BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Use Your Library Card for Free Streaming, Books & Apps

The free movies, audiobooks, music, magazines, and classes hiding behind your library card

Plain-English tech help from:
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Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Your public library card is a quiet powerhouse: with a few free apps it unlocks eBooks and audiobooks (Libby), free movies and documentaries (hoopla and Kanopy), magazines, newspapers, music, and even online classes — all from home, on the device you already have. All you need is your card number and PIN. Borrowed titles return themselves with no late fees, and the movie apps work on your TV too.

Libraries also lend Wi-Fi hotspots and tablets and offer free computers. It won't cover the very newest releases, but between the library and free ad-supported services, most people can cancel several paid subscriptions. If you don't have a card, signing up is quick and free.

1 The Short Version

A modern library card is a key to a huge collection of digital entertainment and learning, not just the books on the shelves. Through a few free apps, your card lets you borrow eBooks and audiobooks, stream movies and shows, read magazines and newspapers, and more — replacing several paid subscriptions at no cost.

It all works from home, on the device you already have. The only thing you need is your library card number and a PIN, plus a few minutes to set up an app. Once you see what's there, you may well cancel a subscription or two.

- Your library card unlocks free eBooks, audiobooks, movies, music, and magazines.
- It works from home on your phone, tablet, or computer through free apps.
- It can replace several paid subscriptions entirely.
- All you need is your card number and PIN to get started.

WATCH OUT

If you don't have a card, or haven't used it in years, that's the first easy step — most Ohio libraries let you sign up in minutes, sometimes right online. A current card is the key to everything in this guide, and it's completely free.

2 What Your Card Actually Unlocks

It helps to see the whole spread at once, because most people only know about one or two pieces. A single library card typically opens the door to all of these, through different free apps.

You want...	The library offers...
eBooks and audiobooks	Borrow them free through an app like Libby
Movies and documentaries	Stream free through apps like Kanopy or hoopla
Music and more	Stream or borrow through hoopla and similar services
Magazines and newspapers	Read current issues free, often through Libby or others
Classes and learning	Free online courses and tutorials through the library

GOOD TO KNOW

Not every library offers every service, and the exact apps vary by county. But most Ohio libraries, including those serving Portage County, offer a rich mix. The library's website lists exactly which services your card unlocks.

3 Get or Renew Your Library Card

Everything starts with an active card. If yours is current, you're ready; if not, getting one is quick and free.

1. Visit your local library branch, or check its website for online signup.
2. Bring a photo ID and something showing your address if signing up in person.
3. Get your card number and set or receive a PIN — you'll need both for the apps.
4. If you have an old card, ask them to confirm it's still active and reset the PIN if needed.

GOOD TO KNOW

Write your library card number and PIN down and keep them with your other important numbers. Every app in this guide asks for them, and having them handy turns each setup into a two-minute job instead of a hunt.

4 Libby: Free eBooks and Audiobooks

Libby is the most popular app for borrowing eBooks and audiobooks from the library, and it's beautifully simple. If you buy books or pay for an audiobook subscription, this one app could replace much of that spending.

1. Install the Libby app from your phone or tablet's app store (it's free).
2. Open it and follow the prompts to find your library.
3. Sign in with your library card number and PIN.
4. Search for a book, tap Borrow, and it downloads to read or listen right away.
5. When you're done, it returns itself automatically — no late fees, ever.

GOOD TO KNOW

Borrowed titles return themselves at the end of the loan, so there are never late fees. If a popular book is already checked out, you can place a hold and Libby notifies you when it's your turn — just like the physical library, but from your chair.

5 hoopla and Kanopy: Free Movies and Shows

For streaming video, many libraries offer hoopla and Kanopy. Between them you'll find movies, documentaries, and TV — a genuine, free alternative to paying for yet another streaming service.

- hoopla offers movies, TV, music, audiobooks, and comics, usually with a monthly borrowing limit.
- Kanopy focuses on films, documentaries, and classic and independent cinema.
- Both are free with your library card and stream to your TV, tablet, or phone.
- You can often send them to your TV through a streaming device or smart TV app.

GOOD TO KNOW

These services usually cap how many titles you can borrow per month, which is simply how the library manages costs. For most people that limit is generous enough to replace a paid movie subscription, especially combined with free ad-supported services.

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 Free Magazines and Newspapers

If you pay for magazine or newspaper subscriptions, your library may offer the same titles free. Current issues are available to read on your phone, tablet, or computer.

- Many popular magazines are available free through the library's apps.
- Some libraries offer major newspapers digitally as well.
- You read current issues, not just old ones.
- It's all included with your card — no extra sign-up fee.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Magazine subscriptions are a classic forgotten recurring charge. Before renewing one, check whether your library offers that same magazine free — many of the best-known titles are available, and reading them through the library costs nothing.

7 Music and Learning

Beyond reading and watching, your card often reaches music and online learning, two more areas people commonly pay for.

- Stream or download music through hoopla and similar library services.
- Take free online courses — languages, computer skills, hobbies — through the library.
- Access tutorials and how-to resources at no cost.
- Some libraries offer free access to research and genealogy tools, too.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> If you've considered paying for a language-learning or skills course, check the library first. Many offer well-known learning platforms free with your card — the exact same courses people pay monthly for, at no cost to you.

