



# Video Calls With Family While You're Away

Close From Far Away FaceTime, Zoom and WhatsApp calls across any distance  
or time zone

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# What's Inside

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

|                                                   |    |
|---------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. The Whole Idea in One Glance . . . . .         | 5  |
| 2. Seeing Family From Anywhere . . . . .          | 5  |
| 3. The Main Video-Call Apps at a Glance . . . . . | 6  |
| 4. FaceTime — The Apple Family Choice . . . . .   | 6  |
| 5. Making a FaceTime Call . . . . .               | 7  |
| 6. FaceTime Links for Everyone Else . . . . .     | 7  |
| 7. WhatsApp — The Mixed-Family Choice . . . . .   | 8  |
| 8. Making a WhatsApp Video Call . . . . .         | 8  |
| 9. Zoom — For the Bigger Gathering . . . . .      | 8  |
| 10. Joining or Hosting a Zoom Call . . . . .      | 9  |
| 11. Google Meet — Join From a Link . . . . .      | 9  |
| 12. Joining a Google Meet . . . . .               | 10 |
| 13. Facebook Messenger Video Calls . . . . .      | 10 |
| 14. Which App to Use With Whom . . . . .          | 11 |
| 15. Use Wi-Fi to Avoid Data Charges . . . . .     | 11 |
| 16. Checking You Are Really on Wi-Fi . . . . .    | 12 |
| 17. Figuring Out the Hour Back Home . . . . .     | 12 |
| 18. Setting Up a Standing Call . . . . .          | 13 |
| 19. Sending the Link or Invite . . . . .          | 13 |
| 20. Helping a Less-Techy Relative Join . . . . .  | 14 |
| 21. Getting the Whole Family on at Once . . . . . | 14 |

|                                                      |    |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 22. Group Calls With the Grandchildren . . . . .     | 15 |
| 23. Why Send the Call to a TV . . . . .              | 15 |
| 24. Sending the Picture to an Apple TV . . . . .     | 16 |
| 25. Sending the Picture With Chromecast . . . . .    | 16 |
| 26. Group Apps Straight on the TV . . . . .          | 17 |
| 27. Good Light Makes All the Difference . . . . .    | 17 |
| 28. Where to Put the Camera . . . . .                | 18 |
| 29. Being Heard Clearly . . . . .                    | 18 |
| 30. Earbuds Can Help a Lot . . . . .                 | 19 |
| 31. Minding What's Behind You . . . . .              | 19 |
| 32. Holding the Phone Steady . . . . .               | 20 |
| 33. The First Call — A Gentle Test . . . . .         | 20 |
| 34. Muting and Unmuting Yourself . . . . .           | 21 |
| 35. Turning the Camera On and Off . . . . .          | 21 |
| 36. Showing Your View With the Back Camera . . . . . | 22 |
| 37. When a Call Freezes or Drops . . . . .           | 22 |
| 38. Making Hotel and Public Wi-Fi Work . . . . .     | 23 |
| 39. Keeping Data Low When There's No Wi-Fi . . . . . | 23 |
| 40. Staying Safe and Private on Calls . . . . .      | 24 |
| 41. A Gentle Routine for Staying in Touch . . . . .  | 24 |
| 42. Your Pre-Trip Video-Call Checklist . . . . .     | 25 |
| 43. The Questions I Hear Most . . . . .              | 25 |
| 44. When It Is Worth Calling Me . . . . .            | 26 |

Everyday Cheat Sheet . . . . . 26

A Picture to Follow Along . . . . . 27

A Second Look . . . . . 28

A Note From Bill . . . . . 28

Your Visit — and My Promise . . . . . 29

## THE 60-SECOND VERSION

## 1. The Whole Idea in One Glance

*If you read only this page, you can still call home tonight.*

A video call is a phone call where you can see each other. You open an app, tap a name, and your family's faces appear on your screen while they see yours. Over hotel or home Wi-Fi it is usually free, no matter how far apart you are.

- Use the app your family already uses: FaceTime for Apple families, WhatsApp for mixed or overseas families
- Connect to Wi-Fi first so you avoid using up your data
- Tap the person's name and the video button to start the call
- Hold the phone a little above eye level and face a window for good light
- To share with a room, you can send the picture to a TV
- For a time zone far away, check the hour where they are before you call

**GOOD TO KNOW**

You do not need to learn every app. Learn the one your family uses, and you are done. The rest of this guide is here for the day you want to try something new.

## WHAT THIS COVERS

## 2. Seeing Family From Anywhere

There is a special comfort in seeing a face, not just hearing a voice. A grandchild holding up a drawing, your spouse at the kitchen table, a friend's smile, these things carry across any distance on a video call. The tools are simpler than they look, and once one is set up, a call is just a tap or two away.

