



An Extended Guide · No. 1816

A UPS Buying Checklist

Name your goal, size it
right, buy once and buy well

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! Read this first — what a UPS can and can't do

First, the honest picture, so a UPS never disappoints you. A UPS — an uninterruptible power supply — is a battery backup box. When the power blinks or goes out, it keeps small electronics like your computer, your modem and router, or a medical monitor running without a flicker. But it is a short bridge, not a whole-home generator: it buys you minutes, not hours — time to save your work and shut down gently, keep the internet up through a brief blip, or ride you over until a generator or a portable power station takes over. Plug only small electronics into the battery side. Never plug in a laser printer, a space heater, a hair dryer, a microwave, a sump pump, or anything that makes heat or has a big motor — they draw far too much and can overload or damage the unit. A UPS has a sealed battery inside, so set it where a little warmth can escape, not sealed in a cabinet, and keep it dry. That battery wears out every few years and gets swapped and recycled at a battery drop-off — never put it in the household trash. This is the shopping guide that pulls the whole series together — name your goal, size it right, and check the features that matter, so you buy once and buy well.

Buying a UPS, step by step

With a little planning, buying a UPS is easy and you'll get exactly what you need — no more, no less. This checklist walks you from 'what am I protecting?' all the way to the shelf, so you shop with confidence.

I'm Bill, from Bill's Home Tech in Portage County, Ohio. I sell no UPS units and earn no commission — just honest advice. So this checklist is built around what serves you, not what any store wants to move.

We'll go step by step: your goal, your gear, the type, the size, and the handful of features worth having. By the end you'll have a clear shopping list.

★ Buy once, buy right

A few minutes of planning saves you from over- or under-buying. Bring me your gear list and I'll help you land on the right unit. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The whole checklist, on one page

If you read nothing else, shop for these.

- ☐ Name your goal: ride a blink, save and shut down, or stay online.
- ☐ List what you'll protect, and add up its watts.
- ☐ Choose line-interactive with pure sine wave output.
- ☐ Size the watts to cover your gear with headroom, and enough runtime.
- ☐ Make sure it has enough battery-backup outlets, well spaced.
- ☐ Look for shutdown-software support, a safety mark, and a user-replaceable battery.

✓ Goal, gear, type, size, features

Five words carry the whole trip. Work through them in order and the right UPS almost picks itself.

Step 1: name your goal

Everything else follows from what you want the UPS to do.

Before anything else, decide the job: do you want short blinks to vanish, a calm window to save and shut down a computer, the internet kept alive through an outage, or a bridge until a generator takes over? Naming the goal points you to the size and features you need — and saves you from buying the wrong thing entirely.

✓ Write the goal at the top of your list

One sentence — 'keep the internet and phone up, and let the computer shut down safely' — is the single most useful thing to bring shopping.

Step 2: list what you'll protect

The gear list drives the size.

Write down exactly what will go on the battery outlets — the computer, the monitor, the modem, the router, a NAS, a phone base, whatever fits your goal. Then find each one's watts (or volts and amps) from its label, and add them up. That total is what your UPS must cover, with room to spare. Leave printers, chargers, and anything hot or motorized off this list.

★ Send me the labels and I'll add them up

The adding-up step is where folks like a hand. Text me photos of your gear's labels and I'll total the watts and suggest a size.

Step 3: choose the type

For most homes, this is a two-word decision.

Choose a line-interactive UPS with pure sine wave output. Line-interactive steadies power that runs high or low without draining the battery — ideal for a home or office — and pure sine wave gives a modern computer the clean power it prefers. Save the pricier 'online' type for a true server or unusually sensitive gear. Our 'three types' guide explains the choice.

✓ Line-interactive, pure sine wave

For the great majority of homes and offices, those two features are the sweet spot — capable, clean, and sensibly priced.

Step 4: size it

Match the capacity and runtime to your list and goal.

Pick a UPS whose watts rating comfortably clears your gear's total, with headroom so it isn't straining — and whose battery holds enough minutes for your goal. Remember the watts number is the honest limit, not the big VA number, and that runtime depends on the load. Our 'VA vs watts' and 'sizing' guides make this painless, and headroom leaves room to grow.

✓ Cover the watts, then the minutes

First make sure the watts clear your gear with room to spare; then check the battery holds enough time for your goal. Both matter.

Step 5: enough outlets, well placed

The right capacity is no good if you can't plug everything in.

