BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 1949

Updated November 2026

VA Hearing Aids — Bluetooth, the App, and the TV

Getting the most from your VA-issued hearing aids

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.

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The 60-Second Version

The whole thing in a breath.

If you get hearing aids through the VA, they're probably far more capable than you realize — modern hearing aids do much more than make sounds louder, and many VA-issued ones are packed with useful technology that often goes unused simply because no one set it up. Three features stand out. First, Bluetooth: most modern hearing aids connect wirelessly to your smartphone over Bluetooth, which lets you stream audio directly into your ears — you can take phone calls through your hearing aids, and listen to music, podcasts, and other audio straight from your phone, hearing it clearly without earbuds.

Second, the companion app: these aids usually have a free smartphone app that lets you adjust them yourself (volume, programs, settings) and — very valuably — lets your VA audiologist fine-tune and adjust your aids remotely, so you can often get them tweaked without an in-person visit (the VA has remote-care programs for exactly this).

Third, the TV: you can usually connect your hearing aids to your television so the TV's sound comes clearly through your aids — this frequently uses a small 'TV streamer' accessory that plugs into the TV, which the VA may provide, since many aids can't take TV audio directly. Setting these up can genuinely transform daily life — clearer calls, easier TV, self-adjustment, remote tuning — and your VA audiology clinic is the place to get help doing it; they can pair things, set up the app, and provide the TV accessory.

Exactly which features your aids have depends on your specific model and clinic, so your VA audiology clinic (and your audiologist) is the authority to ask. But the message is simple: the hearing aids you already have can likely do far more than you're using them for — so it's well worth asking your clinic to help you set up Bluetooth, the app, and the TV connection.

- Modern VA-issued hearing aids do far more than amplify — many are packed with technology that often goes unused. Three features to know: Bluetooth, the companion app, and the TV connection.
- Bluetooth: most connect to your smartphone wirelessly, letting you stream phone calls, music, and other audio straight into your ears — clear, without earbuds.
- The app: a free smartphone app lets you adjust the aids yourself (volume, programs) and lets your VA audiologist fine-tune them remotely, often avoiding an in-person visit (the VA has remote-care programs for this).
- The TV: you can usually connect the aids to your TV so its sound comes clearly through them — often via a small 'TV streamer' accessory the VA may provide. Your VA audiology clinic sets it all up. Exact features depend on your model/clinic — ask them.

MORE THAN LOUDER

2 Modern Hearing Aids Do More Than Amplify

Lots of unused technology.

The starting point is a happy surprise for many veterans: modern hearing aids, including the ones the VA issues, do far more than simply make sounds louder — they're sophisticated little devices full of helpful technology, much of which commonly goes unused because no one set it up.

- Far beyond amplification: today's hearing aids don't just amplify sound; they process it intelligently and connect wirelessly to other devices, making them more like tiny smart earpieces than the simple amplifiers of the past.
- VA aids are often high-quality and modern: the VA provides current, capable hearing aids from major manufacturers, so VA-issued aids frequently include these modern features.
- Three big features to know: the standouts for daily life are Bluetooth streaming (from your phone), a companion app (for adjustments and remote care), and TV connection — covered in this guide.
- Features often go unused: many people wear their aids only as amplifiers and never discover or set up the extra capabilities — leaving real, useful value on the table.

- Setting them up can transform daily life: clearer phone calls, easier TV, the ability to adjust your own aids, and remote tuning by your audiologist can all make a genuine, daily difference.
- Features vary by model: exactly which capabilities your aids have depends on your specific hearing-aid model (and your clinic's offerings), so your VA audiology clinic is the place to confirm what yours can do.

The right starting point is a genuinely happy surprise for many veterans: modern hearing aids, very much including the ones the VA issues, do far more than simply make sounds louder. Where the hearing aids of the past were essentially just amplifiers, today's are sophisticated little devices that process sound intelligently to make speech clearer in difficult environments and that connect wirelessly to your other devices — more like tiny smart earpieces than the simple amplifiers people remember.

