



An Extended Guide · No. 1867

Which Robot Vacuum Fits Your House? Carpet, Pets, Stairs & Budget

A calm, no-jargon buyer's
guide for your floors

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Let's find the one that fits your home

A robot vacuum can be a small daily kindness — it sweeps the floors while you do something you'd rather be doing. This guide helps you pick the right one for your home without the jargon or the worry of overpaying for features you'll never use.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks get comfortable with the gear in their homes, patiently and in plain language. Think of this as me sitting at your kitchen table, helping you think it through one question at a time.

There is no single 'best' robot vacuum — only the one that suits your floors, your pets, your layout, and your budget. So we won't chase specifications. We'll start with your actual home and work calmly out from there.

★ You don't have to get this perfect

If you'd like a second opinion before you spend a dollar, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. I don't sell these machines and earn no commission, so the advice is just honest advice — with nothing to sell you.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you're already most of the way to a smart choice.

- ❑ Start with your floors and your pets, not with a price tag.
- ❑ Mostly carpet or lots of pet hair? Lean toward stronger suction and a brush that resists tangling.
- ❑ Mostly hard floors? Almost any decent robot will do well, and a mopping feature becomes more useful.
- ❑ A robot cannot climb stairs — plan one per level, or carry it.
- ❑ 'Smart' maps and no-go zones are worth it in a cluttered or multi-room home; a simpler random-pattern robot is fine for one open floor.
- ❑ A self-emptying dock is a comfort, not a necessity — decide if it's worth the extra money and the space it takes.

✓ One rule to hold onto

Buy for the home you actually have, not the showroom demo. The fanciest robot in the store can still get stuck on the one throw rug you forgot to mention.

Start with what's on your floors

The single biggest thing that decides which robot suits you isn't a feature — it's your flooring. Walk through your home and take stock.

Mostly hard floors

Wood, tile, vinyl, or laminate are the easy case. Almost any well-reviewed robot keeps hard floors tidy, and this is where a built-in mop earns its keep for everyday dust and light spills.

Mostly carpet

Carpet asks more of a robot. You'll want stronger suction and a brush that digs in, and you can usually skip the mop. Thick or high-pile carpet is the hardest case of all — some robots struggle to drive on it.

A mix, with thresholds and rugs

Most homes are a mix. The thing to watch is the little lip where tile meets wood, or the edge of a thick area rug — robots can climb a small threshold but get beached on a tall one. We'll tackle that later.

★ Not sure what you've got?

If you can't picture how a robot will handle your particular mix of floors and rugs, that's exactly the kind of thing I can eyeball in five minutes on a visit. Call (330) 200-8042.

If you have pets, read this first

Pets are one of the best reasons to own a robot vacuum — and the biggest reason to choose carefully. Hair is the whole story.

Long hair is a robot's natural enemy. It wraps around the brush and the wheels and, left alone, slowly chokes the machine. The good news is that many robots now use rubber or 'tangle-free' brushes designed to shed hair rather than wind it up. If you have a shedding dog or cat, that feature matters more than almost any other.

Strong suction helps pull hair out of carpet and upholstered edges, and a larger dust bin means fewer trips to empty it. This is also where a self-emptying dock shines — it hides the hair away for weeks at a time.

! The brush is where hair goes to hide

Whatever robot you choose, plan to check and clear the brush now and then. A pair of scissors and two minutes keeps a pet-home robot running happily — our living-with-it and maintenance guides show you how.

How a robot finds its way around

Robots navigate in two broad ways, and the difference shows up in how neatly they clean and how much they cost.

The simple, bump-and-go kind

Lower-cost robots wander in a semi-random pattern, bumping gently off walls and furniture until the room is covered. They do a perfectly good job on a single open floor — they just take longer and can't draw you a map.

The mapping kind

Pricier robots use a spinning laser sensor on top (you'll hear it called LiDAR) or a camera to build a map of your home. They clean in tidy rows, find their way back to the dock, and let you say 'just do the kitchen' or fence off a room from your phone.

Mapping is genuinely useful in a larger or multi-room home. In one open room, it's a nice-to-have you may not miss.

✓ Laser maps work in the dark

A robot that maps with a laser doesn't need the lights on and doesn't photograph your rooms. If the idea of a camera roaming your home gives you pause, that's worth knowing — we cover privacy in its own guide.