Count the plugs you need on the battery side, and make sure the UPS has at least that many battery-backup outlets — not just surge-only ones. A few widely spaced outlets are a bonus for bulky plug-in transformers. And look for surge-only outlets too, for the printer and chargers that don't need the battery.

✓ Count battery outlets, not total outlets

A UPS may list many outlets, but only some are battery-backed. Make sure there are enough of the battery kind for your must-stay-on gear.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The checklist is the same, but what you'll prioritize differs with where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, short outages mean you can often shop modestly and focus on everyday protection.

- A modest line-interactive UPS covers a computer and internet for the frequent short blinks.
- Prioritize surge protection and shutdown software over long runtime.
- A separate small or mini UPS for the internet is an inexpensive add.
- You rarely need an expandable or online unit.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a private well, longer outages push you toward more runtime and room to grow.

- Favor a unit with more runtime, or one that accepts add-on battery packs.
- Plan for the UPS to bridge to a generator or power station.
- Keep the internet and phone on a lean, long-lasting UPS to stay reachable.
- Buy with a little extra headroom, since resupply and upgrades mean a trip to town.

★ Want a shopping list built for your home?

Tell me your goal, your gear, and your typical outages, and I'll hand you a specific, honest shopping list. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Step 6: connectivity and shutdown software

For a computer or NAS, this feature is worth insisting on.

If you'll protect a desktop, a NAS, or an office machine, look for a UPS with a USB (or network) connection and free shutdown software for your computer's system — or confirmed support from your NAS. That's what lets the machine save your work and shut down safely on its own during an outage. For internet-only backup, you can skip this.

✓ Confirm it works with your computer or NAS

Before you buy for auto-shutdown, make sure the UPS's software matches your computer's system, or that your NAS lists that brand. A two-minute check saves a headache.

Step 7: a display and clear indicators

A UPS that tells you what's going on is easier to live with.

A small display or a set of clear indicator lights lets you see at a glance whether it's on wall power or battery, how heavy the load is, and whether the battery needs replacing. It's not essential, but it makes everyday life and troubleshooting far simpler — especially handy when a beep sends you looking for answers.

✓ A load meter is a quiet helper

If the unit shows the load level, you can see when you've crept toward its limit and lighten up before it complains.

Step 8: a user-replaceable battery

Because the battery is the one part you'll ever change.

Since a UPS battery wears out every few years, you want a unit whose battery you can easily replace yourself — a simple panel, a common battery, a clear swap. Avoid units where the battery is sealed away or hard to find a replacement for, or you'll be forced to buy a whole new UPS when the battery tires. Our 'replacing the battery' guide shows the swap.

✓ Ask 'how do I change the battery?'

Before you buy, make sure the answer is easy. A user-replaceable battery turns a worn-out UPS into a five-minute fix instead of a new purchase.

Step 9: a safety mark

A small thing to check that tells you a lot.

Look for a recognized safety listing on the unit — such as a UL listing — which means it has been tested to a safety standard. A UPS holds a battery and handles your home's power, so a legitimate safety mark is worth insisting on, and a reason to be wary of a no-name unit that lacks one. It's a quiet sign of quality and safety.

✓ Look for a UL listing

A recognized safety mark like a UL listing is an easy quality check. If a very cheap unit doesn't have one, that's a reason to pass.

Step 10: the warranty

A quick look at what's promised.

Check how long the UPS is warranted, and whether the maker backs the gear you connect to it against a surge that gets through — some do, with conditions in the fine print. A solid warranty is a sign the maker stands behind the unit. Keep your receipt with the manual so a claim is easy if you ever need one.

✓ Keep the receipt with the manual

File the receipt and the manual together (or as phone photos). If a warranty ever matters, you'll be glad they're on hand.

Step 11: room to grow, if you'll need it

A little foresight for a setup that might expand.

If you expect to add gear or want more runtime down the road, favor a UPS with headroom to spare, or one that accepts add-on battery packs for more minutes later. It's easier and cheaper to start with room than to replace a unit you've outgrown in a year. If your needs are fixed, you can skip this and buy just what you need.

✓ Expandable if the future is fuzzy

Unsure whether your needs will grow? A unit that takes extra battery packs keeps your options open without overspending now.

Step 12: think about where it'll live

A last practical check before you buy.