This guide walks through the main video-call apps, helps you pick the right one for each person, and covers the real-world parts that trip people up: the time difference, the hotel Wi-Fi, and getting a less-techy relative to join without a struggle. We will also cover looking and sounding your best, so the call feels close and clear.

**TIP**

Set up and test your chosen app before you leave home, with someone nearby. A practice call across the living room irons out every wrinkle while help is close at hand.

## THE APPS

### 3. The Main Video-Call Apps at a Glance

There are only a handful of apps that most families use, and they all do the same core thing: let you see and hear each other. The main difference is which phones they work on and who in your family already has them. You do not need all of them; you need the one your people use.

- FaceTime: built into every iPhone and iPad, wonderful for Apple families
- WhatsApp: free app on any phone, popular for mixed households and overseas family
- Zoom: good for larger family gatherings and groups
- Google Meet: works from a simple link, no account needed to join
- Facebook Messenger: handy if your family already chats on Facebook

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Every one of these is free to use over Wi-Fi. None of them charges you to make a video call. The cost, if any, is only the data if you are not on Wi-Fi, which we cover later.

## FACETIME

### 4. FaceTime — The Apple Family Choice

If you have an iPhone or an iPad, FaceTime is already there, no download needed. It is the easiest choice when the people you call also have Apple devices, because it uses the phone number or email you already have for them. The picture is clear, the sound is good, and there is nothing to set up.

FaceTime works best when everyone is on Apple devices, but it is no longer locked to Apple alone. You can create a link that lets someone on an Android phone or a Windows computer join through their web browser, which we cover in a moment.

**WATCH OUT**

You cannot start a FaceTime call from an Android phone or a Windows computer. Only an Apple device can begin the call or make the link. Those folks can join a link you send, but they cannot host.

## FACETIME

## 5. Making a FaceTime Call

Starting a FaceTime call takes just a few taps, and if you have called the person by phone before, they are already in your contacts. You can begin a call right from the Contacts list or the Phone app without even opening FaceTime first.

- 1 Open the FaceTime app, or find the person in Contacts
- 2 Tap the person's name
- 3 Tap the FaceTime video button, the one with a little camera
- 4 Wait for them to answer, and their face appears
- 5 Tap the red button to hang up when you are done

## TIP

If you are on a phone call and both have iPhones, look for a FaceTime button right on the call screen. One tap turns your voice call into a video call without hanging up.

## FACETIME

## 6. FaceTime Links for Everyone Else

The clever trick that brings non-Apple family into the picture is the FaceTime link. From your iPhone you create a link, send it by text or email, and anyone can tap it to join from their web browser, even on an Android phone or a Windows computer. They do not need an Apple account or the app at all.

- 1 Open FaceTime and tap Create Link at the top
- 2 Choose to share the link by text message or email
- 3 Send it to the people you want on the call
- 4 When they tap the link, they join through their web browser
- 5 As the host, admit them when their name appears, and the call begins

## GOOD TO KNOW

The person on Android or Windows must wait for you, the host, to let them in. Watch for their name to pop up and tap to admit them. Until you do, they will sit in a waiting screen.

## WHATSAPP

## 7. WhatsApp — The Mixed-Family Choice

WhatsApp is a free app that works on any phone, Apple or Android, which makes it the natural pick when your family is a mix of both, or when loved ones live overseas. It uses your phone number as your identity, so once you and your family each have it installed, calling is as simple as tapping a name.

WhatsApp video calls are free over Wi-Fi anywhere in the world, which is why it is so popular with families spread across countries. It also protects your calls with strong privacy built in, so your conversations stay between you and your family.

## TIP

Have your family send you a message on WhatsApp first, so their number is saved and you can see them in your chat list. Then calling them is just a tap on their name.

## WHATSAPP

## 8. Making a WhatsApp Video Call

Once you and the person both have WhatsApp, a video call is a couple of taps. You open the chat with that person, and the video camera button is right at the top. Group video calls work too, so you can gather several family members at once.

- 1 Open WhatsApp and tap the chat with the person you want
- 2 Tap the video camera icon at the top of the screen
- 3 Wait for them to answer, and their face appears
- 4 To add more people, tap the add-person button during the call
- 5 Tap the red button to end the call

## GOOD TO KNOW

WhatsApp group video calls hold a good-sized family gathering, well more than enough for most families. Everyone needs the app, and everyone needs to be on Wi-Fi or have data.

