BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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What Is ChatGPT, Really? A Plain-English First Day

No jargon, no pressure — just what it is, what it's for, and your very first few questions

Plain-English tech help from:

Bill's Home Tech

Portage County, Ohio

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

ChatGPT is a free website and app where you type a question in plain English and get a helpful written answer back — like a patient, well-read helper. You talk to it in normal sentences, you cannot break it, and the free version is all most people need. Add a little context (who it's for, how long, what tone) for better answers, and you can talk instead of type.

The one rule that matters: it can be confidently wrong, so double-check anything about your health, money, or the law, and never type private numbers or passwords into it.

1 The Short Version

ChatGPT is a free website and phone app where you type a request in plain, everyday language and it writes back a helpful answer in seconds. You can ask it to explain something, write an email, suggest a recipe, or simply answer a question — the way you might ask a knowledgeable friend.

You do not need to learn any special words or commands. You type the way you talk. And you truly cannot break it by asking a "silly" question — there is no such thing here.

- It is a place to type a question and get a written answer back.
- You talk to it in normal sentences — no special language to learn.
- The basic version is free; you only pay if you want extra speed and features.
- It can be wrong, so double-check anything that really matters.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Start by asking it something you already know the answer to — like "explain how to make good scrambled eggs." Seeing it handle a familiar topic takes away the mystery fast.

2 What It Actually Is (and Isn't)

ChatGPT is what people call an "AI assistant." Under the hood it has read an enormous amount of writing, and from all that reading it got very good at predicting what a helpful answer looks like. That is why it can write in full, natural sentences about almost anything.

It is not a person, it is not alive, and it is not searching your computer or spying on your house. It also does not truly "know" you unless you tell it things. Think of it as an extremely well-read helper who is only ever responding to what you type.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Because it predicts a good-sounding answer rather than looking up a guaranteed fact, it can occasionally state something wrong with total confidence. That is why the double-check habit, later in this guide, matters so much.

3 Getting to It the First Time

You can use ChatGPT in a web browser on your computer, or as an app on your phone or tablet. Either way, the free version is all you need to start.

1. On a computer, open your web browser and go to chatgpt.com.
2. On a phone or tablet, open the App Store (Apple) or Play Store (Android) and search for the official "ChatGPT" app by OpenAI, then install it.
3. You can look around without an account, but making a free account lets it remember your past chats — sign up with an email address if you'd like that.
4. When you see a box at the bottom that says something like "Ask anything," you are ready.

WATCH OUT

Only use the official app and the official website. Scammers make copycat "ChatGPT" apps to collect your money or information. The real app is made by a company called OpenAI — if you are unsure which is genuine, that is a perfect moment to ask Bill before installing.

4 Your Very First Question

The hardest part is the blank box. So let's fill it together. Type a normal sentence into the box and press Enter (or tap the arrow). Watch the answer appear a few words at a time — that is completely normal.

1. Click or tap in the message box.
2. Type: "Explain what you can help me with, in simple terms."
3. Press Enter or tap the send arrow.
4. Read the answer. Then try a second question right below it — it remembers the conversation.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is no cost to asking and no limit worth worrying about on the free plan for everyday use. Ask freely. The more you treat it like a conversation, the more useful it gets.

5 Good First Things to Try

Here are gentle, low-stakes starters that show what it is genuinely good at. Pick whichever sounds useful today.

- "Write a short, friendly thank-you note to my neighbor for watching the house."
- "Explain what a VPN is like I'm 70 and not technical."
- "Give me three easy dinner ideas using chicken, rice, and whatever's common."
- "Help me write a polite email asking my doctor's office for my records."

- "What questions should I ask when buying a used car?"

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Notice that every one of these is just a plain request. You never need to phrase it cleverly — asking the way you'd ask a helpful grandchild works perfectly.

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 How to Ask So You Get a Better Answer

You will get good answers from simple questions. You will get even better ones when you add a little context — who it's for, how long you want it, and the tone you'd like. This is the single most useful skill, and it is easy.

1. Say who it's for: "a note for my grandson," "an email to my landlord."
2. Say how long: "keep it short," "just three sentences," "a full page."
3. Say the tone: "warm and friendly," "polite but firm," "plain and simple."
4. If the first answer isn't quite right, just say so: "make it shorter" or "less formal."

> **TIP**
> You can always reply "try again, but simpler" or "make it warmer." It does not get offended, and it will happily rewrite as many times as you like until it sounds like you.

7 It Remembers the Conversation

One of the most helpful things to understand early: within a single chat, it remembers what you already said. So you can keep refining without starting over.

If you ask for a recipe and then say "now make it for two people," it knows you mean that recipe. When you want a clean slate, start a brand-new chat — there is usually a "New chat" button at the top or side.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Start a fresh chat for each new, unrelated task. It keeps things tidy and stops it from mixing up, say, your grocery list with your email to the insurance company.

8 Talking Instead of Typing

If typing is tiring or your hands aren't steady, you can usually talk to it instead. In the phone app there is a microphone button; press it, speak your question, and it types it out for you.

1. Open the ChatGPT app on your phone.
2. Tap the microphone icon near the message box.
3. Speak naturally, as if leaving a voicemail, then stop.
4. Check what it typed, fix any wrong words, and send.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> There is also a fuller voice mode in the app where you can have a back-and-forth spoken conversation, hands-free. It is wonderful for anyone who finds a keyboard frustrating — we cover this more in the "Talk to AI" guide.