Picture where the UPS will sit — near the gear it protects, with its own wall outlet, in a cool, dry, breathable spot. Make sure the size and shape you're buying will fit there, off any damp floor and out of a hot, sealed cabinet. A unit that's too big for its intended home, or destined for a hot corner, starts life at a disadvantage. Our placement guide has the details.

✓ Measure the spot first

A quick look at where it'll go — and whether that spot is cool and breathable — saves you from a UPS that doesn't fit or won't last.

Avoid overbuying

More isn't better — right-sized is better.

It's easy to be talked up to a bigger or fancier UPS than you need — an online unit 'to be safe,' or a giant battery for a job a modest one handles. That money is better spent elsewhere, or kept in your pocket. Buy for your actual goal and gear, with sensible headroom, and stop there. If a salesperson pushes more, ask them to justify it against your list.

! Match your list, not the upsell

The right UPS is the one that fits your goal and gear with a little headroom — not the priciest on the shelf. Overbuying is the most common way to waste money here.

New vs used

For a UPS, new is usually the wiser buy.

Because a UPS's value is largely in its battery, and batteries wear with age, a used UPS may come with a tired battery that needs replacing right away — often erasing the savings. If you do consider a used unit, factor in a fresh battery and confirm the unit itself is sound. For most folks, a new UPS with a full-life battery and a warranty is the better value.

✓ With used, count on a new battery

If you buy a used UPS, assume you'll add a fresh battery. If that still beats a new unit, fine — but often it doesn't.

Common Questions

The buying questions I hear most.

Q: What kind of UPS should I buy for a home?

A line-interactive UPS with pure sine wave output, sized so its watts cover your gear with headroom, and enough battery-backup outlets. That fits the great majority of homes and offices.

Q: How big should it be?

Big enough that its watts comfortably clear the total of what you'll protect, with room to spare, and its battery holds enough minutes for your goal. Our sizing guide walks it through.

Q: What features really matter?

For a computer or NAS: shutdown-software support. Always: enough battery outlets, a user-replaceable battery, and a recognized safety mark. A display is a nice bonus.

Q: Should I get the fanciest one to be safe?

Usually no — an online UPS is more than most homes need. Right-size to your goal; overbuying wastes money you could spend on runtime or a spare battery.

Q: Is a used UPS a good deal?

Often not, because a used one may need a new battery right away. Factor that in. For most folks a new unit with a fresh battery and warranty is the better value.

★ Want help picking the right one?

Tell me your goal and your gear, and I'll hand you a specific, honest shopping list — no commission, no upsell. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The one-page buying checklist

Take this to the store or the search box.

- ☐ Goal named, and gear listed with its watts added up.
- ☐ Line-interactive, with pure sine wave output.
- ☐ Watts cover the gear with headroom; battery holds enough runtime.
- ☐ Enough battery-backup outlets, some well spaced.
- ☐ Shutdown-software support (for a PC or NAS), and a clear display.
- ☐ A user-replaceable battery, a safety mark (UL listing), and a decent warranty.

✓ If it ticks these, buy with confidence

A unit that meets this list will serve you well for years. Anything beyond it is a bonus, not a requirement.

Match a UPS to your need

A quick matchmaker to point you at the right shelf.

Your need	What to buy
Just the internet & phone	A small or mini line-interactive UPS
A home computer	A modest line-interactive, pure sine wave unit
A home office	A roomier line-interactive with shutdown software
A NAS or server	Line-interactive with confirmed NAS support
Long outages / growth	A unit that accepts add-on battery packs

Find your need in the left column and you're most of the way to the right unit. From there, the checklist fine-tunes the choice.

Where to go next

You're ready to shop — here's where to go deeper on any step.

- Pin down the type: 'the three types of UPS.'
- Get the size right: 'VA vs watts' and 'sizing and runtime.'
- Plan the plugs: 'what to plug in' and 'battery vs surge outlets.'
- After it arrives: 'where to place a UPS' and 'self-test and maintenance.'

Follow whatever question is on your mind. Each guide stands on its own — and I'm always a call away if you'd like a hand.

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 choosing and buying the right UPS 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. Setting up a plug-in UPS is friendly, everyday work I'm glad to do with you; I don't do licensed electrical work myself, so for a hardwired unit or any panel or wiring work I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ 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

The Buying Steps

From your goal to the shelf



Goal, size, features — work them in order and shop with confidence.