Stairs, ledges, and staying put

This is the question I'm asked most: will it fall down the stairs? The short answer is no — but let's be sure you understand why.

Every reputable robot vacuum has 'cliff sensors' — little downward-looking eyes that spot a drop-off and turn the robot away from it. In normal use, a robot will stop at the top of your stairs rather than tumble down them.

A robot also cannot climb stairs. So in a two-story home, you either buy one robot per floor or carry the single robot up and down. Many folks keep one downstairs where the living happens and leave it at that.

! Dark or shiny edges can fool the sensors

Cliff sensors read the floor with light, so a very dark stair edge or a glossy surface can occasionally confuse them. On the first few runs near stairs, watch the robot — and if you're ever unsure, a strip of light-colored tape at the edge gives the sensor something to see.

Suction, brushes, and what actually cleans

The big suction number on the box is only part of the story. A few plain ideas tell you more than any single figure.

- **Suction** pulls debris up, and more of it helps on carpet and with pet hair. On hard floors, even modest suction does fine.
- **The main brush** agitates the carpet and sweeps debris into the robot. A rubber or tangle-resistant brush is the friend of any pet owner.
- **A side brush** flicks dust out of corners and along baseboards toward the main brush.
- **The dust bin** is how much it can hold before you empty it — bigger means fewer trips, which matters in a hairy or dusty home.
- **A filter** catches the fine dust; a good one helps if anyone in the house has allergies.

✓ Don't buy suction you won't use

A robot built for deep carpet can be overkill — and louder — in a home of mostly hard floors. Match the muscle to your floors and you'll be happier with the quiet and the price.

The mopping question

Many robots now vacuum and mop in one pass. It's a lovely idea, and it's genuinely handy — within honest limits.

A robot mop is best thought of as a daily light wipe: it keeps dust and the odd footprint off hard floors beautifully. What it is not is a scrub — dried-on spills and sticky messes still want a human and a cloth.

On a mostly hard-floor home, mopping is a real bonus. On carpet it does nothing, and the better robots lift the mop pad or steer around rugs so they don't soak them. If most of your home is carpet, you can save money by skipping mopping altogether.

✓ The dock does the mop's dirty work

The fanciest docks rinse and dry the mop pad for you. It's a genuine convenience on a big hard-floor home — but it's also the priciest, largest kind of dock. Decide if the comfort is worth it for your floors.

Docks, apps, and how much fuss you want

Two choices shape how a robot feels to live with day to day: what kind of dock it comes home to, and how much you'll lean on the phone app.

The dock

Every robot has a charging dock it returns to. Some docks go further and empty the robot's bin into a big bag for you, so you only deal with it every few weeks. That's a comfort — especially with pets — but it costs more and takes up more room. Our docks guide weighs it up in detail.

The app

The phone app is where you start a clean, set a schedule, and draw no-go zones. The good news: once it's set up, you may rarely touch it. If a phone feels like a chore, a robot with simple buttons or voice control can be run without the app at all.

★ I'll set the app up once, so you don't have to

The app is usually the only fiddly part, and it's a one-time job. On a visit I'll get it connected to your Wi-Fi, set a schedule you like, and fence off the spots that cause trouble. After that it just runs. Call (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

The right robot for a snug one-floor home is often not the right one for a big house full of rugs, pets, and stairs. Picture your own home as you read.

A smaller, single-floor home

If you're in a ranch home, a condo, or an apartment — mostly one open level — your needs are simple, and you can save real money by not overbuying.

- A simpler bump-and-go robot often covers one open floor just fine.
- A modest dust bin and plain charging dock are usually plenty.
- Mopping is a nice bonus if your floors are mostly hard.
- One robot is all you need — no per-floor math.

A big house with pets and stairs

A larger, multi-room home — especially with a shedding pet and a couple of floors — is where the smarter, stronger robots earn their price.

- Mapping and no-go zones keep a cluttered, multi-room home organized.
- Stronger suction and a tangle-free brush handle pet hair and carpet.
- A self-emptying dock means you deal with the dirt far less often.
- Plan one robot per floor, since none of them climb stairs.

★ Somewhere in between?

