tax advice; rules and rates change — confirm current ones on IRS.gov or with a tax professional.)

- Gig mileage and business expenses are generally tax-deductible and can substantially lower your taxes — but as a 1099 worker, it's on you to track them; nobody does it for you.

- The big one is mileage: the IRS lets you deduct a set rate per business mile (the standard mileage rate), which adds up fast for drivers — but only if you've recorded the miles. The rate changes, so use the current IRS rate.
- Tracking is easy now: apps auto-log your drives in the background and let you photograph receipts.
- Keys: track consistently, keep your logs and receipts for years (in case of audit), and don't mix business with personal. (General info, not tax advice — confirm current rules on IRS.gov.)

WHY IT MATTERS

2 Why Tracking Matters So Much

It's money, and it's on you.

It's worth being clear about why mileage and expense tracking matters so much for gig workers, because once you see it as real money you're leaving on the table, the motivation to track becomes obvious. Two facts drive it: these costs are deductible, and nobody tracks them for you.

- Your gig income is taxed: gig work income is taxable, and as an independent contractor you generally owe income tax plus self-employment tax on your net earnings — so your tax bill can be sizable.
- Expenses reduce what's taxed: you're taxed on your profit, not your gross earnings — so legitimate business expenses (including mileage) are subtracted, lowering the income you pay tax on.
- Mileage is usually the biggest deduction: because driving gigs involve a lot of miles, the mileage deduction is typically the largest one, and tracking it can cut your tax bill substantially.
- Untracked means lost: if you don't record your miles and expenses, you generally can't claim them — so failing to track is the same as overpaying your taxes, often by a lot.
- Nobody does it for you: unlike an employee with an employer, as a 1099 worker there's no one tracking your costs — the responsibility (and the benefit) is entirely yours.

- It also keeps you compliant: good records aren't just about deductions; they help you report accurately and back up your numbers if the IRS ever questions them.

The reason mileage and expense tracking deserves real attention from gig workers is simply that it's money — often a lot of it — and the responsibility for capturing it falls entirely on you. Start with the tax picture: income from gig work is taxable, and as an independent contractor you generally owe not just income tax but also self-employment tax on your net earnings, which together can make for a meaningful tax bill.

The crucial point is that you are taxed on your profit — your earnings minus your legitimate business costs — rather than on your gross earnings, which means that every legitimate business expense you can document, including your business mileage, is subtracted from your income before tax is calculated, directly lowering what you owe. For most people who drive for their gig work, mileage is by far the biggest of these deductions, because driving gigs rack up large numbers of miles, and claiming them can reduce a tax bill substantially.

But here is the catch that makes tracking so important: if you haven't recorded your miles and expenses, you generally can't claim them, so failing to track is, in practical terms, the same as voluntarily overpaying your taxes — often by hundreds or thousands of dollars over a year. And unlike an employee, who has an employer and payroll system handling such things, a 1099 gig worker has no one tracking any of this; the responsibility, and equally the entire benefit, is yours alone.

Beyond the money, good records also keep you compliant: they let you report your income and deductions accurately, and they give you the documentation to back up your numbers should the IRS ever question your return. Put simply, tracking turns a legal tax benefit you're entitled to into money you actually keep, while not tracking throws that benefit away — which is why building the habit is one of the highest-value things a gig worker can do. (This is general information, not tax advice; confirm the current rules for your situation on IRS.gov or with a tax professional.)

GOOD TO KNOW

Gig income is taxed on your profit — earnings minus legitimate business costs — so every business mile and expense you document lowers what you owe (income plus self-employment tax). Mileage is usually the biggest deduction for drivers. But if you don't record it, you generally can't claim it, so not tracking is the same as overpaying — often a lot. As a 1099 worker, nobody does this for you; the responsibility and the benefit are yours. (General info, not tax advice — confirm on IRS.gov.)

THE MILEAGE DEDUCTION

3 How the Mileage Deduction Works

A set rate per business mile.

Mileage is usually the biggest deduction for gig drivers, so it's worth understanding how it works. The most common method is the IRS 'standard mileage rate': you deduct a set number of cents for every business mile you drive. Simple in principle — but it depends entirely on having tracked your miles.

