BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Turn Your AirPods Into Hearing Helpers

Use the AirPods you already own to hear conversations, the TV, and the world more clearly

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What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

The 60-Second Version 3
The Short Version 3
What These Features Can and Cannot Do 4
Make Sure Everything Is Up to Date 4
Get the Fit Right First 5
Take the Hearing Check 6
Turn On the Hearing Assistance 6
Hear a Live Conversation: Live Listen 7
Hear the TV or Music Clearly 8
Tame a Noisy Room: Conversation Boost 8
Transparency, Noise Cancellation, and When to Use Each 9
Set What a Press Does 10
Use AirPods on Phone and Video Calls 10
When They Won't Connect 11
Everyday Comfort and Battery 11
Keep a Backup Plan 12
When to Call Bill 13
Everyday Cheat Sheet 14
A Note From Bill 15
Your Visit — and My Promise 16

SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

AirPods Pro (2nd generation and newer) can help with mild to moderate hearing loss — you may already own a hearing helper. Update the iPhone and AirPods first, get a snug ear-tip seal, then take the five-minute hearing check in the Health app in a quiet room, and turn on Hearing Assistance from the AirPods' settings.

Use Live Listen (the Hearing icon in Control Center) to hear across a noisy table, and connect the AirPods to the TV to watch at your own volume. See an audiologist if the check suggests significant loss, and keep separate alerts for sounds you cannot afford to miss.

1 The Short Version

Apple's AirPods Pro (the second generation and newer) include features designed to help with mild to moderate hearing difficulty. They are not a replacement for a prescription hearing aid if you have significant loss, but for the “I can hear, I just can't always make out the words” stage that so many of us reach, they are remarkably good — and you may already own a pair.

Setting them up takes about ten minutes and starts with a short hearing check your phone walks you through, right there in your own living room. After that, the AirPods quietly do their work whenever you wear them, boosting the sounds your ears miss.

- AirPods Pro 2 and newer can act as hearing helpers for mild to moderate hearing loss.
- You start with a five-minute hearing check your iPhone guides you through in a quiet room.
- They can also amplify a live conversation, or stream the TV straight to your ears.
- You need an iPhone or iPad, recent AirPods Pro, and the latest updates installed on both.

TIP

Before you start, make sure your iPhone and AirPods are fully up to date — these hearing features arrived in a software update, so an older phone or out-of-date AirPods may simply not show them. If you are unsure, I can confirm it in a minute on a visit.

2 What These Features Can and Cannot Do

It helps to be clear-eyed about this. AirPods Pro are excellent for the common, frustrating situation where ordinary hearing is slipping — you turn the TV up, you ask people to repeat themselves, restaurants are a struggle. For mild to moderate loss, the United States Food and Drug Administration has cleared the AirPods hearing feature for exactly this use, which is a serious endorsement.

What they are not is a substitute for seeing an audiologist if you have significant hearing loss, ringing, pain, or sudden changes. Think of AirPods as a genuinely helpful first step and an everyday convenience, not a diagnosis. Reassuringly, if the hearing check suggests more serious loss, the phone itself will gently suggest you see a professional rather than pretending it can fix everything.

WATCH OUT

If you have sudden hearing loss in one ear, dizziness, pain, or any discharge, see a doctor promptly rather than relying on any gadget. Those are signs that deserve a professional's attention, not a setting — and the sooner the better.

3 Make Sure Everything Is Up to Date

The hearing features need a recent iPhone or iPad and recent AirPods, plus the latest software on both. Updating first saves a lot of the “why don't I see it” confusion that trips people up, because the feature simply will not appear on older software.

1. On your iPhone, open Settings, tap General, then Software Update, and install anything offered.
2. Put both AirPods in their case, open the lid near your unlocked iPhone, and leave them for a few minutes.
3. To check the AirPods' own version, open Settings, tap your AirPods' name at the top, and scroll to the firmware line.
4. If anything is out of date and will not update, plug the phone in, connect to Wi-Fi, and try again.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> AirPods have no update button of their own; they update themselves quietly when they are in the case, charging, and sitting near your phone. Leaving them on the charger overnight next to the phone is the reliable way to get them current without any fuss.

4 Get the Fit Right First

None of this works well if the AirPods do not seal properly in your ears. A loose fit lets sound leak out and defeats both the boosting and the noise-reducing, so it is worth two minutes to get it right before you do anything else.

1. AirPods Pro come with several sizes of soft silicone tip — try the small, the medium, and the large.
2. Open Settings, tap your AirPods, and run the Ear Tip Fit Test if it is offered; it tells you whether each ear is sealed.
3. If a tip feels loose or lets in a lot of outside sound, go up a size.
4. If a tip feels tight or uncomfortable, go down a size — comfort matters for all-day wear.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A proper seal is also what makes the hearing help and the noise-cancelling feel dramatic rather than faint. Most people who are disappointed with AirPods simply have the wrong tip size in one or both ears, and swapping tips transforms the sound.