## ZOOM

## 9. Zoom — For the Bigger Gathering

Zoom became a household name for group calls, and it shines when you want many people together at once, like a whole family scattered across the country on a Sunday afternoon. One person starts a meeting and shares a link, and everyone else joins by tapping it. You do not all need to be friends on an app first.

Zoom has a free version that is plenty for family calls, though it may limit how long a group call can run before you start it again. For a one-to-one call there is usually no such limit. The paid versions remove the limit, but most families never need to pay.

**WATCH OUT**

On the free version, a group call may cut off after a set time. If that happens, do not panic. The host simply starts a new meeting and sends the link again, and you all rejoin.

**ZOOM**

## 10. Joining or Hosting a Zoom Call

Most of the time, someone else hosts the family Zoom and sends you a link. Joining is the easy part: you tap the link and the app opens the call. If you want to host your own, you create a free account first, then start a meeting and share its link.

- 1 To join, tap the Zoom link someone sends you by text or email
- 2 If asked, allow Zoom to use your camera and microphone
- 3 Tap Join with Video and Join with Audio when prompted
- 4 To host, open Zoom, tap New Meeting, then Invite to share the link
- 5 Tap Leave or End to finish

**TIP**

The first time you tap a Zoom link, it may ask to install the app. Let it, and future calls open right up. Do this at home before a trip so you are not installing it on hotel Wi-Fi.

**GOOGLE MEET**

## 11. Google Meet — Join From a Link

Google Meet is another group-call option, and its strength is how easily people join. A meeting is just a link, and anyone can join from their web browser without an account and without installing anything. That makes it gentle for a relative who freezes up at the word 'download.'

If you have a Google account, which many people already do from an Android phone or a Gmail address, you can start a Meet yourself. If not, you only ever need to tap the link someone sends you to join their call.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Because Meet opens right in a web browser, it is often the kindest choice for the one family member who finds apps confusing. They tap the link, and they are in. Nothing to install.

**GOOGLE MEET**

## 12. Joining a Google Meet

Joining a Meet is about as simple as it gets. Someone sends you a link, you tap it, and you are in the call. The first time, your phone asks permission to use the camera and microphone, and you simply say yes.

- 1 Tap the Google Meet link you were sent
- 2 Choose to open it in the browser or the Meet app
- 3 Tap Allow when it asks to use your camera and microphone
- 4 Tap Join or Ask to Join
- 5 Tap the red button to leave when the call is over

**TIP**

If the call asks you to wait to be let in, that is normal. The host sees your name and admits you in a moment. Just sit tight on the waiting screen.

**MESSENGER**

## 13. Facebook Messenger Video Calls

If your family already keeps in touch on Facebook, its Messenger app does video calls too, and it is already on many phones. You do not need the person's phone number, only that they are a friend or contact on Messenger. It is a comfortable choice for families who live in their Facebook feed.

- 1 Open the Messenger app and find the person or group
- 2 Tap the conversation to open it
- 3 Tap the video camera icon at the top
- 4 Wait for them to answer
- 5 Tap the red button to end

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Messenger calls are free over Wi-Fi like the others. If your whole family is already on Facebook, this may be the path of least resistance, since no one has to install anything new.

## WHICH APP

## 14. Which App to Use With Whom

The simplest rule is to match the app to the person you are calling, not the other way around. Use whatever that person already has and knows. You can happily keep two or three apps on your phone and reach for whichever one a given family member uses.

- All-Apple family: FaceTime, since it is already there for everyone
- A mix of iPhones and Android phones: WhatsApp, which works on both
- Family overseas: WhatsApp, free worldwide over Wi-Fi
- A big family group call: Zoom or Google Meet, shared by a link
- Family who live on Facebook: Messenger, nothing new to install

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Ask each family member, 'What do you use to video call?' and put that app on your phone. Meeting them where they already are saves everyone the frustration of learning something new.

## WI-FI FIRST

## 15. Use Wi-Fi to Avoid Data Charges

Video calls use a fair amount of data, since they send live pictures both ways. Over Wi-Fi, that data is free. Over your phone's cellular plan, especially abroad, it can add up or burn through your allowance. So the golden rule is simple: connect to Wi-Fi before you make a video call.

Hotels, cruise ships, airports, cafes, and vacation rentals almost all offer Wi-Fi, often free. Connect to it when you arrive, and your video calls home cost you nothing beyond the trip you already paid for. This matters most overseas, where cellular data can carry steep roaming charges.

**WATCH OUT**

Traveling abroad without Wi-Fi, a long video call on cellular data can bring a nasty roaming bill. Make video calls on Wi-Fi, and save cellular for short messages or quick voice calls.