- The standard mileage rate: the IRS sets a rate (in cents per mile) that you can deduct for each business mile — multiply your business miles by that rate to get your deduction. It covers your vehicle's running costs (gas, wear, etc.) in one figure.
- The rate changes — use the current one: the standard mileage rate is set by the IRS and changes over time (for example, it was 72.5 cents per mile early in 2026 and was raised to 76 cents per mile effective July 1, 2026). Always use the current rate from IRS.gov for the period you drove.
- It adds up for drivers: because gig driving involves many miles, even at a few dozen cents each, the deduction grows large over a year — which is why tracking every business mile matters.
- Business miles only: only miles driven for your gig work count — not your personal driving or (generally) your regular commute; mixing them in is a mistake (and against the rules).
- The alternative: actual expenses: instead of the standard rate, you can deduct your actual vehicle costs (gas, maintenance, depreciation, etc.) by their business-use share — more record-keeping, and you generally pick one method; which is better varies, so consider advice.

- Either way, you must track miles: both methods require knowing your business miles (the standard rate directly, actual-expense to figure your business-use percentage) — so mileage tracking is essential regardless.

Since mileage is typically the largest deduction for gig drivers, it pays to understand how it actually works, and the most common and simplest approach is the IRS 'standard mileage rate.' Under this method, the IRS sets a rate expressed in cents per mile, and you deduct that amount for every business mile you drive: you simply multiply your total business miles for the period by the rate to get your deduction, and that single rate is meant to cover all of your vehicle's running costs — gas, maintenance, wear and tear, and so on — rolled into one figure, which is what makes it so convenient.

A vital detail is that this rate is set by the IRS and changes over time, and not always just once a year: in 2026, for instance, the business rate began the year at 72.5 cents per mile and was then raised to 76 cents per mile effective July 1, 2026, a mid-year change. Because of this, you should always use the current official rate from IRS.gov for the period in which you actually drove, rather than relying on a figure you half-remember or read somewhere, since using the wrong rate throws off your deduction.

The reason this deduction matters so much is sheer volume: gig driving involves a great many miles, and even at a few dozen cents per mile, the total deduction grows large over a full year of driving — which is precisely why recording every business mile is worth the effort. It's essential, though, to count only business miles: miles driven for your gig work qualify, but your personal driving, and generally your ordinary commute, do not, and mixing personal miles into your business total is both a common mistake and against the rules.

There is an alternative to the standard rate — the 'actual expense' method, where you instead deduct the real costs of operating your vehicle (gas, maintenance, insurance, depreciation, and the like) according to the percentage of use that's for business — but it requires considerably more record-keeping, you generally have to choose one method, and which comes out better depends on your situation, so it's an area where getting advice can pay off.

Crucially, both methods require you to know your business mileage — the standard rate uses it directly, and the actual-expense method needs it to work out your business-use percentage — so tracking your miles is essential no matter which method you ultimately use. (Tax rules and rates change; confirm the current ones on IRS.gov or with a tax professional.)

WATCH OUT

The standard mileage rate is set by the IRS and changes — it was 72.5 cents per mile early in 2026 and rose to 76 cents effective July 1, 2026, a mid-year change. Always use the current official rate from IRS.gov for the period you drove, not a half-remembered figure. Count only business miles — not personal driving or (generally) your commute. Both the standard-rate and actual-expense methods require tracking your miles, so mileage tracking is essential either way. (Confirm current rules on IRS.gov or with a tax pro.)

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.

TRACKING EASILY

4 Tracking Miles and Expenses the Easy Way

Let an app do the work.

The thing that used to make tracking a chore — scribbling miles in a notebook and shoeboxing receipts — is mostly gone, because apps now do the heavy lifting. A good mileage-and-expense tracker logs your drives automatically and stores your receipts, so the whole thing runs quietly in the background.

- Apps auto-log your miles: dedicated mileage-tracker apps run in the background on your phone and automatically detect and record your drives using GPS — so your miles are captured without you doing anything each trip.

- You classify trips as business or personal: the app logs all your driving, and you quickly mark each trip as business or personal (often with a swipe) — which keeps your business miles separate and accurate.
- Snap photos of receipts: good apps let you photograph receipts for gas, supplies, and other expenses and store them digitally — no more fading paper receipts in a drawer.
- They total it up for you: the app tallies your business miles and expenses and often estimates your deduction, making tax time far simpler than adding it all up by hand.
- Free and paid options exist: there are several mileage/expense apps with free and paid tiers; some are built for gig workers specifically. Pick one that's reliable and easy for you.
- A simple logbook also works: if you prefer, a manual mileage log (date, purpose, start/end odometer or miles) plus kept receipts is perfectly valid — the app just makes it easier and more consistent.

The best news about tracking is that the part that used to make it a tedious chore — jotting down your odometer in a notebook every trip and stuffing fading paper receipts into a shoebox — has largely been solved by apps, which now do the heavy lifting so that tracking can run quietly in the background of your day.