5 Take the Hearing Check

The hearing check is the heart of the whole thing. It plays a series of soft tones in a quiet room and asks you to tap each time you hear one, building a personal picture of your hearing that the AirPods then use to help you. It takes about five minutes and feels much like the hearing test at a clinic.

1. Find a genuinely quiet room — no TV, no fan, no traffic through the window.
2. Put both AirPods in and make sure they fit snugly.
3. Open the Health app on your iPhone, tap the search box, and search for Hearing, then look for the hearing test.
4. Follow the prompts, tapping the screen each time you hear a tone, even a very faint one.
5. At the end, your results are saved and offered as the basis for the hearing feature.

TIP

Take the check when you are rested and the house is quiet — early morning is ideal. A noisy room makes the result less accurate, which is the single most common reason the feature feels slightly off afterward. If in doubt, you can take it again.

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 Turn On the Hearing Assistance

Once the check is done, you can turn on the feature that uses it. From then on, whenever you wear the AirPods, they gently emphasize the frequencies you have trouble with, so voices and everyday sounds come through more clearly without your having to do anything.

1. With the AirPods in and connected, open Settings and tap your AirPods' name at the top.
2. Look for the Hearing Assistance or Hearing Aid section.
3. Turn it on and, if asked, confirm you want to use your saved hearing results.
4. Wear them for a while in normal life to let your ears and brain adjust to the clearer sound.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The first day can sound surprisingly bright, because you are suddenly hearing sounds you had quietly lost — the clink of dishes, birdsong, the letters S and T in speech. That brightness settles as your brain readjusts, usually within a few days, and then it just feels normal.

7 Hear a Live Conversation: Live Listen

There is a second, wonderfully practical trick. Your iPhone can act as a remote microphone, picking up a conversation across a noisy table and sending it straight to your AirPods. Apple calls this Live Listen, and it turns the phone into a little hearing booster you can point exactly where you need it.

1. Set your iPhone near the person or the sound you want to hear — say, on the table between you.
2. Wear your AirPods.
3. Open Control Center (swipe down from the top-right corner), and tap the Hearing (ear) icon.
4. Tap Live Listen to turn it on; sound from near the phone now comes through your AirPods clearly.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> If you do not see the Hearing icon in Control Center, you can add it: Settings, Control Center, then add Hearing. Once it is there, Live Listen is one tap away whenever a restaurant gets loud or someone is speaking across the room.

8 Hear the TV or Music Clearly

Because AirPods connect wirelessly to your iPhone or iPad — and, with the right box, to many TVs — you can send the sound of a show straight into your ears at your own comfortable volume, without blasting the room for everyone else. This is a small miracle in a household where one person needs it loud.

- Anything playing on your iPhone or iPad — a show, a video call, a podcast — plays through the AirPods automatically once they are connected.
- For a living-room TV, a small Apple TV box lets AirPods connect directly so you can watch at your own volume.
- Many newer TVs can connect AirPods by Bluetooth directly — look in the TV's sound or accessibility settings.
- You can still leave the TV's own speakers on for others while you listen through the AirPods.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Being able to set your own volume in your ears while the room stays quiet ends the volume tug-of-war that so many couples know well — one person watching comfortably loud, the other reading in peace. Both get what they want.

9 Tame a Noisy Room: Conversation Boost

AirPods Pro can also do the opposite of amplifying everything — they can focus on the person right in front of you and push the background clatter down. The feature that does this for face-to-face talk is called Conversation Boost, and it is a lifesaver in restaurants and family gatherings.

1. With AirPods in, open Settings and tap your AirPods' name.
2. Open the Accessibility or Hearing settings for the AirPods.
3. Turn on Conversation Boost (sometimes found under a Transparency or Hearing section).

4. Face the person you are talking with; their voice is brought forward and the room is pushed back.

> **TIP**
>
> Conversation Boost works best when you look at the person you want to hear, because it listens in the direction you are facing. In a noisy restaurant, simply turning toward whoever is speaking lifts their words out of the din.

10

Transparency, Noise Cancellation, and When to Use Each

AirPods Pro have two opposite modes that matter a great deal for hearing. Noise Cancellation hushes the world around you — lovely for listening on a bus or in a noisy house. Transparency lets the outside world in, even amplifying it a little, so you can hear traffic, a doorbell, or someone speaking to you while the AirPods are in.

- Use Transparency when you want to stay aware — walking outside, talking to someone, listening for the oven timer.
- Use Noise Cancellation when you want quiet — resting, or cutting a loud fan or engine.
- Transparency is the one to leave on for everyday wear, so you never feel cut off from the room.
- The hearing help works alongside Transparency, boosting the voices around you.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Never wear AirPods in Noise Cancellation mode while crossing a road, driving, or anywhere you need to hear traffic and warnings. Transparency is the safe choice when you are out and about, because it keeps the world audible.