## WI-FI FIRST

## 16. Checking You Are Really on Wi-Fi

Before a call, take five seconds to confirm your phone is actually on Wi-Fi and not quietly using cellular data. It is an easy thing to glance at, and it saves you from a surprise charge. The little fan-shaped Wi-Fi symbol at the top of your screen is your signal.

- 1 Look at the top of your screen for the fan-shaped Wi-Fi symbol
- 2 If you see it, you are on Wi-Fi
- 3 If not, open Settings and tap Wi-Fi to connect to the network
- 4 Pick the hotel or home network and enter its password
- 5 Then make your call, knowing the data is free

**TIP**

When traveling abroad, turn off Data Roaming in your phone's settings as a safety net. Then your phone simply cannot run up a cellular bill, and video calls only go through when you are on Wi-Fi.

## TIME ZONES

## 17. Figuring Out the Hour Back Home

The trickiest part of calling family while away is often the time difference, not the technology. Nobody wants to ring at three in the morning. Your phone can show you two clocks at once, so you always know what hour it is where your family is before you call.

- 1 Open the Clock app on your phone
- 2 Tap World Clock
- 3 Tap the plus button to add a city
- 4 Add the city where your family lives, such as your hometown
- 5 Now both clocks show side by side, so you can pick a kind hour to call

**GOOD TO KNOW**

You can also just ask your phone's assistant. Say 'What time is it in Cleveland?' and it tells you at once. That quick check keeps you from waking anyone at a bad hour.

## SCHEDULING

## 18. Setting Up a Standing Call

The surest way to stay in touch is to agree on a regular time, so nobody has to guess or chase. A standing call, like every Sunday at a set hour, becomes a comfortable rhythm the whole family can count on. You can set a repeating reminder on your phone so it never slips your mind.

- 1 Agree with your family on a day and time that suits both ends
- 2 Account for the time difference so it is reasonable for everyone
- 3 Open your Calendar app and add the event
- 4 Set it to repeat, such as every Sunday
- 5 Turn on a reminder so your phone nudges you beforehand

## TIP

Pick a time that works in both places and write it down as both clocks, like 'Sunday 6pm here, 1pm there.' Spelling out both hours prevents the mix-ups that come with time zones.

## SENDING INVITES

## 19. Sending the Link or Invite

For the group-call apps like Zoom and Google Meet, getting everyone together means sharing a link ahead of time. You create the meeting, copy its link, and send it by text or email to everyone you want on the call. They tap it at the agreed hour and you are all together.

- Create the meeting in Zoom or Google Meet
- Tap the option to copy or share the invitation link
- Paste it into a text message or email to the family
- Include the date and time, written in each person's local hour
- Send it a day ahead so nobody is scrambling at call time

## GOOD TO KNOW

The same link usually works for the whole call, so you can send one message to several people and they all join the same place. No need to call each person separately.

## HELPING RELATIVES

## 20. Helping a Less-Techy Relative Join

Often the hardest part is the one relative who finds all of this baffling. The kindest approach is to remove every step you can. A link they only have to tap, on an app that needs no account, is far gentler than asking them to download something and sign up while you wait on the line.

- Choose the easiest path for them: a FaceTime or Google Meet link they just tap
- Send the link right before the call so it is at the top of their messages
- Call them on the regular phone first and talk them through tapping it
- Keep your instructions to one step at a time
- Be patient; once they do it once, the next time is far easier

**TIP**

Before your trip, do a practice call with that relative while you are still in town. Sitting beside them once, or walking them through it slowly, makes every call from the road go smoothly.

## GROUP CALLS

## 21. Getting the Whole Family on at Once

A group video call puts several faces on your screen at the same time, so the whole family can gather even when you are far away. Everyone sees everyone, and it feels a bit like a family dinner on the glass. FaceTime, WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Meet all do this.

- Each app can hold a good-sized family group at once
- FaceTime and WhatsApp work by adding people to a call you start
- Zoom and Google Meet work by everyone tapping a shared link
- On a group call, the person speaking is usually highlighted
- You can mute yourself when you are not talking to cut background noise

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Group calls can get noisy with everyone at once. It helps if people mute themselves when not speaking, so one voice comes through clearly at a time. We cover muting a little later.

## GRANDCHILDREN

## 22. Group Calls With the Grandchildren

Few things warm a trip like seeing the grandchildren on a call. Little ones do best with short, lively calls rather than long ones, and they love it when you show them things: the view from your window, a funny hat, the ocean behind you. Turning the camera around to show your world keeps them engaged.