And this isn't reserved for expensive private hearing aids: the VA provides current, capable hearing aids from the major manufacturers, so the aids issued through the VA frequently include exactly these modern features. Three of those features stand out as the most useful in daily life, and they're the focus of this guide: Bluetooth streaming, which lets audio from your phone go straight into your ears; a companion smartphone app, which lets you adjust your aids and lets your audiologist tune them remotely; and the ability to connect your aids to your television so you hear the TV clearly.

The unfortunate reality, though, is that these valuable capabilities very often go completely unused, because many people simply wear their hearing aids as basic amplifiers and never discover, or never get help setting up, the extra features — which means a great deal of genuinely useful value is left on the table. That's a shame, because setting these features up can make a real, daily difference to quality of life: phone calls heard clearly straight through your aids, the television finally easy to follow, the ability to adjust your own aids as needs change through the day, and the convenience of having your audiologist fine-tune them without you having to travel for an appointment.

It's worth being clear that exactly which capabilities your particular aids have depends on your specific hearing-aid model and on what your clinic offers, since

there are many different models with different features, so your VA audiology clinic is the place to confirm precisely what your aids can do. But the overarching and encouraging message is simple: the hearing aids you already have are very likely capable of far more than you're currently using them for, and the following chapters explain the three big features and how to get your clinic's help setting them up so you can enjoy their full benefit.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Modern hearing aids — including VA-issued ones from major manufacturers — do far more than amplify: they process sound intelligently and connect wirelessly to your devices, more like tiny smart earpieces. The three standout features for daily life are Bluetooth streaming (from your phone), a companion app (for self-adjustment and remote care by your audiologist), and TV connection. These often go unused because no one set them up — leaving real value on the table. Exact features vary by model, so confirm with your VA audiology clinic.

BLUETOOTH

3 Bluetooth — Streaming From Your Phone

Calls and audio straight to your ears.

The most widely useful modern feature is Bluetooth: most modern hearing aids connect wirelessly to your smartphone, which lets you stream audio directly into your ears — turning your hearing aids into wireless earpieces for phone calls, music, and more. Here's what it does.

- Wireless connection to your phone: the aids pair with your smartphone over Bluetooth (just as wireless earbuds do), creating a wireless link between your phone and your ears.
- Phone calls through your aids: once connected, you can take phone calls through your hearing aids, hearing the caller clearly in both ears — a big help if phone calls have been hard to hear.

- Stream music, podcasts, audio: you can also stream music, podcasts, audiobooks, and other audio from your phone straight into your aids, hearing it clearly without needing separate earbuds.
- Clearer than a speaker: because the sound goes directly into your aids (which are tuned to your hearing), streamed audio is often clearer for you than listening through a phone or speaker.
- Hands-free and convenient: streaming is convenient and hands-free, and you can usually control it (answer calls, adjust volume) via your phone or the aids themselves.
- Depends on compatibility: Bluetooth streaming depends on your aids and your phone being compatible — most modern combinations work, but your clinic can confirm and help pair them.

The single most widely useful modern feature of hearing aids is Bluetooth, and it's worth understanding because it effectively turns your hearing aids into clear, personalized wireless earpieces. The way it works is that your hearing aids pair with your smartphone over Bluetooth, just as a pair of wireless earbuds would, creating a wireless link directly between your phone and your ears.

Once that connection is set up, the benefits are immediate and practical. Most notably, you can take phone calls through your hearing aids, so that when your phone rings, the caller's voice comes clearly into both of your ears via the aids that are already tuned to your hearing — which is a genuine relief for the many people who have found phone calls increasingly hard to hear, since it puts the call right where you hear best.

Beyond calls, you can stream all sorts of audio from your phone straight into your aids: music, podcasts, audiobooks, videos, and more, all heard clearly without needing to fuss with separate earbuds that don't account for your hearing. And because the streamed sound is delivered directly into your hearing aids, which are adjusted specifically for your hearing loss, it's often noticeably clearer for you than trying to listen through a phone's speaker or a regular speaker would be — the audio is, in effect, shaped to your ears.

