



Turn Your Smartphone Into a Simpler Phone (Without Buying a New One)

The free, step-by-step way to make an iPhone or Android calmer, clearer, and easier to use

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1669** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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What's Inside

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

1. You may not need a new phone at all	4
2. The whole guide, on one page	4
3. What we're really doing	5
4. Step one: turn the screen black-and-white	5
5. Step two: clear away the apps you don't use	6
6. Step three: hush the notifications	6
7. Step four: one tidy home screen	7
8. Step five: make everything easy to read	7
9. Quiet on a schedule: Focus and Bedtime	8
10. Android only: a simpler launcher	8
11. iPhone only: a drastically simpler phone	9
12. Two reasons to simplify, two sets of steps	9
13. Why keeping your phone is often the smart move	10
14. A good order to do it in	10
15. Organizing what's left	11
16. Turning off the little tricks that pull you in	11
17. Keeping it simple over time	12
18. When simplifying isn't quite enough	12
19. Simplifying a phone for someone you love	13
20. Common Questions	13
21. You don't have to do this alone	14

A Picture to Follow Along 15

A Second Look 16

A Note From Bill 16

Your Visit — and My Promise 17

WELCOME

1. You may not need a new phone at all

Before you spend a dime on a minimalist phone, here's a secret worth knowing: you can make the phone already in your pocket far calmer and far simpler — for free. A handful of settings can turn a busy, buzzing smartphone into a quiet, easy one. I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping people feel at home with their technology, patiently and in plain language. I don't sell phones and I earn no commission, so what follows is just honest, step-by-step guidance, the way I'd do it at your kitchen table. This works on both iPhone and Android, and I'll keep the steps gentle and plain. We'll turn the screen calm, clear away the clutter, hush the notifications, and — on an iPhone — even turn on a built-in mode that makes the whole phone drastically simpler. Nothing here can break your phone, and everything can be undone. A free first experiment If a quieter phone has been tugging at you, try these free changes first. And if you'd like a hand making them, that's a quick visit or a bit of help right on your screen. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

2. The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only a handful of things, let it be these.

- Turn the screen to black-and-white (grayscale) — it instantly makes the phone less tempting to stare at.
- Remove or hide the apps you don't use, so only your essentials remain.
- Silence most notifications, so the phone stops buzzing for your attention.
- Set up one tidy home screen with just the handful of things you actually use.
- Make the text bigger and bolder so it's easy to read.
- On an iPhone, Assistive Access can make the whole phone big-button simple; on Android, a simple launcher does something similar.
- It's all free, all reversible, and you keep your camera, photos, and apps for when you truly need them. One idea to hold onto You don't have to do all of it. Even just grayscale and quieter notifications can transform how a phone feels. Start small.

THE GOAL

3. What we're really doing

The goal isn't to cripple your phone. It's to put you back in charge of it.

A smartphone is designed to hold your attention — bright colors, little red badges, feeds that never end. That's wonderful when you want it and exhausting when you don't.

Everything in this guide quietly turns that pull down, so the phone sits still until you pick it up on purpose. If you want the bigger picture of why a calmer phone matters, our Light Phone and the Phone That Does Less guide tells that story. This guide is the hands-on, free version: the same quiet, using the phone you already own. Our digital-detox settings guides for iPhone and Android, and our Making Any Phone Less Addictive guide, go even deeper on the attention side. Calm, not crippled Everything here is reversible. If you turn something off and miss it, you turn it back on. You're tuning the phone to your life, not throwing anything away.

GRAYSCALE

4. Step one: turn the screen black-and-white

This is the single most powerful change, and the easiest. A gray screen is simply far less tempting than a colorful one. When the bright colors are gone, those glowing app icons and endless feeds lose much of their pull. Your phone still works exactly the same — it just stops dazzling you. Many people are surprised how much calmer the phone feels within a day.

- On an iPhone: Settings > Accessibility > Display & Text Size > Color Filters, turn it on and choose Grayscale.
- On Android: look in Settings under Accessibility (often Color correction) or in Digital Wellbeing's Bedtime mode, which can fade the screen to gray on a schedule.
- Make it easy to toggle: on an iPhone you can set a triple-click of the side button to switch grayscale on and off when you want color back for a photo. Keep an easy on/off switch Set up a quick way to flip grayscale off, so you can glance at a color photo or map and then flip it back. The on/off shortcut is what makes grayscale livable.