- Keep calls with young children short and cheerful
- Show them your surroundings by turning the camera around
- Hold up something to show, like a souvenir or the view
- Let their parent set up the call on their end
- Do not worry about a perfect picture; they just want to see you

**TIP**

Many apps have fun effects and filters that delight children, like silly hats or sparkles on the screen. A quick tap on the effects button can turn a call into a giggle.

## CAST TO TV

## 23. Why Send the Call to a TV

A phone screen is small, especially for a roomful of people wanting to see the grandchildren. You can send, or 'cast,' your video call to a television so everyone's faces appear big on the TV. It turns a call crowded around a phone into something the whole room can enjoy from the couch.

This takes a little setup and depends on what kind of TV and devices you have. It is a lovely extra, not a necessity, so do not feel you must master it. A call on the phone works perfectly well on its own.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Casting to a TV usually happens on the home end, where the family and the big TV are, more than from your hotel room. It is often easiest for the folks at home to set up.

## CAST TO TV

## 24. Sending the Picture to an Apple TV

If the television has an Apple TV box, or is a smart TV that supports Apple's AirPlay, an iPhone or iPad can send its screen or its FaceTime call to the big screen over the same Wi-Fi. Both devices must be on the same Wi-Fi network for it to work.

- 1 Make sure the phone and the TV are on the same Wi-Fi
- 2 Start or join the FaceTime call
- 3 Open the Control Center by swiping from the top corner
- 4 Tap Screen Mirroring, then choose the Apple TV
- 5 The call appears on the television

**TIP**

Newer Apple TVs and smart TVs can show the call on the big screen while the camera in your phone still does the seeing. Prop the phone where it can see the room, and watch everyone on the TV.

## CAST TO TV

## 25. Sending the Picture With Chromecast

If the TV has a Chromecast or is an Android-style smart TV, an Android phone can cast its screen to it over Wi-Fi in much the same way. Again, both the phone and the TV need to be on the same Wi-Fi network. The exact buttons vary by phone, but the idea is the same.

- 1 Make sure the phone and the TV share the same Wi-Fi
- 2 Swipe down from the top of the phone to find the quick settings
- 3 Look for a Cast or Screen Cast button and tap it
- 4 Choose the TV or Chromecast from the list
- 5 Start your video call and it shows on the television

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Some video apps have a little cast button right inside the call screen, shaped like a small screen with waves in the corner. Tapping that sends just the call to the TV, which is often simpler than casting the whole phone.

## CAST TO TV

## 26. Group Apps Straight on the TV

Some smart TVs can run Zoom or Google Meet right on the television itself, with a camera clipped to the top. If the family at home has a setup like that, they can join the family call on the big screen without a phone in the mix at all. It is the most comfortable way for a group to gather.

- Check whether the home smart TV has a Zoom or Meet app
- A small clip-on camera and microphone may be needed for the TV
- The family joins the call on the TV and sees you full size
- You can still be on your phone from the hotel; they are on the TV
- This is usually a home setup, not something for your travels

**TIP**

If the family wants this at home, it is a nice thing to set up once, in person, before anyone travels. Then every call from the road lands on the big screen with no fuss.

## LIGHTING

## 27. Good Light Makes All the Difference

The single easiest way to look better on a video call is to face the light, not sit with your back to it. A window or a lamp in front of you lights your face so your family can see you clearly. A bright window behind you turns you into a dark shadow, which is the most common mistake people make.

- Face a window or a lamp so the light falls on your face
- Never sit with a bright window directly behind you
- Soft, even light looks kinder than a harsh single bulb
- If a room is dim, turn on more lights before you call
- Daytime by a window is the most flattering light of all

**WATCH OUT**

A window behind you is the number one reason people look like a dark blob on a call. Turn around so the window is in front of you, and you will be amazed at the difference.

## CAMERA ANGLE

## 28. Where to Put the Camera

How you hold the phone changes how you come across. Held low, pointing up, it gives an unflattering view up the nose. Held a little above eye level and pointed slightly down, it is kinder to everyone and feels more natural, as if you are looking across at each other.

- Hold the phone at eye level or a touch higher
- Avoid holding it low and looking down at it
- Prop it against books or use a small stand so your arm does not tire
- Leave a little space above your head in the picture
- Look at the camera now and then, not just the screen, to 'meet eyes'

## TIP

Propping the phone on a stand or against a stack of books frees both your hands and holds the camera steady. A shaky, tiring arm makes a call harder on everyone watching.

## SOUND

## 29. Being Heard Clearly

Good sound matters as much as a good picture. A quiet room, free of a loud television or a busy restaurant, lets your family hear you without strain. If a place is noisy, move somewhere calmer before you call, and speak at a normal, unhurried pace.