Dedicated mileage-tracker apps install on your phone and run in the background, automatically detecting when you're driving and recording your trips using the phone's GPS, so your miles get captured without you having to remember to start and stop a log for each trip — a huge practical difference. Because the app logs all of your driving, it then lets you quickly classify each trip as business or personal, often with a simple swipe, which is what keeps your deductible business miles cleanly separated from your personal driving and keeps your records accurate.

Good apps handle expenses too, letting you snap a photo of a receipt — for gas, supplies, car-wash, or whatever — and store it digitally, so you no longer depend on paper receipts that fade or get lost. They also do the arithmetic, tallying up your business miles and expenses over the year and often estimating your resulting deduction, which makes tax time dramatically simpler than trying to add everything up by hand from scraps of paper.

There are several such apps available, with both free and paid tiers, and some are built specifically with gig workers in mind, so it's worth picking one that's reliable and comfortable for you to use consistently — consistency being the real key. And if you'd rather not use an app at all, a straightforward manual mileage logbook — recording the date, the business purpose, and your start and end mileage (or odometer readings) for each business trip, together with your kept receipts — remains perfectly valid and acceptable; the app simply makes the same job easier and more consistent, which matters because the biggest failure in tracking is not doing it regularly.

However you do it, the goal is the same: capture every business mile and expense as you go, so that at tax time you have a complete, accurate record ready.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Let an app do the work: a mileage-tracker app runs in the background, auto-logs your drives by GPS, and lets you swipe each trip as business or personal — then you snap photos of receipts, and it totals everything for tax time. Several apps offer free and paid tiers, some built for gig workers; pick one you'll use consistently. Prefer no app? A manual logbook (date, purpose, start/end miles) plus kept receipts is perfectly valid — the key either way is tracking every business mile as you go.

RECORDS & MISTAKES

5 Keeping Records and Avoiding Mistakes

Keep it clean, keep it for years.

Tracking is only half the job; keeping your records properly and avoiding a few common mistakes is the other half — and it's what protects your deductions if the IRS ever asks. The rules here are simple: keep good records for years, and don't blur business with personal.

- Keep your records for years: keep your mileage logs and receipts for several years, because the IRS can question a return after the fact and you may need to prove your deductions (a common guideline is to keep tax records for several years — check the current recommendation).
- Don't mix business and personal: only business miles and genuine business expenses are deductible — keep personal driving and personal purchases out of your business totals; mixing them is a top mistake and a red flag.
- Track contemporaneously: record miles and expenses as you go (or very soon after), not reconstructed from memory months later — timely, consistent records are what hold up.
- Keep business money separate if you can: a separate bank account/card for gig work makes it far easier to keep business and personal expenses apart and to document everything.
- Only claim legitimate expenses: deduct genuine business costs, not inflated or personal ones — overclaiming invites trouble, while under-tracking costs you money; aim for accurate and complete.
- Consider a tax professional: gig taxes (self-employment tax, quarterly estimated payments, choosing a mileage method) get complex — a tax pro can save you money and mistakes, especially as your gig income grows.

Capturing your miles and expenses is only half the task; the other half is keeping those records properly and steering clear of a few common mistakes, and this half is what actually protects your deductions if the IRS ever looks at your return. The first rule is to keep your records for several years rather than discarding them once you've filed, because the IRS can question a return after the fact and you may be asked to prove the deductions you claimed — your mileage logs and receipts are that proof, so hold onto them (a common guideline is to keep tax records for a number of years, and you can check the current recommendation on IRS.gov).

The second, and one of the most important, is never to mix business with personal: only genuine business miles and genuine business expenses are deductible, so your personal driving and personal purchases must be kept out of your business totals, and blurring the two is both a classic mistake and a red flag that can cause trouble.

Related to this is tracking contemporaneously — that is, recording your miles and expenses as you go, or very soon after, rather than trying to reconstruct them from

memory months later at tax time, because timely, consistent records are what hold up under scrutiny while guesswork does not. A practical habit that makes everything cleaner is keeping your business money separate where you can, such as using a dedicated bank account or card for your gig work, which makes it far easier to keep business and personal expenses apart and to document each one.

It's equally important to claim only legitimate expenses: the goal is to be accurate and complete, deducting every genuine business cost you're entitled to while not inflating or inventing deductions, since overclaiming invites problems just as under-tracking quietly costs you money. Finally, because gig taxes can get genuinely complex — self-employment tax, the need to make quarterly estimated tax payments, the choice between the standard mileage and actual-expense methods — it's well worth considering a tax professional, who can often save you both money and mistakes, and this becomes more valuable as your gig income grows.