REMOVE APPS

5. Step two: clear away the apps you don't use

Every app you'll never open is just clutter and, sometimes, a temptation. Clearing them out is tidying a drawer. Go through your apps and be honest: which do you actually use? The rest can go. On both iPhone and Android you can remove an app by pressing and holding its icon until a menu appears, then choosing to delete or remove it. If you're not sure about one, you can often hide it instead of deleting, so it's gone from view but not gone for good. The apps that pull hardest — social media, news, games, shopping — are the ones worth clearing first if focus is your goal. You can still reach most of them in a web browser if you truly need them, which adds just enough friction to break the habit.

WATCH OUT

Don't delete something you rely on Before removing an app, make sure it isn't how you bank, get medication reminders, or reach a caregiver. When in doubt, hide it instead of deleting it, or ask a family member or me first.

SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

6. Step three: hush the notifications

Notifications are the buzzes, dings, and banners that interrupt you all day. Most of them you never needed. Every app wants to ping you, and all those pings add up to a phone that never lets you rest. The fix is to turn notifications off for everything except the few that matter — calls, texts, and perhaps your calendar. Then the phone goes quiet until someone actually needs you.

- On an iPhone: Settings > Notifications, then go app by app and turn off the ones you don't need.
- On Android: Settings > Notifications, then switch off the apps that don't deserve to interrupt you.
- Keep the essentials on: phone calls, text messages, and maybe your calendar reminders — that's usually plenty. Silence the badges, too Those little red numbers on app icons are their own kind of nagging. Turning them off (in the same notification settings) makes the home screen feel instantly calmer.

ONE HOME SCREEN

7. Step four: one tidy home screen

A single, clean home screen with only your essentials is a joy to use. No hunting, no clutter, no surprises. The idea is to put the handful of things you use every day — phone, messages, camera, maybe weather and your calendar — on one screen, and tuck everything else away. On both iPhone and Android you can drag icons into a folder or move them off the main screen, so the first thing you see is calm and familiar. Keep it to one screen if you can. When there's only one page to look at, you always know where everything is, and there's nowhere to get lost. Our Declutter a Senior's Phone guide walks through this in even more detail, with pictures. Essentials up front, the rest tucked away. Think of it like a kitchen counter: keep out only what you use daily, and put the rest in the cupboard. You can always open the cupboard when you need it.

BIGGER TEXT

8. Step five: make everything easy to read

A simpler phone is also an easier-to-see phone. Bigger, bolder text takes the strain out of every glance. If you find yourself squinting or holding the phone at arm's length, a quick settings change fixes that. You can make the text larger and bolder across the whole phone, and turn up the contrast so letters stand out from the background. It makes everything from texts to buttons far easier.

- On an iPhone: Settings > Accessibility > Display & Text Size — turn on Larger Text, Bold Text, and Increase Contrast.
- On Android: Settings > Accessibility > Display size and text — raise the font size and display size, and turn on bold or high-contrast text.
- Turn up the ringer and alerts, too, so you don't miss a call while you're across the room. I'll get the sizes just right. Finding the text size and contrast that suit your eyes is a quick, satisfying thing to do together, and I can often help right on your screen. Call (330) 200-8042.

FOCUS MODES

9. Quiet on a schedule: Focus and Bedtime

Sometimes you don't want the phone silent all the time — just during dinner, or overnight. Both kinds of phone can do that automatically. On an iPhone, Focus modes (Settings > Focus) let you set the phone to go quiet during certain hours or activities, allowing only the people and apps you choose to reach you. There's a Do Not Disturb Focus for sleep and others you can shape. On Android, Bedtime mode fades the screen to gray and silences alerts on a schedule, and a Focus mode can pause distracting apps. The nicest use is an overnight quiet time: the phone hushes itself at bedtime and wakes up friendly in the morning, while still letting an urgent call from family ring through if you set it to. It's a gentle way to protect your evenings and your sleep. Let family still reach you When you set a quiet time, you can allow your closest people to ring through anyway. That way the phone stays peaceful without cutting you off in a real emergency.