- Find a quiet spot away from traffic, music, or a TV
- Speak normally; you do not need to shout at the phone
- If the other side is hard to hear, turn your volume up
- Wind outdoors is rough on sound; step into shelter if you can
- A short pause after someone speaks avoids talking over each other

## GOOD TO KNOW

On a video call there is a tiny delay, so you may accidentally talk over each other. A small pause before you reply, and taking turns, keeps the conversation smooth.

## HEADPHONES

## 30. Earbuds Can Help a Lot

A simple pair of earbuds or headphones can make a call much clearer, both for you and for your family. The tiny microphone in earbuds sits closer to your mouth, so your voice comes through better, and hearing the call in your ears cuts out room noise and echo.

- Earbuds put the microphone closer to your mouth for clearer speech
- Listening through earbuds cuts out background noise for you
- They prevent the echo that can happen on speaker
- Any earbuds that fit your phone will do
- Wireless ones are tidy, but corded ones work just as well

**TIP**

If your family often struggles to hear you, try earbuds and ask if it helps. Many people are surprised how much clearer they sound with the microphone close to their mouth.

## BACKGROUND

## 31. Minding What's Behind You

Your family will see whatever is behind you, so a quick glance at your background before the call is worth it. A tidy, simple backdrop keeps the focus on your face. On a trip, though, a lovely view behind you is a gift, so turn the camera to share it.

- Glance behind you before you start the call
- A plain wall keeps the focus on your face
- On a trip, show off the view as part of the fun
- Avoid a cluttered or private scene you would rather not share
- Some apps let you blur the background if you prefer

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Several apps offer a button to blur your background or set a picture behind you. It is handy if your room is messy, but a real sunset behind you needs no blurring at all.

## STEADY SHOT

## 32. Holding the Phone Steady

A wobbling picture is tiring to watch and can even make a viewer queasy. Holding the phone still, or propping it up, gives your family a calm, steady view. A small, folding phone stand is light to pack and makes every call easier on your arm and their eyes.

- Prop the phone against something solid rather than holding it the whole time
- A small folding stand packs flat and sets the phone upright
- If you must hold it, rest your elbow on a table for steadiness
- Set it down for long calls so your arm does not tire
- A steady picture is far easier to watch than a wandering one

**GOOD TO KNOW**

A little folding phone stand costs very little and weighs almost nothing. Tuck one in your bag and you will always have a steady, hands-free setup wherever you land.

## TEST RUN

## 33. The First Call — A Gentle Test

The best time to learn an app is before you need it, with someone patient on the other end. A practice call across town, or even across the room, lets you find the buttons, check your light and sound, and sort out any permissions, all without the pressure of a long-awaited call from abroad.

- 1 Pick the app your family uses and install it before the trip
- 2 Call a patient family member for a practice run
- 3 Check that they can see and hear you clearly
- 4 Try the mute button, the camera flip, and hanging up
- 5 Fix any light or sound trouble while help is nearby

**GOOD TO KNOW**

The first call is always the one that teaches you the most. Get it out of the way at home, and every call on your trip will feel like second nature.

**MUTING**

## 34. Muting and Unmuting Yourself

Every video app has a mute button, which switches your microphone off so the others cannot hear you. It is useful in a group call when you are not speaking, or when there is noise around you, so you do not send a racket to everyone else. Tap it again to unmute and be heard.

- 1 Look for the microphone button on the call screen
- 2 Tap it once to mute; a line usually appears through it
- 3 While muted, the others cannot hear you
- 4 Tap it again to unmute when you want to speak
- 5 Watch for the muted symbol so you remember to unmute

**WATCH OUT**

The most common mix-up on any call is speaking while muted. If people look puzzled and cannot hear you, glance at the microphone button to see if it has a line through it, then tap to unmute.

**CAMERA OFF**

## 35. Turning the Camera On and Off

Sometimes you want to stay on the call but not be seen for a moment, perhaps while you tidy up or step away. The camera button lets you switch your picture off while the sound keeps going. Tap it again when you are ready to be seen.

- Find the camera or video button on the call screen
- Tap it to turn your picture off while staying on the call
- The others still hear you; they just see a name or a dark box
- Tap it again to turn your picture back on
- Handy if you need a private moment but want to keep listening

**TIP**

If you ever feel unsure whether your camera is on, assume it is, and act as you would on camera. Then use the button deliberately when you truly want to step out of view.

## FLIP CAMERA

## 36. Showing Your View With the Back Camera

Your phone has a camera on the front, which shows your face, and one on the back, which shows whatever you point it at. On a call you can flip between them, so you can turn from your own face to the ocean, the mountains, or the grandchildren's cousins in the room with you. It is the easiest way to share where you are.