The whole experience is convenient and hands-free: you can typically answer and end calls and adjust the volume either through your phone or through controls on the

aids themselves, so you're not juggling anything. The one thing it depends on is compatibility between your particular hearing aids and your particular phone — most modern combinations of reasonably recent aids and phones work well together, but there can be exceptions, and the details of pairing vary, which is exactly the kind of thing your VA audiology clinic can confirm and help you set up.

For anyone who has struggled with phone calls or wished they could listen to things more clearly, getting Bluetooth streaming working between their aids and their phone is often the most immediately rewarding of all the modern features — so it's a great place to start.

GOOD TO KNOW

Bluetooth connects your hearing aids wirelessly to your smartphone (like wireless earbuds), so you can take phone calls through your aids — hearing the caller clearly in both ears — and stream music, podcasts, and other audio straight into your ears. Because the sound is delivered into aids tuned to your hearing, it's often clearer than a speaker. It's hands-free and controllable from your phone or the aids. It depends on your aids and phone being compatible — your VA audiology clinic can confirm and help pair them.

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.

THE APP

4 The Companion App and Remote Care

Adjust them yourself; tune remotely.

Modern hearing aids usually come with a free companion smartphone app, and it does two valuable things: it lets you adjust your aids yourself, and — especially useful with the VA — it lets your audiologist fine-tune and adjust your aids remotely, often sparing you a trip to the clinic.

- A free companion app: your hearing aids typically have a matching free smartphone app (from the aids' manufacturer) that connects to them, usually over the same Bluetooth link.
- Adjust your aids yourself: the app lets you change settings on the spot — adjusting volume, switching between programs or environments (quiet, noisy, TV), and other tweaks — so you can fine-tune to your situation without the clinic.
- See useful info: apps often show helpful things like battery level and let you find a misplaced aid, among other conveniences.
- Remote adjustment by your audiologist: valuably, the app lets your VA audiologist connect remotely and fine-tune your aids' settings from a distance — because your aids link to your phone, the audiologist can adjust them through it.
- The VA has remote-care programs: the VA offers telehealth/remote programs for hearing care precisely so you can get adjustments and support without always traveling to the clinic — a real convenience, especially if getting there is hard.
- Set up with your clinic's help: your VA audiology clinic can help you install and set up the app, link it to your aids, and arrange remote care — so ask them to get you going.

Modern hearing aids almost always come with a free companion smartphone app, and it's worth setting up because it does two genuinely valuable things. The app is a free application from your hearing aids' manufacturer that connects to your aids, usually over the same Bluetooth link that handles streaming. The first thing it lets you do is adjust your own hearing aids on the spot: you can change the volume, switch between different programs or listening environments — a setting for quiet rooms, one for noisy places like restaurants, one for watching TV, and so on — and make other tweaks yourself, so you can fine-tune how your aids behave to suit whatever

situation you're in, without needing to go to the clinic for every little change.

Apps also commonly show you useful information and conveniences, such as your aids' battery level, and many can even help you locate a hearing aid you've misplaced, which is a small but welcome feature. The second, and especially valuable, capability — particularly in the context of VA care — is remote adjustment by your audiologist: because your hearing aids are linked to your phone through the app, your VA audiologist can connect remotely and fine-tune your aids' settings from a distance, adjusting them through that phone connection rather than requiring you to come in.

The VA offers telehealth and remote-care programs for hearing care precisely to make this possible, so that you can get your aids adjusted, tuned, and supported without always having to travel to the clinic in person — which is a real convenience for everyone and a significant help for anyone who finds getting to the clinic difficult, whether because of distance, mobility, or time.

Getting the app installed and working is something your VA audiology clinic can help you with: they can assist you in installing and setting up the right app, linking it to your specific aids, and arranging the remote-care service, so if any of this sounds useful — and self-adjustment plus remote tuning is useful to almost everyone — it's well worth asking your clinic to get you set up.