ANDROID LAUNCHERS

10. Android only: a simpler launcher

If you have an Android phone and want to go further, you can change the whole look of the phone to something plain and calm. A launcher is simply the layer that controls your home screen and app list. Android lets you install a different one, and there are simple launchers designed to make the phone plain, large, and uncluttered — big text, a short list of essentials, and none of the usual busyness. Some Samsung Galaxy phones also include an Easy mode in Settings that does much the same thing. A launcher changes only how the phone looks and feels, not what it can do underneath, and you can switch back anytime. It's a gentle way to give an Android phone that purpose-built-simple feel without buying anything. Try Easy mode first On a Samsung Galaxy phone, look for Easy mode in Settings before installing anything — it's built in, free, and a one-tap way to make the phone larger and simpler.

ASSISTIVE ACCESS

11. iPhone only: a drastically simpler phone

If you have an iPhone and want the biggest leap in simplicity, there's a built-in mode made exactly for that. It's called Assistive Access (Settings > Accessibility > Assistive Access), and it transforms the whole iPhone into a very simple one: a few big buttons, large high-contrast text, and only the apps you choose. You can set up simplified versions of Calls, Messages, Camera, Photos, Music, and a Magnifier, laid out as big tiles or a plain list. It's free, already on the phone, and completely reversible. A family member can set it up, pick the apps, and protect it with a passcode. For someone who finds a normal iPhone overwhelming, this can make it feel as approachable as a purpose-built senior phone, with none of the clutter. The big leap, when you're ready The other steps in this guide gently calm an iPhone; Assistive Access transforms it. If the simpler steps aren't enough, this is the one that goes all the way.

TWO REASONS TO SIMPLIFY

12. Two reasons to simplify, two sets of steps

People simplify a phone for two different reasons, and that points to a different mix of steps. If you want calm and focus back Your phone works fine — you just feel pulled at by it, and you want to spend less time staring and more time living. You're simplifying for peace of mind.

- Start with grayscale and silencing notifications — the biggest calm.
- Clear out the apps that pull hardest, like social media and news.
- Set a quiet time in the evening to protect your sleep.
- Our Making Any Phone Less Addictive guide goes deeper on this. If you want an easier phone for a senior You're setting up a phone for a parent or for yourself, and the goal is plain: big, clear, and impossible to get lost in. You're simplifying for ease of use.
- Make the text big and bold, and turn up the ringer.
- On an iPhone, turn on Assistive Access; on Android, Easy mode.
- Keep one tidy home screen with only the daily essentials.
- Our Declutter a Senior's Phone guide shows the clean-up step by step. Not sure where to start? Tell me which reason sounds like you and what kind of phone you have, and I'll point you to the handful of steps that'll help most. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

KEEP YOUR PHONE

13. Why keeping your phone is often the smart move

There's a real case for simplifying the phone you have instead of buying a new minimalist one — and it's not just about money. When you simplify your current phone, it costs nothing, there's no carrier compatibility to worry about, and you keep your good camera, your photos, and your important apps for the moments you truly need them. You get most of the calm of a minimalist phone while keeping the safety net of a capable one. The honest trade-off is that the temptation is still a few taps away — a true minimalist phone removes it entirely. But for most people, a grayscale screen with the apps cleared and the notifications hushed is more than enough quiet, at no cost and no risk. Try quiet before you buy quiet. Spend two weeks with grayscale on and your notifications off. If that scratches the itch, you may not need a new phone at all. If you still crave more quiet, a minimalist phone will feel like a natural next step.

A CLEAN START

14. A good order to do it in

If you'd like a simple plan, here's the order I'd follow at your kitchen table. Do as much or as little as you like.

- Turn on grayscale and set up an easy on/off shortcut.
- Go through your apps and remove or hide the ones you never use.
- Silence notifications for everything but calls, texts, and your calendar.
- Build one tidy home screen with just your daily essentials.
- Make the text bigger and bolder, and turn up the ringer.
- Set a quiet time for the evening or overnight.
- If you want to go all the way, turn on Assistive Access or Easy mode. There's no rush and no wrong order. Each step helps on its own, so even if you stop after the first two, you've already made the phone calmer. Come back and do more whenever you like. One step a day is plenty. You don't have to do this all at once. One change a day for a week, and by the weekend you'll have a completely different phone — the same phone, made calm.