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11 Set What a Press Does

A gentle squeeze of the little stem on an AirPod does something — and you get to choose what. Setting the press to switch between Transparency and Noise Cancellation, or to adjust the hearing help, puts control right at your fingertips without reaching for the phone.

1. With AirPods in and connected, open Settings and tap your AirPods' name.
2. Find the press-and-hold settings for the left and right AirPod.
3. Choose which modes a press-and-hold cycles between — Transparency and Noise Cancellation is the most useful pair.
4. Practice the squeeze a few times so it becomes second nature.

TIP

You can also slide a finger up or down the stem to change the volume on AirPods Pro. A little practice makes both the squeeze and the slide feel natural, and then you rarely need to touch the phone at all.

12 Use AirPods on Phone and Video Calls

AirPods shine on calls, because the sound goes straight into both ears at your own volume and their microphones pick up your voice clearly. Once they are connected, your phone will usually route a call to them automatically.

1. Put the AirPods in before or during the call.
2. If the call does not switch to them, tap the audio or speaker button on the call screen and choose your AirPods.

3. Speak normally — the AirPods' microphones are close enough to catch your voice without shouting.
4. To go back to the phone's speaker, tap the audio button again and choose iPhone.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Because both ears get the call, voices on the phone are noticeably clearer through AirPods than through the little earpiece speaker held to one ear — which is exactly why so many people find phone calls easier with them in.

13 When They Won't Connect

Now and then AirPods seem to vanish or refuse to connect. It is almost always a small hiccup rather than a breakage, and a short routine brings them back.

1. Put both AirPods in the case, close the lid, wait ten seconds, then open it near your phone.
2. Check the phone's Bluetooth is turned on (Settings, Bluetooth).
3. If they still will not connect, tap your AirPods in the Bluetooth list and choose Forget, then set them up fresh by holding them near the open phone.
4. A full charge of the case solves a surprising number of “won't connect” moments.

> **TIP**
> If only one AirPod plays, put both back in the case for a few seconds and take them out together — that resyncs the pair. It is the quickest fix for the common “only one side works” puzzle.

14 Everyday Comfort and Battery

Like any wireless earbud, AirPods run on a small battery and need a daily charge. A little routine keeps them ready whenever you want them, so they are never flat at the moment you reach for them.

- Pop them back in the case whenever you are not using them — the case recharges them.
- Charge the case itself every day or two; a Lightning or USB-C cable, or a wireless pad, does it.
- Your iPhone shows the battery level when you open the case lid near it.
- A quick wipe of the tips keeps the sound clear — earwax is the quiet enemy of volume.

> **WATCH OUT**
> If one AirPod suddenly sounds muffled or quiet, it is almost always earwax in the little mesh, not a fault. A gentle clean with a soft dry brush or cloth usually restores it — never poke anything sharp or wet into the mesh, which can do real damage.

15 Keep a Backup Plan

AirPods are a help, not a lifeline, so it is wise not to depend on them for the things that truly matter — hearing a smoke alarm, a doorbell, or an emergency call. They come out of your ears at night and can run flat during the day, so your home still needs to be safe without them.

Keep your rooms loud enough, or use the flashing and vibrating alerts covered in another guide, for the sounds you cannot afford to miss. AirPods make daily life clearer; the safety alerts in your home should stand on their own.

> **WATCH OUT**
> If AirPods become your main way of hearing day to day, that is a sign it is worth a proper hearing evaluation as well. They are a fine bridge, and for many people a lasting help, but a professional can tell you whether you have crossed from “convenience” into “should be treated.”

16 When to Call Bill

Setting up the hearing check, turning on the features, adding the Control Center button, and getting the fit right are all things I can walk you through in one calm visit — and I will leave you using them confidently, not just set up and left to figure it out.

I will make sure your phone and AirPods are fully updated first, run the hearing check with you in a quiet room, turn on exactly the features that help for how you live, and show you the one-tap way to use Live Listen at a noisy dinner. If the check suggests you should see an audiologist, I will tell you plainly and kindly.

- You own AirPods Pro and want the hearing features set up properly.
- You cannot find the hearing check or the features do not appear — usually an update is needed.
- You want Live Listen and the TV sound set up for the real situations you find hard.
- You would like help judging whether a professional hearing test is the next step.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this with your AirPods. Update first, then take the hearing check in a quiet room.

I want to...	Do this...
Update AirPods	Put them in the case, open the lid near your unlocked iPhone, leave them charging
Take the hearing check	Health app search Hearing run the hearing check in a quiet room
Turn on hearing help	Settings tap your AirPods' name Hearing Assistance on
Hear a noisy table	Control Center Hearing (ear) icon Live Listen set phone near the talker
Hear the TV quietly	Connect AirPods and watch at your own volume while the room stays quiet
Fix a muffled earbud	Gently clean the mesh tip; check for a snug ear-tip seal
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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