The companion app, in short, puts control of your aids in your own hand day to day and puts your audiologist's expertise just a phone connection away.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Modern hearing aids usually have a free companion app (from the manufacturer) that connects over Bluetooth. It lets you adjust your aids yourself — volume, switching programs for quiet/noisy/TV environments — and shows info like battery level or helps find a lost aid. Valuably, it also lets your VA audiologist fine-tune your aids remotely through your phone, and the VA has telehealth/remote-care programs for exactly this, so you can often get adjustments without traveling to the clinic. Ask your clinic to help set it up.

THE TV

5

Connecting Your Hearing Aids to the TV

Hear the TV clearly, often via a streamer.

A feature that delights many people is connecting their hearing aids to the television, so the TV's sound comes clearly through their aids. This often uses a small 'TV streamer' accessory, which the VA may provide. Here's how it works and how to get it.

- Hear the TV through your aids: you can usually connect your hearing aids to your TV so that the television's audio streams directly into your aids — clear, at a volume that suits you, while others can keep the TV at a normal level.
- A huge help for the 'TV too loud' problem: this solves the classic conflict where you need the TV loud to follow dialogue but it's too loud for everyone else — the TV sound goes to your aids instead.
- Often needs a TV streamer accessory: many hearing aids can't take audio directly from a TV, so a small 'TV streamer' (or 'TV connector') accessory plugs into the television and sends its sound to your aids — a key piece to know about.
- The VA may provide the streamer: importantly, the VA may supply the TV streamer accessory for your aids at no cost — so ask your audiology clinic whether one is available for your model rather than assuming you must buy one.
- Setup involves the streamer and the TV: the streamer connects to your TV's audio output (and pairs with your aids); your clinic can help you understand and set this up for your particular TV and aids.
- Newer aids/standards may vary: hearing-aid and audio technology is evolving (newer wireless standards, etc.), so exactly how your aids connect to a TV can vary by model — your clinic can advise what works for yours.

A modern hearing-aid feature that genuinely delights many people is the ability to connect their aids to the television, so that the TV's sound comes clearly and directly into their hearing aids — and it's one of the most life-improving of all, because of the problem it solves. When your aids are connected to the TV, the television's audio streams straight into them at a volume and clarity that suits you, which means you can hear your programs clearly while everyone else in the room keeps the TV at a normal, comfortable level.

This directly resolves the classic and frustrating household conflict in which you need the TV turned up loud to follow the dialogue, but that volume is too loud for everyone else — with the TV sound going to your aids, you get it clearly and the room stays peaceful, which can transform TV watching from a source of tension into a pleasure again.

There's an important practical detail to understand about how this is usually achieved: many hearing aids cannot take audio directly from a television on their own, so the connection commonly relies on a small accessory, typically called a 'TV streamer' or 'TV connector,' which plugs into the television and sends the TV's sound wirelessly to your hearing aids.

Knowing about this little device is key, because without it the TV connection often simply won't work, and people sometimes don't realize an accessory is involved. The genuinely good news for veterans is that the VA may provide this TV streamer accessory for your hearing aids at no cost, so rather than assuming you'd have to buy one yourself, the right move is to ask your VA audiology clinic whether a TV streamer is available for your particular model.

Setting it up involves connecting the streamer to your television's audio output and pairing it with your aids, and the specifics depend on your TV and your aids, so your clinic can help you understand and arrange it for your particular equipment. It's also worth knowing that hearing-aid and audio technology is evolving — with newer wireless audio standards emerging that may change how aids connect to TVs and other audio sources over time — so exactly how your aids link to a television can vary by model and generation, and once again your VA audiology clinic is the authority on what will work for your specific aids.

But the headline is well worth acting on: you can very likely hear your TV clearly through your hearing aids, often with a free accessory from the VA, so it's a feature to ask your clinic about.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can usually connect your hearing aids to your TV so its sound streams clearly into your aids at a volume that suits you — while others keep the TV at a normal level, solving the 'too loud for them, too quiet for me' conflict. This often needs a small 'TV streamer' accessory that plugs into the TV (many aids can't take TV audio directly), and the VA may provide it at no cost — so ask your audiology clinic. Exactly how it connects varies by model; your clinic can set it up for your TV and aids.

