



An Extended Guide · No. 1809

Self-Test and Routine Maintenance

The little habits that
keep a UPS ready for years

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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. A UPS asks very little of you — keep it plugged in, keep it cool, and test it now and then. This guide covers the whole light routine.

Keeping your UPS healthy

A UPS is one of the most low-maintenance gadgets you'll own. It mostly looks after itself. A little attention now and then — a test, a dusting, a glance at the lights — keeps it ready for the day you need it.

I'm Bill, from Bill's Home Tech in Portage County, Ohio. The nicest thing about a UPS is that it works quietly in the background for years. The main thing to avoid is forgetting about it entirely, only to find a dead battery when an outage hits.

So we'll keep this simple: how the self-test works, a real-world test you can do in a minute, and a gentle seasonal rhythm that keeps everything in good shape.

★ A little attention, a lot of readiness

Five minutes of care a couple of times a year is all a UPS asks. If you'd like me to check yours over on a visit, I'm glad to. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The whole routine, on one page

If you read nothing else, here's the entire maintenance plan.

- ❑ Leave it plugged in so the battery stays charged and ready.
- ❑ Keep it cool, dry, and dusted — heat is the battery's enemy.
- ❑ Let it run its automatic self-tests; press the test button now and then.
- ❑ A couple of times a year, briefly unplug it to confirm your gear stays on.
- ❑ Watch the load level and the indicator lights.
- ❑ Note the battery's age; plan a swap after a few years.

✓ Mostly, just leave it be

A UPS thrives on being left plugged in and cool. The 'maintenance' is really just an occasional check that it's still ready.

A UPS is low-maintenance by nature

Let's set expectations: there's very little to do.

Unlike a generator with oil and fuel, a UPS has no engine, no filters, and nothing to top up. It sits plugged in, keeps its battery charged, and runs quiet. The whole of its upkeep is keeping it cool and clean, making sure the battery is still healthy, and swapping that battery every few years. That's it.

✓ No oil, no fuel, no fuss

If you've cared for a generator, a UPS will feel like a vacation. The hardest part is simply remembering to check on it once in a while.

The automatic self-test

Your UPS quietly checks itself — and lets you check it, too.

Most UPS units run a brief self-test on their own from time to time, flicking to battery for a moment to make sure it's healthy, then back again. Many also have a test button you can press to run that check yourself, and the software can trigger it too. If a self-test finds a weak battery, the unit warns you — which is exactly what you want.

✓ Press the test button now and then

Giving the test button a press every so often — and watching for a pass or a warning — is a good, simple habit. It's the UPS's own health check.

A real-world test you can do

The self-test checks the battery; this checks your whole setup.

- ❑ Make sure nothing important is mid-save or mid-copy.
- ❑ With everyone's okay, briefly unplug the UPS from the wall.
- ❑ Watch that your computer, internet, or other gear keeps running.
- ❑ Listen for the on-battery beep and check the lights.
- ❑ Plug it back into the wall before the battery gets low.
- ❑ Note how it did — did everything stay on as expected?

✓ Test on a calm day

Do this on an ordinary afternoon, not during a storm. Seeing your gear sail through the unplug turns hope into confidence.

Keep it plugged in and charged

The simplest care of all: leave it powered.

A UPS wants to stay plugged into the wall so its battery stays topped up and ready. If you unplug and store a UPS for a long time, the battery slowly drains and can be harmed. So unless you're putting it away on purpose, leave it plugged in — that's how it stays prepared for the next outage.

! Don't leave it unplugged for months

A UPS stored unplugged with a draining battery can quietly ruin that battery. If you must store one, follow the maker's advice on charging it first and topping it up periodically.

Keep it cool, dry, and dusted

The environment does more for battery life than anything you actively do.

- Keep it at comfortable room temperature — heat shortens battery life.
- Keep it dry and out of direct sun.
- Wipe the vents clear of dust with a dry cloth now and then.
- Leave air around it — don't let it get boxed in or buried.

✓ See our placement guide

Most of a UPS's lifespan is decided by where it sits. Our 'where to place a UPS' guide covers heat and airflow in full.

Watch the load and the indicators

A glance now and then catches trouble early.

If your UPS has a display or load bar, an occasional look tells you whether you've crept up toward its limit — a sign you've added gear and should lighten the battery side or size up. Keep an eye on the indicator lights too: a steady 'online' light is happy; a warning or replace-battery light is your cue to act. These little checks take seconds.

✓ A creeping load sneaks up

Every device you add over the years nudges the load up. A glance at the load level catches that before it costs you runtime or trips an overload.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The upkeep is the same everywhere, but the country's demands make testing extra worthwhile.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, short outages are frequent, so your UPS gets plenty of real-world exercise on its own.

- The frequent short blinks naturally test the battery from time to time.
- Still, do a deliberate unplug test a couple of times a year.
- Keep it cool and dusted; town homes can run warm in a small space.
- Note the battery's age so a swap doesn't sneak up on you.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country on a private well, longer outages mean you truly rely on the battery — so a tired one is a bigger problem.