Most homes are. Tell me your floors, your pets, and how many levels you've got, and I'll help you land on the right robot without overspending. Call (330) 200-8042.

What your money actually buys

Robot vacuums span a wide range of prices. Rather than quote numbers that change with every sale, here's what tends to come with spending more.

At the gentler end, you get a capable robot that cleans one floor well in a random pattern, with a simple dock and a basic app. For many one-level homes, that's genuinely all you need.

Spending more buys, in rough order: smart mapping and no-go zones; stronger suction and better brushes; a self-emptying dock; and finally mopping with a dock that rinses the pad. Each step up is a real convenience — the trick is buying only the steps your home will use.

✓ Watch the sales, but check the current price

Robot prices swing a lot around the holidays and big sale days. Because the deals and models change constantly, always check the current listing before you buy — and don't let a 'was/now' sticker rush you.

Making sense of the spec sheet

The box and the web page are full of numbers and badges. Here's how to read the ones that matter and ignore the marketing.

- **Navigation:** 'LiDAR' or 'laser' means it maps with a laser; 'vSLAM' or 'camera' means it maps with a camera; neither word means it's a better clean on its own.
- **Suction (Pa):** a bigger number is stronger, and matters most on carpet. Don't agonize over small differences.
- **Bin size:** larger is fewer trips to empty; handy with pets.
- **Run time and 'recharge and resume':** a good robot finishes a big home by topping up at the dock and carrying on where it left off.
- **App and voice:** check it works with whatever you already use — a smart speaker, or just the buttons on the robot.

✓ Snap a photo and ask

If two models look alike on paper and you can't tell them apart, photograph both listings and text them to me. Two minutes of a second opinion can save a return.

Finding the dock a good home

A robot spends most of its life parked at its dock. A little thought about where that dock lives pays off every single day.

The dock wants a flat spot against a wall, on hard floor rather than thick carpet, with a bit of clear space on either side so the robot can line itself up to park. Out of a walkway but not boxed into a tight cupboard is the sweet spot.

An outlet nearby is a must, and keeping the dock in the room you most want cleaned means the robot starts and ends its day right where the dust gathers. The bigger self-emptying docks need more room, so measure before you buy one.

✓ Give it a launch pad

A foot or two of clear floor in front of the dock helps the robot dock cleanly every time. If it keeps missing the dock, the spot is usually too cramped — not the robot's fault.

Noise, timing, and fitting it into your day

A robot you'll actually be glad to run is one that cleans when it suits you and doesn't drive you — or the dog — up the wall.

Robots are far quieter than an upright vacuum, but they're not silent, and a self-emptying dock gives a loud whoosh when it empties the bin. Many folks set the robot to clean while they're out or at a set time each day, so the noise happens to an empty house.

A nervous pet may need a few gentle introductions before it ignores the robot. Start with short runs while you're home, and most pets soon treat it as part of the furniture — more on that in our pets guide.

✓ Let it clean while you're away

A daily schedule timed for when you're at an appointment or out walking means you come home to clean floors and never hear a thing. It's the single best habit for living happily with a robot.

The costs beyond the sticker

The price on the robot isn't quite the whole story. Knowing the small ongoing costs up front keeps there from being surprises.

Robots use a few wear-and-tear parts over the years — filters, side brushes, sometimes the main brush, and eventually a battery. If it has a self-emptying dock, that dock uses dust bags you replace now and then. None of it is dear, but it's worth knowing it exists.

The kindest thing you can do for the total cost is buy a brand whose parts you can actually get a few years from now. Our yearly-cost guide lays out a simple maintenance calendar so nothing sneaks up on you.

★ Let's plan the whole picture

Tell me the robot you're weighing and I'll help you check that its parts are easy to get and fairly priced — so the machine you buy is still easy to keep running in a few years. Call (330) 200-8042.

A simple shopping checklist

Keep this open while you shop, online or in the store. Check each box before you buy.

- ☐ It suits my floors — enough suction for my carpet, or mopping for my hard floors.
- ☐ If I have a shedding pet, it has a tangle-resistant brush.
- ☐ It maps my home if I have multiple rooms; a simpler one is fine for one open floor.
- ☐ It has cliff sensors so it won't fall down the stairs.
- ☐ I've decided whether a self-emptying dock is worth the money and the space.
- ☐ It works with my phone — or has buttons or voice control if I'd rather skip the app.
- ☐ Its replacement parts are easy to get and fairly priced.
- ☐ I checked the current price rather than trusting an old sticker.