QUESTIONS

6 Plain Questions and Answers

The things veterans ask most.

"Can my VA hearing aids connect to my phone?"

Most modern ones can, over Bluetooth — just like wireless earbuds. Once paired, you can take phone calls through your hearing aids, hearing the caller clearly in both ears, and stream music, podcasts, and other audio from your phone straight into your aids. Because the sound goes into aids tuned to your hearing, it's often clearer than a speaker. It depends on your aids and phone being compatible — your VA audiology clinic can confirm and help pair them.

"What does the app do?"

The free companion app (from your aids' manufacturer) does two valuable things. It lets you adjust your aids yourself — volume, switching programs for quiet, noisy, or TV settings — and shows info like battery level. And it lets your VA audiologist fine-tune your aids remotely through your phone, so you can often get adjustments without traveling to the clinic; the VA has remote-care programs for exactly this. Your clinic can help you install and set it up.

"How do I hear my TV through my hearing aids?"

You connect your aids to the TV so its sound streams clearly into them at a volume that suits you, while others keep the TV normal — solving the 'too loud for them' problem. This often needs a small 'TV streamer' accessory that plugs into the TV,

since many aids can't take TV audio directly. Importantly, the VA may provide that accessory at no cost, so ask your audiology clinic whether one is available for your model, and have them help you set it up.

"How do I get these features set up?"

Ask your VA audiology clinic — they're the ones who can set it all up and help. They can confirm what your specific aids can do, help pair them to your phone for Bluetooth streaming, install and set up the companion app, arrange remote-care adjustments with your audiologist, and provide and set up a TV streamer accessory for the TV connection. Exactly which features your aids have depends on your model and clinic, so they're your authority — and for your hearing care generally, your audiologist.

WRAP UP

7 Get the Full Value

Ask your clinic to set it up.

If you receive hearing aids through the VA, the big takeaway is that they can very likely do far more than you're currently using them for — modern hearing aids are packed with helpful technology beyond simply amplifying sound, and much of it commonly goes unused only because no one set it up. Three features are especially worth having.

Bluetooth lets your aids connect wirelessly to your smartphone, so you can take phone calls through your hearing aids and stream music, podcasts, and other audio straight into your ears, often clearer than any speaker. The companion app lets you adjust your aids yourself — volume, programs for different environments — and, valuably, lets your VA audiologist fine-tune them remotely through your phone, so you can often get adjustments without a trip to the clinic, thanks to the VA's remote-care programs.

And you can usually connect your aids to your television so the TV's sound comes clearly through them at a volume that suits you while the room stays comfortable —

frequently using a small TV streamer accessory that the VA may provide at no cost. Setting these up can genuinely improve daily life: clearer calls, easier TV, self-adjustment, and remote tuning.

Your VA audiology clinic is the place to make it happen — they can confirm what your aids can do, pair your phone, set up the app, arrange remote care, and provide the TV accessory. Since exact features depend on your specific model and clinic, they (and your audiologist) are your authority. So the simple, worthwhile step is to ask your VA audiology clinic to help you set up Bluetooth, the app, and the TV connection — and get the full value from the hearing aids you already have. (For your hearing care, your audiologist is the one to guide you.)