Keep clean, timely, separated records for years, claim honestly, and get help when it gets complicated, and your tracking will both maximize your deductions and keep you safely compliant. (General information, not tax advice; confirm current rules on IRS.gov or with a professional.)

WATCH OUT

Keep your mileage logs and receipts for years (the IRS can question a return later, and you'll need to prove your deductions). Never mix business with personal — only genuine business miles and expenses count, and blurring them is a top mistake. Track as you go rather than from memory, keep business money separate if you can, and claim only legitimate expenses. As gig taxes get complex (self-employment tax, quarterly payments), consider a tax professional. (General info, not tax advice.)

QUESTIONS

6 Plain Questions and Answers

The things gig workers ask most.

"Why should I bother tracking my miles and expenses?"

Because it's money. Your gig income is taxed on your profit — earnings minus legitimate business costs — so every business mile and expense you document lowers what you owe, and mileage is usually the biggest deduction for drivers. But if you don't record it, you generally can't claim it, so not tracking is the same as overpaying your taxes, often by a lot. As a 1099 worker, nobody tracks it for you — the benefit is yours to claim or lose.

"How does the mileage deduction work?"

The common method is the IRS standard mileage rate: you deduct a set number of cents for each business mile you drive, covering your car's running costs in one figure. The rate is set by the IRS and changes — it was 72.5 cents per mile early in 2026 and rose to 76 cents effective July 1, 2026 — so always use the current rate from IRS.gov for when you drove. Only business miles count, not personal driving or your commute.

"What's the easiest way to track?"

Use a mileage-tracker app. It runs in the background on your phone, auto-logs your drives by GPS, and lets you swipe each trip as business or personal, plus snap photos of receipts — then it totals everything for tax time. Several apps have free and paid tiers, some built for gig workers. If you prefer no app, a manual logbook (date, purpose, start/end miles) plus kept receipts is perfectly valid. The key is tracking consistently, as you go.

"How long do I keep the records?"

Keep your mileage logs and receipts for several years, because the IRS can question a return after you've filed and you may need to prove your deductions. A common guideline is to keep tax records for a number of years — check the current

recommendation on IRS.gov. Keep them clean too: don't mix business with personal, track as you go rather than from memory, and claim only legitimate expenses. (General information, not tax advice.)

WRAP UP

7

Keep More of What You Earn

Track it, and it pays off.

For gig workers who use their own car and supplies, tracking mileage and expenses is one of the highest-value money habits there is, because those miles and costs are generally tax-deductible and tracking them can substantially lower the tax you owe — while not tracking them is, in effect, overpaying your taxes, often by a lot.

As a 1099 independent contractor, nobody does this for you; the responsibility and the benefit are yours. The biggest deduction for most drivers is mileage: the IRS lets you deduct a set rate per business mile, and because gig driving piles up miles, it adds up fast — but only if you've recorded them, and only for business miles, using the current IRS rate (which changes, so check IRS.gov).

The good news is that tracking is now easy: apps run in the background, auto-log your drives, let you classify trips and photograph receipts, and total everything for tax time — though a simple manual logbook plus kept receipts works too. The keys are to track consistently as you go, keep your records for years in case the IRS ever asks, keep business cleanly separate from personal, and claim honestly — and to consider a tax professional as your gig taxes get more complex.

Build the habit, and you'll keep more of what you earn while staying on the right side of the rules. (This is general information, not tax advice; tax rules and rates change, so confirm the current ones on IRS.gov or with a tax professional for your situation.)

- Gig mileage and expenses are deductible and can substantially lower your taxes — not tracking them is overpaying. As a 1099 worker, it's on you; nobody does it for you.

- Mileage is the big deduction: a set IRS rate per business mile (it changes — use the current IRS.gov rate), business miles only.
- Tracking is easy: apps auto-log drives, classify trips, and store receipts; a manual logbook plus receipts works too. Track consistently, as you go.
- Keep records for years, keep business separate from personal, claim honestly, and consider a tax pro as it gets complex. (General info, not tax advice — confirm on IRS.gov.)

GOOD TO KNOW

If you do gig work and want to stop overpaying on taxes, I'm happy to help you set up easy tracking. We can pick a mileage-tracker app that auto-logs your drives and stores receipts, get you in the habit of classifying trips and capturing expenses as you go, and sort out a simple system for keeping your records for years. I'll point you to the current IRS mileage rate and rules on IRS.gov — and because gig taxes (self-employment tax, quarterly payments, choosing a mileage method) can get genuinely complex, a tax professional is well worth it as your income grows. This is general help, not tax advice — but good tracking is money in your pocket.