ORGANIZING APPS

15. Organizing what's left

Once the clutter's gone, a little organizing makes the apps you keep easy to find.

Group similar apps into folders with plain names — a 'Health' folder, a 'Money' folder, a 'Fun' folder — so you always know where to look. Put the things you use every day on the first screen and the folders on a second screen you rarely need. The goal is that nothing you use daily is ever more than one tap away. On both iPhone and Android you make a folder by dragging one app on top of another. It takes a few minutes and makes the phone feel tidy and predictable, which is exactly what we're after. Name folders the way you think. Call the folders whatever makes sense to you — 'Doctor stuff,' 'Grandkids,' 'Bills.' The phone doesn't care, and plain names you'll remember beat clever ones you won't.

TURN OFF THE PULL

16. Turning off the little tricks that pull you in

Phones use a few small tricks to keep you tapping. Knowing them lets you switch them off.

- Badges: the red numbers on app icons that make you feel behind. Turn them off in notification settings.
- Banners and sounds: the pop-ups and dings that interrupt you. Silence all but the essential few.
- Autoplay and feeds: where an app keeps loading more to keep you scrolling. Removing the app removes the pull.
- The home screen glance: a gray, tidy home screen simply gives your eye nothing exciting to land on. None of these are things you need; they're things designed to hold your attention. Switching them off doesn't cost you anything useful — it just hands the quiet back to you. Our digital-detox guides cover each of these in more depth. Boring on purpose. A phone that's a little boring to look at is a phone you'll put down. That's not a bug — for a calmer life, it's the whole point.

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

17. Keeping it simple over time

Phones have a way of filling back up. A little upkeep keeps yours calm for the long haul. Every so often, take two minutes to clear off any new apps you didn't mean to collect and check that notifications haven't crept back on after an update. Updates sometimes switch settings back, so a quick glance now and then keeps things the way you like them. If you ever find the phone creeping busy again, just run back through the steps in this guide. It gets quicker each time, and soon keeping the phone calm becomes a simple habit rather than a chore. A quick tidy once a month Pick a day — say the first of the month — to spend two minutes tidying the phone. Little and often beats a big clean-up once a year.

WHEN IT'S NOT ENOUGH

18. When simplifying isn't quite enough

For most folks these free changes do the trick. For a few, the pull is still too strong — and that's useful to know. If you've gone grayscale, cleared the apps, and hushed the phone, and you still find yourself reaching for it and getting pulled in, that's a sign the temptation being 'a few taps away' is the problem. A true minimalist phone — one with no browser and no app store at all — removes that temptation entirely. In that case, our Light Phone and the Phone That Does Less guide and our Minimalist Phones Compared guide are your next stop. There's no shame in it — some of us simply do better when the temptation isn't there to resist in the first place. Knowing your limits is wisdom If willpower alone isn't winning, that's not a failing — it's information. A phone that can't tempt you may serve you better than one you have to keep resisting.

HELPING SOMEONE ELSE

19. Simplifying a phone for someone you love

A lot of this gets done by a daughter or son for a parent. A few pointers make it go kindly. Do it together, not behind their back. Ask which apps they actually use before you remove anything, and explain each change as you make it so it doesn't feel like their phone was taken over. Make the text big, the ringer loud, and the home screen hold exactly what they use — and leave a cheat card with the handful of daily steps. On an iPhone, Assistive Access is a wonderful tool for a loved one who finds a normal phone overwhelming; on Android, Easy mode or a simple launcher does the same. Set it up with them watching, and check back in a week to adjust anything that isn't quite right. I'll set it up gently with your family. Simplifying a parent's phone is a common and happy visit for me. I work at their pace, explain everything, and leave notes behind. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

COMMON QUESTIONS

20. Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks simplifying the phone they already have.