✓ Buy where returns are easy

Even the right robot can surprise you once it meets your real floors. Buying somewhere with a friendly return window takes the pressure off the decision.

Common mistakes people make

A handful of avoidable slip-ups account for most robot-vacuum regret. Now you'll know them in advance.

- **Buying for carpet you don't have** — paying for deep-carpet suction in a home of mostly hard floors.
- **Forgetting the pet hair** — choosing a robot without a tangle-free brush and fighting wrapped hair forever after.
- **Expecting it to climb stairs** — then being surprised it only cleans one floor.
- **Skipping the map** in a big, multi-room home, then wishing you could fence off the one room that causes trouble.
- **Overbuying the dock** — paying for a mop-rinsing station in a carpeted home that never mops.

! The one that strands a robot

The most common real-world problem isn't the robot at all — it's cords, loose rug corners, and clutter on the floor. A ten-minute tidy before the first run prevents most stuck-robot headaches. Our 'getting ready' guide walks through it.

Setting honest expectations

A robot vacuum is a wonderful helper. Knowing what it is — and isn't — keeps you happy with your choice.

A robot keeps your floors maintained between proper cleans. It sweeps up the daily dust, crumbs, and pet hair beautifully, day after day, so the floors rarely get bad. What it won't do is replace the occasional deep vacuum of the stairs, the sofa, and the corners a robot can't reach.

Think of it like a dishwasher: it doesn't mean you never touch a dish, but it takes the daily drudgery off your plate. Owners who expect a helpful routine, not a miracle, are the ones who love their robots.

✓ The magic is in the schedule

A robot run on a daily or every-other-day schedule keeps floors so consistently tidy that the big clean comes around far less often. Set it and let it become invisible.

A word on brands and staying supported

I won't push a brand on you — but I will tell you what to look for so you buy something that'll still work well years from now.

Favor an established maker with a real app that gets updates, replacement parts you can actually buy, and support you can reach. A rock-bottom price on an unknown brand can turn frustrating the first time the app breaks or a brush wears out and there's nowhere to get another.

The robot-vacuum world has seen some big shake-ups lately, so it's worth a thought about what happens if a maker changes hands or an app goes dark. We have whole guides on that — including what it means for Roomba owners, and how to keep a robot working even without its app.

★ Ask before you're dazzled by a deal

A deep discount is tempting, but a robot vacuum is a buy-it-once item for most folks. If you're weighing two models or a too-good-to-be-true sale, send them my way and I'll give you my honest read. Call (330) 200-8042.

Questions to ask before you buy

Whether you're talking to a salesperson or to me, these are the questions that get you to the right machine.

Q: Is this better for carpet or hard floors?

Match the answer to your home. Strong suction and a good brush for carpet; mopping and gentler suction are plenty for mostly hard floors.

Q: Does it map my home, and can I set no-go zones?

Worth it in a multi-room or cluttered home. In one open room, a simpler random-pattern robot saves money and does fine.

Q: Will it handle my pet's hair without tangling?

Ask specifically about a rubber or tangle-free brush. For a shedding pet, this matters more than almost any other feature.

Q: How easy is it to get parts and support a few years from now?

Favor an established brand with parts you can buy and an app that gets updates. It's the difference between a five-year helper and a two-year disappointment.

✓ There's no silly question

If a salesperson makes you feel rushed or foolish for asking, that's a reason to walk away, not to buy. A good answer to a plain question is the least you should expect.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks choosing their first robot vacuum, answered plainly.

Q: Will it really fall down my stairs?

No. Every reputable robot has cliff sensors that stop it at a drop-off. Watch it on the first runs near very dark or shiny stair edges, which can occasionally fool the sensors.

Q: Do I need the expensive one with the big dock?

Only if your home will use it. A self-emptying, mop-rinsing dock is a real comfort in a big hard-floor home with pets, and wasted money in a small carpeted one.

Q: Can I use it without a smartphone?

Often yes — many robots have buttons on top or work with a voice assistant. The app makes mapping and scheduling easier, but it's usually a one-time setup I'm glad to do for you.