- 1 During the call, find the flip-camera button, often two arrows in a circle
- 2 Tap it to switch to the back camera
- 3 Now point the phone at the view you want to share
- 4 Tap it again to flip back to your own face
- 5 Narrate what they are seeing, like a little tour

## GOOD TO KNOW

Flipping to the back camera is how you give family a tour of your trip. Walk them along a beach or through a market, and they feel like they are right there with you.

## DROPPED CALLS

## 37. When a Call Freezes or Drops

Now and then a call freezes, goes choppy, or drops entirely. This is almost always the internet connection, not anything you did wrong. The usual fix is simple: hang up and call again, and move closer to the Wi-Fi if the signal is weak.

- 1 If the picture freezes, give it a few seconds to catch up
- 2 If it stays frozen, hang up and start the call again
- 3 Move closer to the Wi-Fi router or a stronger signal
- 4 Turning your camera off can help if the connection is weak, since sound needs less
- 5 If the Wi-Fi is poor, try again from a spot with better signal

## GOOD TO KNOW

A choppy call is a weak-signal problem, not a sign your phone is broken. Hotel Wi-Fi can be crowded in the evening; a call may run smoother at a quieter hour or nearer the router.

## HOTEL WI-FI

## 38. Making Hotel and Public Wi-Fi Work

Hotel and cafe Wi-Fi often needs a quick extra step before it lets you online: a sign-in page where you agree to terms or enter a room number. Until you finish that page, nothing connects. Once you are through it, your video calls run free over that Wi-Fi.

- 1 Open Settings, tap Wi-Fi, and choose the hotel's network
- 2 Wait for a sign-in page to appear, or open your web browser to make it show
- 3 Enter your room number or the access code if asked, and agree to the terms
- 4 Once connected, confirm the Wi-Fi symbol shows at the top of your screen
- 5 Then make your video call

**WATCH OUT**

On public Wi-Fi, stick to video calls and ordinary browsing. Avoid banking or typing sensitive passwords on a network you do not control, to keep your information safe.

## NO WI-FI

## 39. Keeping Data Low When There's No Wi-Fi

Once in a while you will want to call and there is simply no Wi-Fi. You can still do it over cellular data, but keep it short, and know that it uses your plan. A voice call or a few photos use far less data than a long video call, so those are gentler on your allowance when you are off Wi-Fi.

- A short video call on cellular is fine; a long one eats data
- A voice call uses much less data than video
- Sending a photo or a short video message uses less than a live call
- Abroad, cellular data can carry heavy roaming charges, so be careful
- Save the long, leisurely video calls for when you are back on Wi-Fi

**TIP**

If you have no Wi-Fi and want to share a moment, record a short video and send it as a message instead of a live call. Your family enjoys it just as much, and it costs far less data.

**PRIVACY**

## 40. Staying Safe and Private on Calls

Video calls with family are safe, and the main apps keep your calls private. A few simple habits keep it that way. Only accept calls from people you know, be mindful of what the camera shows, and be wary of any unexpected request for money or personal details, even if a face on screen seems familiar.

- Answer video calls only from people you recognize
- Be aware of what your camera shows in the background
- Never share bank details or passwords over a video call
- Be cautious of urgent money requests, even from a familiar-seeming caller
- If something feels off, hang up and call the person back on their known number

**WATCH OUT**

If anyone on a call, however familiar they look or sound, pressures you for money or secrecy, hang up and call your family member back on their usual phone number to check it is really them.

**A ROUTINE**

## 41. A Gentle Routine for Staying in Touch

The families who stay closest while apart tend to keep it simple and regular. A standing call, the right app ready to go, and a quick check of light and Wi-Fi before each one, that is the whole routine. It becomes as natural as putting the kettle on.

- Agree on a regular call time, written in both time zones
- Connect to Wi-Fi before each call
- Face the light and prop the phone steady
- Keep the first call short to test everything
- Flip to the back camera to share your view and bring them along

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Once it is a habit, a video call takes less effort than a letter ever did, and your family gets to see your face. That small routine keeps everyone close, however far you roam.

## YOUR CHECKLIST

## 42. Your Pre-Trip Video-Call Checklist

Run through this before you leave home and your calls will go smoothly from the road.

- The right app installed and tested with family
- A practice call made while help is nearby
- A second time zone added to your Clock
- A regular call time agreed, written in both zones
- A small phone stand and maybe earbuds packed
- Data Roaming turned off abroad, so you only call on Wi-Fi
- Links or contacts for each family member saved

**TIP**

The practice call is the most important line on this list. One test call at home, with someone patient, saves every frustration later when you are far away and just want to see a familiar face.