Q: Will any of this break my phone or delete my photos? No. Everything in this guide is a setting you can turn on and off, and none of it touches your photos or your contacts. If you turn something off and miss it, you simply turn it back on. Q: Does grayscale really make that much difference? It's the one change most people are surprised by. A gray screen is far less tempting to stare at, and your phone still works exactly the same. Set up an easy on/off switch and try it for a week. Q: What's the difference between this and a Light Phone? A Light Phone removes the browser and apps entirely, so there's nothing to resist. Simplifying your own phone gets you most of the calm for free while keeping your camera and apps — but the temptation is still a few taps away. Q: Is Assistive Access only for people with disabilities? Not at all. It lives under Accessibility, but it's for anyone who wants a drastically simpler iPhone — a big-button, large-text phone with only the apps they choose. Plenty of folks use it just to make the phone calm and clear. Q: Can I undo all of this if I don't like it? Every bit of it. Turn the color back on, re-add an app, switch notifications back — it all reverses in seconds. That's what makes this a safe, free experiment. Want a hand with any of it? Any of these steps is something I can walk you through, often right on your screen for a smaller fee. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll make your phone calm together.

BILL'S HERE TO HELP

21. 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 making your phone simpler 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. I'm a tech helper, not a salesman — there's nothing to buy here, since these are all free settings on the phone you already own. If you'd like a hand turning on grayscale, clearing clutter, silencing notifications, or setting up Assistive Access or Easy mode, that's exactly what I do. 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

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Make Your Phone Calmer, for Free

Where each setting lives on your kind of phone

	On an iPhone	On an Android
Gray screen	Color Filters	Grayscale
Bigger text	Display & Text	Size
Fewer alerts	Notifications	app by app
Quiet hours	Focus modes	Bedtime / Focus
Whole phone	Assistive Access	Easy mode / launcher

Every change here is free and completely reversible.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

How Far Do You Want to Go?

Pick the level of quiet that suits you

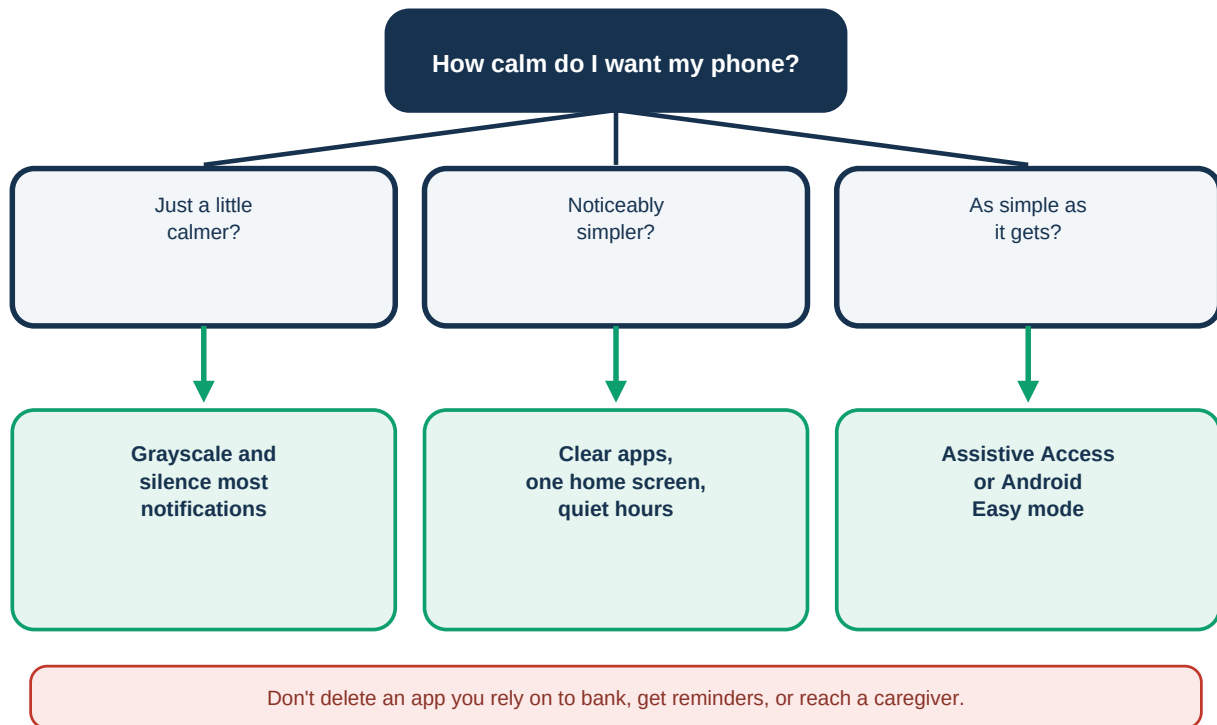


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

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

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

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.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

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