8 Set Up Your First App, Step by Step

The apps all follow the same simple pattern, so once you've done one, the rest feel familiar. Here's the general flow using Libby as the example.

1. Open your phone or tablet's app store and search for the app by name.
2. Tap to install it (free), then open it.
3. When asked, search for and select your library.
4. Enter your library card number and PIN to sign in.
5. Browse or search, then borrow or stream — that's it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Every library app asks for the same two things: your library and your card number with PIN. Once you've entered them in one app, you know exactly what the next app will want, which makes setting up the others quick and unintimidating.

9 Watch It on Your TV

Reading and listening happen naturally on a phone or tablet, but the movie services are even better on the big screen. Getting them onto your TV is usually straightforward.

- Look for the hoopla or Kanopy app on your smart TV or streaming device.
- Sign in with your library card the same way as on your phone.
- Or play on your phone and send it to the TV, if your setup allows.
- A streaming device you already own likely has these apps available.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you're not sure how to get an app onto your TV, that's a common sticking point and an easy one to sort out. Once it's on there and signed in, free library movies are just a few clicks away on the big screen.

10 Borrow a Device or Hotspot

The library's help extends to the devices and internet themselves, which matters if money is tight or your home internet is limited.

- Many libraries lend Wi-Fi hotspots you can take home for a few weeks.
- Some lend tablets or laptops for borrowing.
- Free public computers and Wi-Fi are available at the branch.
- Librarians will help you learn to use any of it.

GOOD TO KNOW

A borrowed hotspot can be a real bridge if home internet is a stretch, and borrowing a tablet lets you try one before spending money. These lending programs are quietly among the most valuable things libraries do — just ask at the desk.

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.

11 What the Library Can't Replace

To be honest and useful, it's worth being clear about the limits. The library is a tremendous free resource, but it won't cover everything, and knowing the gaps helps you decide what, if anything, to keep paying for.

- The very newest movies and current-season TV usually aren't available free.
- Popular books may have a wait, like any library hold.
- Monthly borrowing limits apply to some services.
- Not every title or magazine will be in the collection.

GOOD TO KNOW

Think of the library as covering the large majority of your reading, listening, and watching for free, with a paid service or two filling the small gap for the newest releases. Even that combination usually costs far less than paying for everything.

12 Share the Habit With Family

Once you're set up, it's a lovely thing to help others in the family get going, especially grandchildren who read a lot or a spouse who'd enjoy the movies.

1. Help each family member get their own free library card.
2. Set up the apps on their devices with their card.
3. Show them how to borrow their first book or movie.
4. Point out the no-late-fees, returns-itself convenience.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Each person's own card means each gets their own borrowing limits and holds, so the family isn't competing for one account. Getting the grandkids library cards is a gift that keeps giving — and quietly teaches them that the best things really can be free.

13 Why It's All Free — and Really Is

People are sometimes suspicious that something this good is free, and wonder where the catch is. There isn't one. Your public library is paid for by the community through taxes, and these digital services are simply the modern shelves — the library licenses them so residents can borrow, exactly as it always has with physical books.

That means no hidden charge, no card details required beyond your library card, and no fees even if you keep a book too long, since the digital ones return themselves. It's one of the few genuinely free things in modern life, and it's yours because you live in the community that funds it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Because it's funded by the community, there's nothing to upsell and no reason for the library to push you toward spending. That's a refreshing contrast to the apps and services that make their money from your subscriptions — and it's why the library is such a reliable money-saver.

14 Your Borrowing Stays Private

A natural question is whether using these services exposes what you read or watch. Libraries have a long, serious tradition of protecting borrowers' privacy, and that carries into the digital apps.

- Libraries have long protected the privacy of what people borrow.
- Your borrowing isn't an advertisement or shared with your contacts.
- You sign in with your library card, not a social account.
- As always, use a good password on the apps and your library account.

> **TIP**
>
> If you'd rather not get promotional emails, you can usually opt out in each app's settings, and your librarian can help you keep notifications to just the useful ones, like "your hold is ready." The services are there to serve you, not to market to you.

15 When to Call Bill

The library's free services are wonderful, but getting the apps installed, signed in with your card, and especially onto your TV can be the stumbling block that stops people from ever enjoying them. If you'd like a hand getting set up, that's a cheerful, easy visit.

I'll help you get or renew your card if needed, install the right apps for your devices, sign you in, and get the movie services onto your TV — then show you how to borrow your first book and film. We can also look at which paid subscriptions the library lets you comfortably cancel.

- You want help installing and signing in to the library apps.
- You'd like the free movie services set up on your TV.
- You're not sure which apps your library offers or how to start.
- You want to see which paid subscriptions you can drop once the library's set up.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this handy. Your card number and PIN unlock all of it, free.

I want to...	Do this...
Borrow eBooks & audiobooks	Install Libby, find your library, sign in with card + PIN, tap Borrow
Watch free movies	Install hoopla or Kanopy, sign in with your card, stream
Read magazines/newspapers	Use the library's app (often Libby) — current issues, free
Get music or take a class	Use hoopla and the library's learning services with your card
Watch on the TV	Add the hoopla/Kanopy app to your smart TV or streaming device
Get online for free	Borrow a Wi-Fi hotspot or use free library computers and Wi-Fi
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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