- Test more deliberately, since a rural outage may ask the battery for everything it has.
- Watch runtime over the years; a big drop means the battery is due.
- Keep barn or basement units out of the damp and the cold, which sap a battery.
- Keep a spare battery on hand, since resupply is a drive away.

★ Want me to check your UPS over?

On a visit I can run a test, check the load and battery, and make sure it's ready for the next outage. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

A simple maintenance rhythm

Tie the upkeep to things you already do.

When	Do this
Always	Leave it plugged in and charged
Each season	Dust the vents; feel that the spot isn't too hot
A couple times a year	A real-world unplug test; press the test button
Every few years	Replace the battery

Hang these on the seasons and you'll never have to remember a schedule. A UPS asks for so little that this rhythm covers it entirely.

Note the battery's age

The one number worth writing down.

A UPS battery lasts a few years, then needs replacing — and the easiest way to stay ahead of that is to note when the unit (or its battery) went into service. A small dated label on the unit does the trick. Then, when the years add up or the runtime drops, you'll know it's the battery's age talking, not a fault.

✓ Date it and forget it

Stick a little label with the in-service date on the UPS. Years later, that date tells you at a glance whether a fresh battery is overdue.

Testing with the software

If your UPS is connected to a computer, the software helps you keep watch.

When a UPS is linked to a computer by its cable, the maker's software can run self-tests, show the battery's health and the current load, and even log how the UPS has been doing. For a desktop, NAS, or office setup, that's a handy dashboard — and it's free. Our safe-shutdown guide covers setting the software up.

✓ A free health dashboard

The maker's software turns your computer into a little monitor for the UPS — battery health, load, and test results at a glance. Well worth installing.

Don't over-test or over-cycle

A gentle caution: a battery has a limited number of deep workouts.

Testing is good, but you don't need to run the battery all the way down over and over to prove it works. A brief unplug that confirms your gear stays on, a couple of times a year, is plenty. Draining it to empty again and again just uses up the battery faster. Test enough to trust it, not so much that you wear it out.

✓ A short test is enough

You're checking that it takes over and holds — not running a marathon. Keep tests brief and let the battery rest between them.

Cleaning it safely

A light dusting is welcome — with a couple of common-sense rules.

Wipe the outside and the vents with a dry or barely damp cloth to keep dust from clogging the airflow. Don't spray liquids into the vents, don't open the case looking for dust inside, and never poke anything into the vents. The inside is sealed for a reason; keeping the outside clean is all the cleaning it needs.

! Don't open the case

There's nothing you need to clean or service inside a UPS, and opening it can be hazardous. Keep the outside and vents clean, and leave the insides sealed.

Signs it needs attention

A few things worth acting on when you notice them.

- **A replace-battery light or beep** — time for a fresh battery.
- **Runtime that's dropped a lot** — the battery is aging.
- **It runs warmer than it used to**, or the spot has gotten hot.
- **A swollen look, a hot smell, or damage** — stop and get it checked.

! A swollen or hot unit is a stop sign

If a UPS ever looks bulged, smells hot, or shows damage, unplug your gear from it, stop using it, and get it checked or replaced. That's beyond routine care.

What you can't (and shouldn't) service

Know the line between upkeep and repair.

The one part you'll ever replace is the battery, and on most home units that's a simple, user-friendly swap. Everything else inside is sealed and not meant to be serviced at home. If a UPS has a real fault beyond a tired battery, it's usually more sensible to replace the unit than to try to repair it. Our 'replacing the battery' guide covers the one repair you will do.

★ Battery, yes; internals, no

Swapping the battery is friendly work I'm glad to help with. Anything deeper inside isn't a home repair — and I'll tell you honestly when a unit is simply due for replacement.

Keep the paperwork

A little record-keeping saves future guesswork.

Tuck the manual, the receipt, and a note of the in-service date together with your home papers. The manual decodes the lights and beeps, the receipt matters for any warranty, and the date tells you the battery's age. A photo of each on your phone works just as well and is always with you.

✓ A phone photo is a filing cabinet

Snap the manual's beep chart, the receipt, and the in-service date. That's your whole UPS 'file,' always in your pocket.

Common maintenance mistakes

The ways a low-maintenance gadget still gets neglected.

- **Forgetting it exists** until a dead battery fails you in an outage.
- **Letting it run hot**, quietly halving the battery's life.
- **Ignoring the replace-battery warning** for months.
- **Storing it unplugged** so the battery drains and spoils.

! Neglect shows up at the worst moment

A UPS you never check will let you down exactly when you need it. A couple of quick checks a year prevents that.

Common Questions

The maintenance questions I hear most.

Q: How much maintenance does a UPS need?

Very little — keep it plugged in and cool, dust it now and then, test it a couple of times a year, and replace the battery every few years. There's no oil, fuel, or filters.

Q: How do I test it?