## COMMON WORRIES

## 43. The Questions I Hear Most

A few worries come up again and again, and the answers are reassuring.

- Does it cost money? No, video calls over Wi-Fi are free on all these apps
- Do we need the same phone? No, WhatsApp, Zoom, and Meet work across any phones
- What if the call drops? It is the signal, not you; hang up and call again
- Will I look terrible? Face a window and hold the phone a bit high; that fixes most of it
- Is it safe? Yes, with simple habits, and only answer people you know

**GOOD TO KNOW**

If you can send a text message and tap an app, you can make a video call. It is one of the friendliest things a phone does, and it brings your family right to you.

## WHEN TO CALL

## 44. When It Is Worth Calling Me

Most people can set up a video-call app in a quiet evening, especially with a family member to practice with. But if the app will not install, if the camera or microphone will not cooperate, or if you would simply feel better having someone patient sit beside you and walk through it before a trip, that is exactly what I am here for. I am Bill, I have more than thirty years of professional experience, and I help neighbors across Portage County.

For ninety-nine dollars I will come to your home for a first visit and get everything ready: the right app for your family, a test call, your Wi-Fi sorted, and a little coaching on light, sound, and holding the phone so you look and sound your best. I follow up within thirty days to be sure it stuck. If a question comes up while you are traveling, remote screen-share help is forty-nine dollars, and my helper Sophie can point you the right way any time.

**TIP**

Call me at (330) 200-8042, or email [Bill@BillsHomeTech.com](mailto:Bill@BillsHomeTech.com). Set it up before you leave, and you will be seeing your family's faces from the road with no fuss at all.

## CHEAT SHEET

## Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy for your trip. It is the short answer to the questions travelers ask most about video calling family from away.

- Use the app your family uses: FaceTime for Apple, WhatsApp for mixed or overseas
- Connect to Wi-Fi before every call so you avoid data charges
- Tap the person's name, then the video button, to start
- Add a second time zone to your Clock so you call at a kind hour
- Agree on a regular call time, written in both zones
- Face a window and hold the phone a little above eye level
- Prop the phone on a stand and find a quiet spot for clear sound
- Flip to the back camera to share your view and give a little tour
- Send a call to the TV so the whole room can see
- Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042

## AT A GLANCE

## A Picture to Follow Along

### Which App for Which Family?

Match the app to the people you are calling.

#### All Apple

Use FaceTime  
Already on every iPhone  
Just tap a name

#### Mixed Phones

Use WhatsApp  
Works on any phone  
Great for overseas

#### Big Group

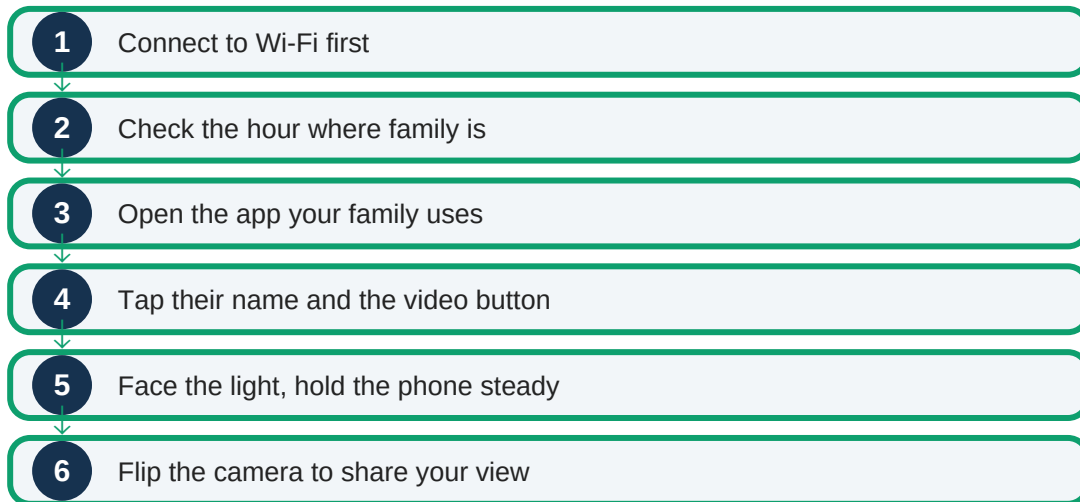
Zoom or Google Meet  
Everyone taps a link  
No account to join Meet

## AT A GLANCE

## A Second Look

### From Hotel Room to Family Room

A few calm steps and you are face to face.



## 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**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.