9 Free vs. Paid — You Do Not Need to Pay

The free version of ChatGPT is genuinely capable and is all most people ever need. There are paid plans (the best known is around twenty dollars a month) that give faster responses, higher daily limits, and access to the newest, most powerful versions — but none of that is required to get real value.

Prices and plan names change often, so do not feel you must keep up. Start free. If one day you are using it heavily every day and bumping into limits, that is the moment to consider paying — not before.

WATCH OUT

Never pay through a link someone sent you or a pop-up promising "ChatGPT Pro, cheap." Upgrades happen only inside the official app or website. If a deal feels urgent or too good, it is a scam.

10 A Few Words You'll Hear — and What They Mean

People throw around a handful of terms when they talk about ChatGPT, and knowing just these takes away most of the intimidation. None of them are things you have to use — they are only labels for what you are already doing.

You'll hear...	It just means...
AI / artificial intelligence	Software that can respond in natural language, like ChatGPT
Prompt	The question or request you type in the box
Chat / conversation	One ongoing back-and-forth, which it remembers as you go
Model	The 'engine' doing the answering; newer ones are a bit smarter
Hallucination	When it confidently states something that isn't true
OpenAI	The company that makes the real ChatGPT

GOOD TO KNOW

If someone uses a word you don't know, you can even ask ChatGPT itself: "What does that word mean, in plain English?" It is genuinely good at explaining itself.

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11 Make It Yours: A Few Comforts Worth Setting

Out of the box it works fine, but a couple of small choices make it friendlier, especially on a phone. These live in the settings, usually behind your name or a little gear icon.

- Make the text bigger using your device's own text-size setting if the chat feels small to read.
- Turn on voice input (the microphone) if typing is tiring.
- In the app's settings you can tell it a little about how you'd like answers — for example, "always explain things simply."
- You can delete any chat you don't want kept, and clear your history whenever you like.

TIP

Telling it once, in settings, "I'm a senior and I prefer short, plain answers without jargon" quietly shapes every future reply. It is the single kindest setting for comfortable use.

12 What to Never Type Into AI

AI chat tools are wonderful helpers, but it is safest to treat the chat box like a postcard, not a locked diary. Most of these services keep a copy of what you type, and some use it to train their systems. The rule is simple: the more sensitive a detail is, the less it belongs in the chat.

The good news is you almost never need private numbers to get good help. You can describe a situation in general terms, or cover up the private parts before you share something — and still get a clear, useful answer.

- Your Social Security number, Medicare number, or any government ID number.
- Full bank account, debit card, or credit card numbers.
- Passwords, PINs, or the answers to your security questions.
- Your full date of birth together with your full name and home address.
- Anything about your health you would not say out loud in a crowded waiting room.

WATCH OUT

If any website or app asks you to type a password or a card number "so the AI can help you," stop. A real AI helper never needs those to answer a question. When in doubt, leave it out — and call Bill if you are unsure what is safe to share.

13 AI Can Be Wrong — Always Double-Check

Here is the most important habit of all: AI sometimes states things that are simply not true, and it says them with the same calm confidence it uses for the right answers. A polished, sure-sounding reply is not proof it is correct. Treat whatever AI gives you as a helpful first draft or a friendly explanation — never as the final word on anything that matters.

For anything touching your health, your money, medicine, legal questions, or a decision you cannot easily undo, confirm it with a real person or an official source before you act on it.

- Medicine or health: confirm with your doctor or pharmacist, never the chat.
- Money or taxes: confirm with your bank, your accountant, or the official statement.
- A letter from the government: confirm by calling the number printed on the letter itself.
- A fact, name, or date you'll repeat to someone else: check it on an official website too.

WATCH OUT

AI confidently inventing a wrong answer is common enough that the industry has a name for it. It does not mean the tool is broken or that you did anything wrong — the double-check is simply part of using it well.

14 If a Session Feels Off or Confusing

Sometimes an answer wanders, repeats itself, or just misses the point. That is not you doing anything wrong, and nothing is damaged. The fix is almost always to gently steer it.

- Tell it plainly: "That's not what I meant — I'm asking about X."
- Ask it to "start over and keep it simple."
- Or open a brand-new chat and ask the question fresh.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because it remembers the whole conversation, a chat that has gone in circles can stay confused. A new chat is like a clean sheet of paper — often the quickest cure.

15 When to Call Bill

Getting comfortable with something brand-new is exactly the kind of thing that is easier with someone sitting beside you for an hour. There is no shame in wanting a calm, in-person start — it is one of the most common visits I do.

I will get you signed in safely on your own device, show you the handful of things that matter, and leave you with a simple one-page cheat sheet in your own words. I make house calls across Portage County, Ohio, and I have spent 30+ years helping people make peace with their technology.

- You want a patient, in-person walkthrough on your own computer or phone.
- You are not sure which app is the real, official one.
- You'd like it set up so talking to it is easy on your hands.
- You simply want someone to answer your questions without rushing.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the computer. You truly cannot break it — ask freely.

I want to...	Do this...
Get to it	Open chatgpt.com, or the official ChatGPT app from the app store
Ask my first question	Type a normal sentence in the box, press Enter, read the reply
Get a better answer	Say who it's for, how long, and the tone you want
Fix an answer	Reply "make it shorter" or "simpler" — it rewrites happily
Talk instead of type	Tap the microphone in the app and speak
Start fresh	Tap "New chat" for a clean, unrelated topic
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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