Q: Will it replace my regular vacuum?

For daily floor dust, largely yes. For the stairs, the sofa, and a periodic deep clean, you'll still want your upright now and then. Think helpful routine, not miracle.

★ Still weighing it up?

Choosing a robot vacuum is exactly the kind of thing I love to help with. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and let's find the one that fits your home and your floors.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made choosing a robot vacuum feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. I'll help you choose the right machine, get it set up and mapped, connect it to your Wi-Fi and your phone, and show you how to run it. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site — app settings, schedules, a quick question — I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. For anything that calls for a ladder, wiring, or digging, I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro rather than risk it.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Which Robot Fits Your Home?

Start with your floors and your pets, not a price tag

	What you have	What to lean toward
Mostly hard floors	Any good robot;	mopping is a bonus
Mostly carpet	Strong suction,	good main brush
Shedding pet	Tangle-free brush,	bigger bin
Many rooms	Mapping and	no-go zones
Two floors	One per floor,	or carry it

Match the machine to the home you actually have.

Choosing in Four Steps

The calm way to land on the right robot



Do these in order and the right robot almost picks itself.

Two Ways a Robot Navigates

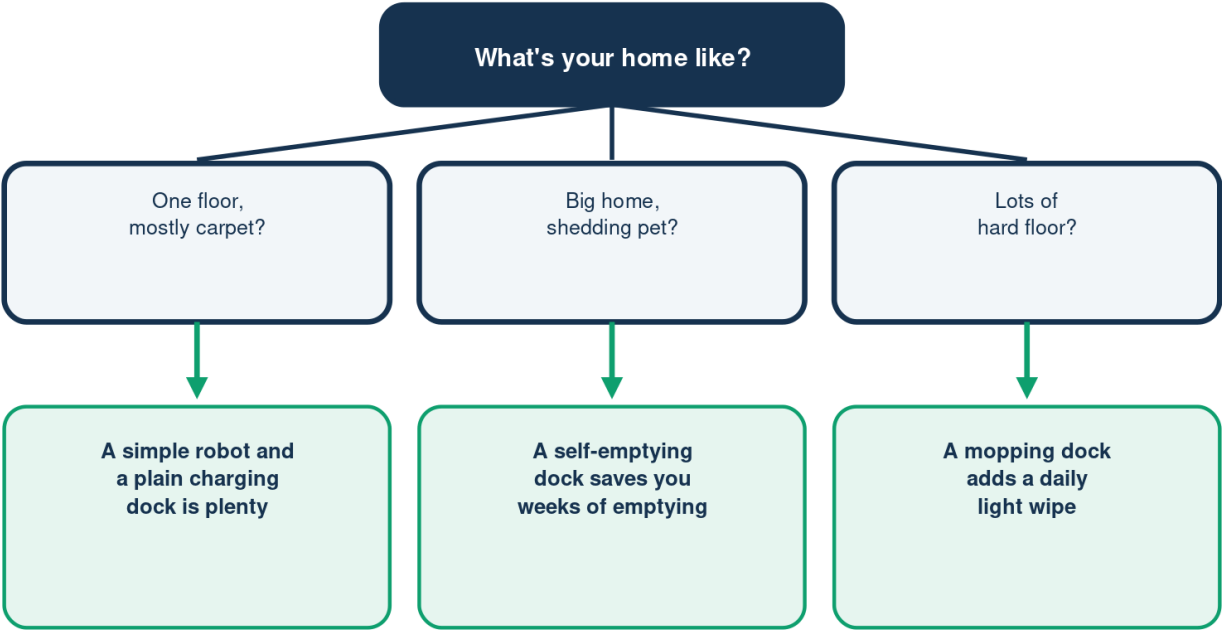
Neither word means a better clean on its own

	Style	What it means for you
Bump-and-go	Random pattern,	fine for one room
Laser (LiDAR)	Tidy map, works	in the dark
Camera (vSLAM)	Maps with a lens,	needs some light
No-go zones	Fence off rugs	and pet bowls

Mapping shines in a big, multi-room home.

Do You Need the Big Dock?

Let your home answer the question



The fancy docks cost more and take more room -- buy only what you'll use.

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



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

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