- VA-issued hearing aids are likely far more capable than you're using them for — modern aids do much more than amplify, and the extra features often go unused because no one set them up.
- Bluetooth: connect to your phone to take calls through your aids and stream music and audio straight into your ears, often clearer than a speaker.
- The app: adjust your aids yourself (volume, programs) and let your VA audiologist fine-tune them remotely through your phone — often avoiding a clinic trip (the VA has remote-care programs).
- The TV: connect your aids so the TV's sound comes clearly through them at your volume while the room stays normal — often via a 'TV streamer' the VA may provide free. Ask your VA audiology clinic to set it all up; features vary by model.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you've got VA hearing aids, I'm happy to help you get far more out of them. We can look at setting up Bluetooth so you can take phone calls through your aids and stream audio from your phone, getting the companion app installed so you can adjust them yourself (and so your VA audiologist can tune them remotely without a clinic trip), and connecting them to your TV so you hear it clearly — often with a free 'TV streamer' accessory the VA may provide. Your VA audiology clinic is the place to make it all happen, since the features depend on your model, so we'll plan what to ask them — and for your hearing care itself, your audiologist is your guide.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
More than louder	Modern VA aids stream audio, connect to devices
Bluetooth	Stream calls, music, and audio from your phone
The app	Adjust them yourself; audiologist can tune remotely
TV connection	Hear the TV through your aids (often via a TV streamer)
Remote care	Audiologists can adjust settings via the app/phone
Ask your clinic	Your VA audiology clinic sets it up and helps
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

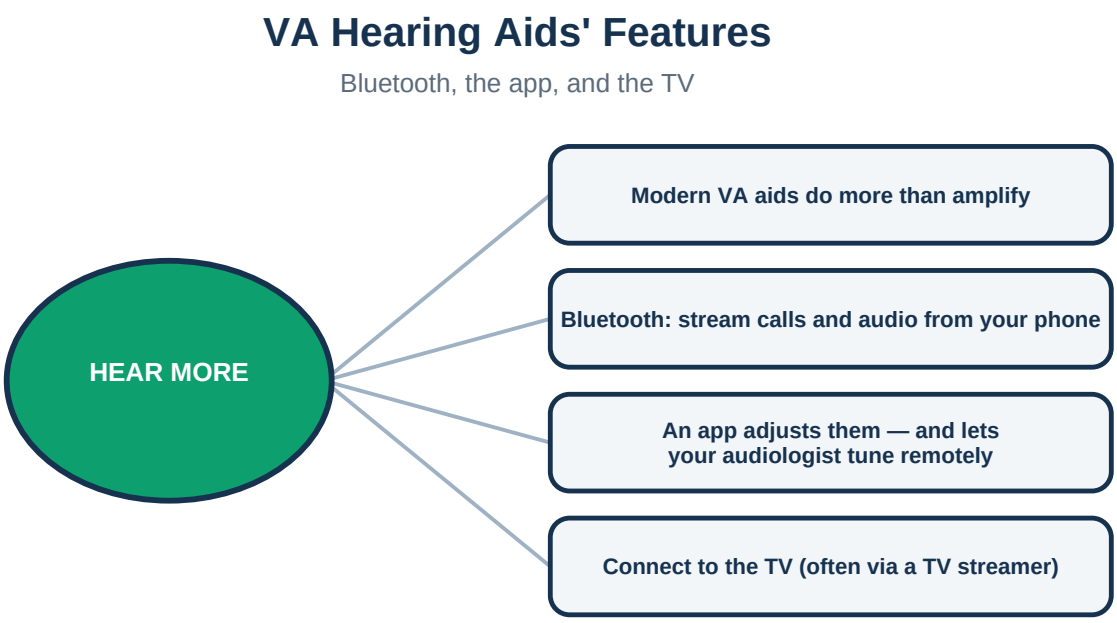


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Setting It Up

Four steps

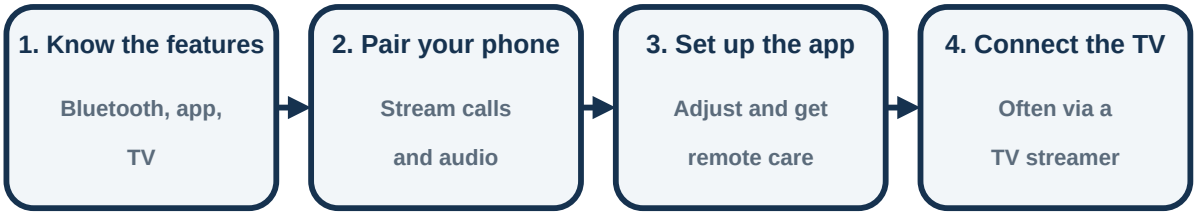


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

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.

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