The Buying Checklist

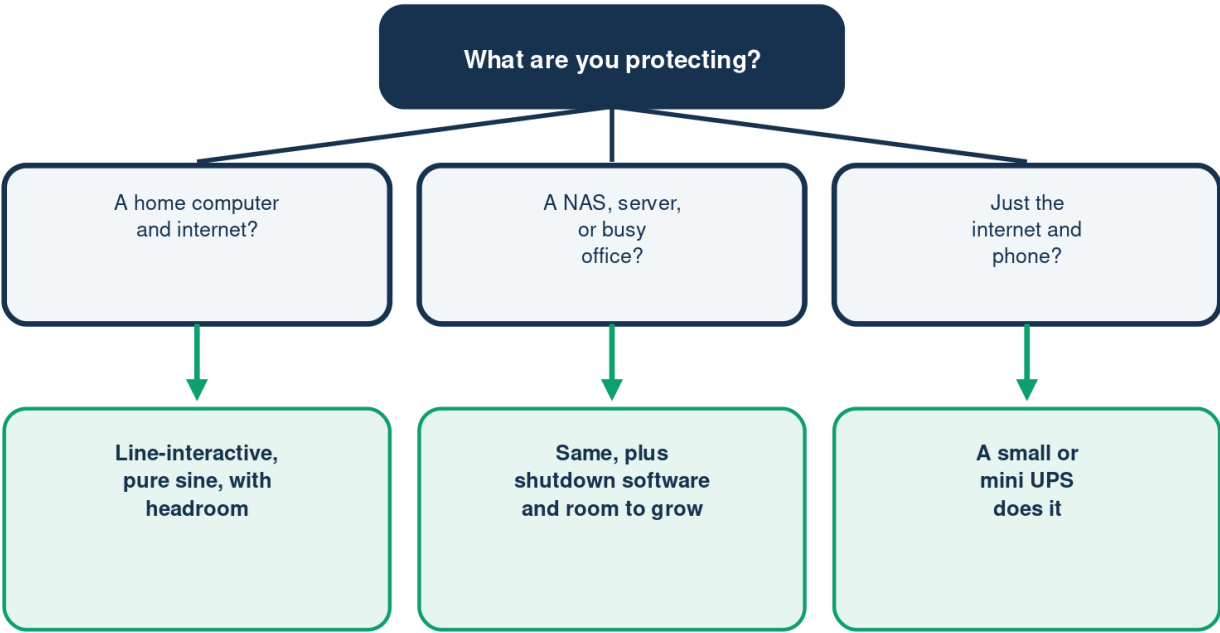
What to look for on the box

Check for	
Type	Line-interactive, pure sine
Watts	Covers your gear + room
Outlets	Enough battery outlets
Software	USB/network + shutdown
Safety mark	A UL listing
Battery	User-replaceable

Tick these and a unit will serve you well for years.

Which UPS Should You Buy?

A starting point, not the final word

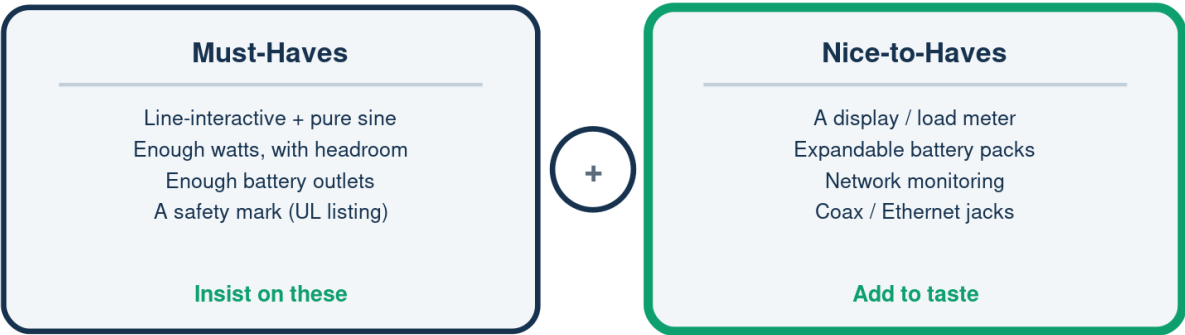


Right-size to your goal — overbuying an online unit wastes money.

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

Must-Haves vs Nice-to-Haves

Get the left column right first



Get the must-haves right; add nice-to-haves as your budget allows.

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



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

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