Press the test button and watch for a pass, and once or twice a year briefly unplug the UPS from the wall to confirm your gear stays on. Do the unplug test on a calm day.

Q: Should I unplug it when I'm away?

No — leave it plugged in so the battery stays charged and ready. Unplugging it for long stretches drains and can harm the battery.

Q: How do I know when the battery is worn out?

The unit usually warns you with a light or beep, and the runtime drops noticeably. Noting the in-service date helps you see the age coming.

Q: Can I clean inside it?

No — keep the outside and vents clean, but don't open the case. There's nothing to service inside, and opening it can be hazardous.

★ Want a hand keeping it ready?

I can test your UPS, check the battery and load, and set up the software on a visit. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

The maintenance checklist

Everything from this guide, in one list.

- ☐ Leave it plugged in and charged.
- ☐ Keep it cool, dry, and dusted.
- ☐ Press the test button now and then; do a real-world unplug test twice a year.
- ☐ Glance at the load level and the indicator lights.
- ☐ Label the in-service date and plan a battery swap every few years.
- ☐ Keep the manual, receipt, and date together (or as phone photos).

✓ Plugged in, cool, and tested

Three habits carry the whole routine. Do those and your UPS stays ready for years.

Where to go next

You've got upkeep down — here's what pairs with this guide.

- Time for a fresh battery? See 'replacing the battery.'
- Decode the warnings: 'understanding the beeping and alarms.'
- Give it a good home: 'where to place a UPS.'
- Let it test itself: 'automatic safe-shutdown software.'

Follow whatever question is on your mind. Each guide stands on its own.

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 testing and maintaining your 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 Simple Maintenance Rhythm

Three easy habits keep it ready



No oil, no fuel, no filters — just an occasional check.

Self-Test vs Real-World Test

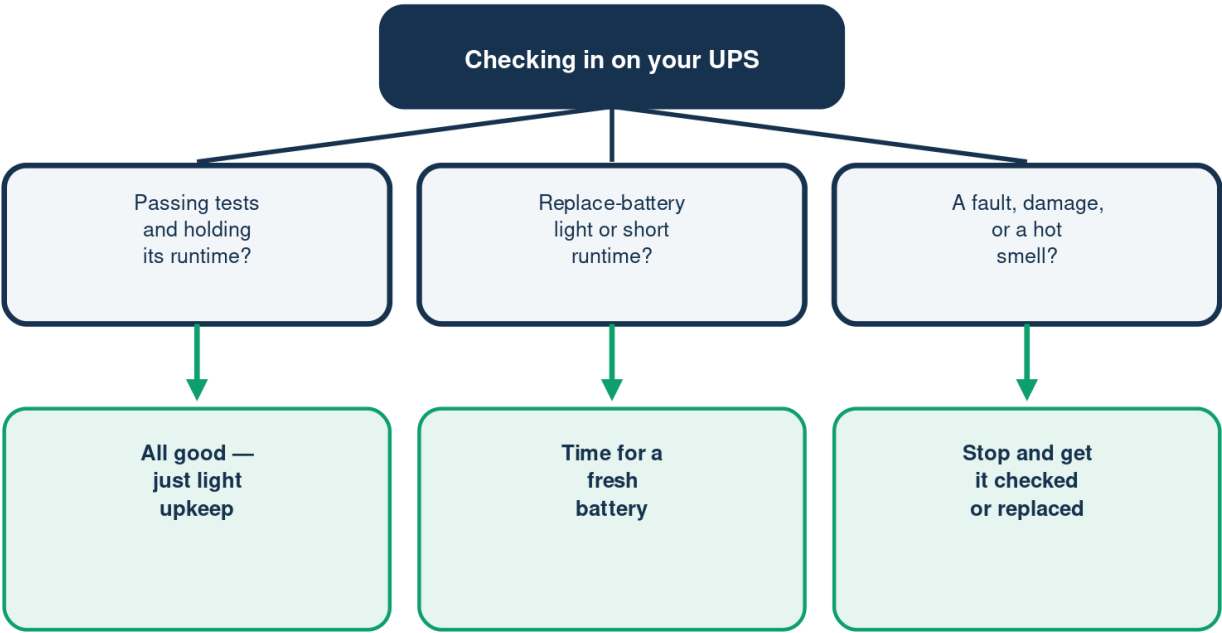
Two useful checks

	Self-test	Real-world test
Who runs it	The UPS	You
How	Auto / button	Briefly unplug
Checks	Battery health	Your whole setup
How often	It handles it	Twice a year

The self-test checks the battery; the unplug test checks everything.

Does Your UPS Need Attention?

A starting point, not the final word



Keep it plugged in and cool — that's most of the maintenance.

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

A Yearly Rhythm

Tie the upkeep to the seasons

Do this	
Always	Leave it plugged in
Each season	Dust vents, feel the spot
Twice a year	A real-world unplug test
Every few years	Replace the battery

Hang the upkeep on the seasons and you'll never forget it.



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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 comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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