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…
why it matters	Mileage and expenses are deductible — they cut your taxes
it's on you	As a 1099 worker, nobody tracks this for you
the mileage deduction	Deduct a set rate per business mile (IRS rate)
track automatically	Apps log miles as you drive; snap receipt photos
keep records	Logs and receipts, kept for years, in case of audit
don't mix	Separate business from personal miles and costs
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

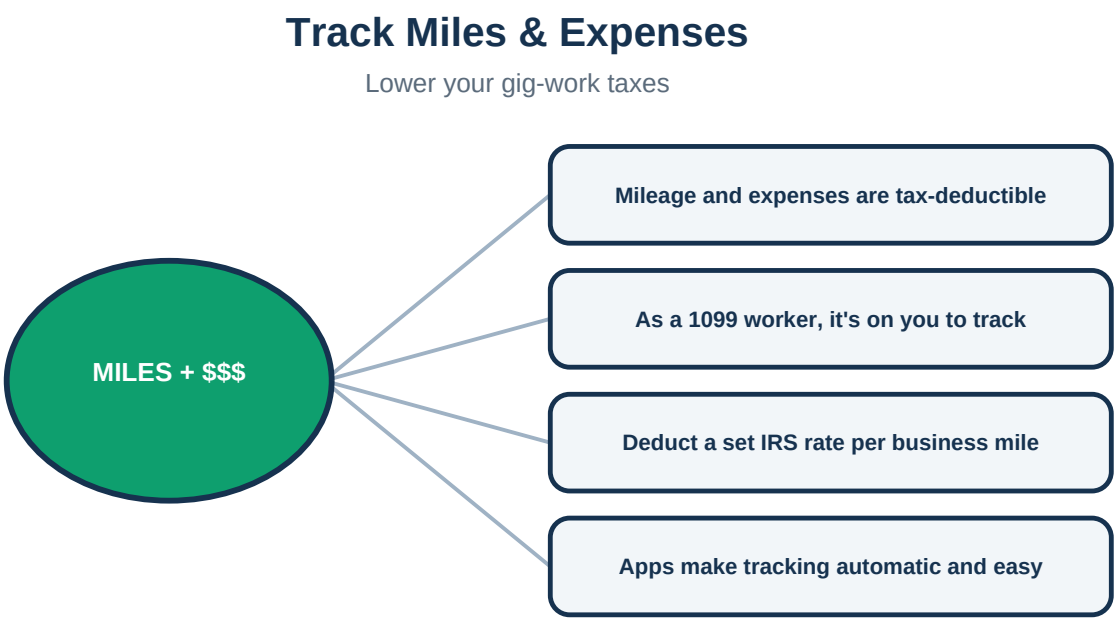


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

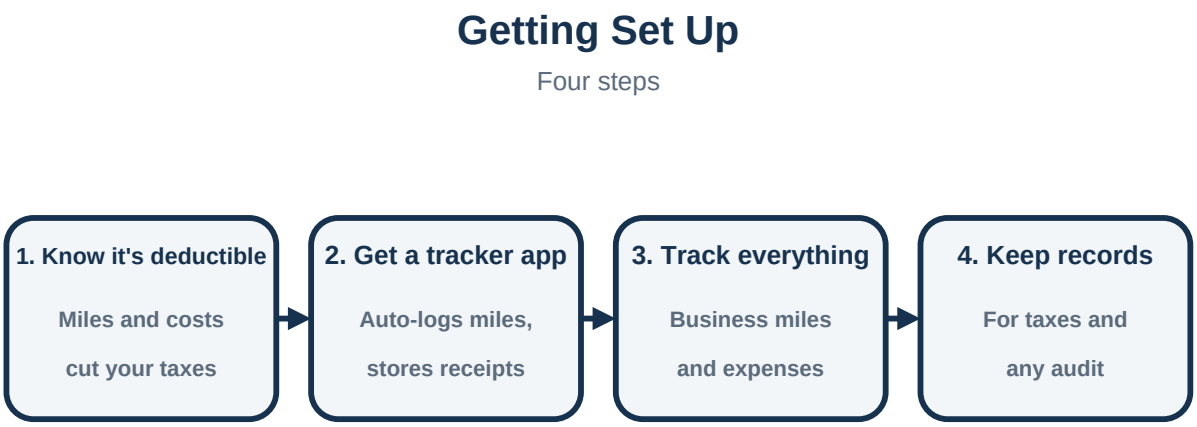


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

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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