BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2361

Updated November 2026

Wi-Fi Drops on Mac After Sleep

Why the connection vanishes when the Mac wakes — and the calm, in-order fixes

Plain-English Mac help from:

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

Wi-Fi dropping after your Mac sleeps is almost always a small reconnection hiccup, not a broken Mac. The fastest fix is to click the Wi-Fi icon, turn it off, wait a few seconds, and turn it back on. If that doesn't hold, forget your network and rejoin it with the password, or renew the network address (TCP/IP Renew DHCP Lease) when it says connected but nothing loads.

Updating macOS and restarting both the Mac and the router clears many stubborn cases, and the lasting cure is often a router setting like favoring the 5GHz band. If it keeps dropping, it's an easy visit to sort for good.

1 The Short Version

You close your Mac or leave it for a while, and when you come back the Wi-Fi is gone — the little fan-shaped icon has an exclamation mark, or pages won't load until you fiddle with it. It is a common and genuinely annoying quirk, and the good news is that it is almost always a small settings or connection hiccup, not a broken Mac or broken internet.

This guide walks through the fixes in the order a professional would try them, from the ten-second toggle that fixes most cases to the deeper settings that stop it happening again. Follow along until your Wi-Fi stays put.

- Wi-Fi dropping after sleep is a common hiccup, not a broken Mac.
- The quick fix is usually to turn Wi-Fi off and on, or forget and rejoin your network.
- If it keeps happening, a settings refresh or a router tweak is the lasting cure.
- When nothing holds, that's an easy visit for Bill.

TIP

Before anything deeper, try the simplest thing: click the Wi-Fi icon at the top of the screen, turn it off, wait a few seconds, and turn it back on. That alone fixes the majority of after-sleep drops.

2 Why Wi-Fi Naps When Your Mac Does

When your Mac sleeps, it powers down parts of itself to save energy — including, to a degree, its Wi-Fi. Normally it wakes everything back up smoothly. But sometimes the Wi-Fi is slow to reconnect, or it comes back and can't quite re-grab its spot on your network, and you're left staring at a dead connection.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is a handshake problem, not a damage problem. The Mac and the router briefly lose track of each other during sleep and need a nudge to reintroduce themselves. That's why turning Wi-Fi off and on — a fresh handshake — works so often.

3 The 30-Second Fix

The fastest cure, and the one that handles most after-sleep drops, is simply to restart the Wi-Fi connection on the Mac.

1. Click the Wi-Fi icon (the fan-shaped symbol) at the top-right of the screen.
2. Switch Wi-Fi off.
3. Wait about five seconds.
4. Switch Wi-Fi back on and let it reconnect to your network.
5. Try loading a web page to confirm you're back.

> **WATCH OUT**
> If this works but you have to do it every single time, don't settle for that — it means there's an underlying cause worth fixing. Keep reading; the later chapters stop it recurring.

4 Forget and Rejoin Your Network

If the quick toggle doesn't hold, the Mac may be clinging to stale information about your network. Telling it to "forget" the network and join fresh clears that out. You'll need your Wi-Fi password to rejoin, so have it handy.

1. Open System Settings from the Apple menu, then click "Wi-Fi."
2. Find your network in the list, click the “Details” or “…” option next to it.
3. Choose "Forget This Network" and confirm.
4. Back on the Wi-Fi screen, select your network again and type the password carefully.
5. Confirm you're connected and pages load.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Have your Wi-Fi password written down before you forget the network — once you forget it, you'll need to type it back in. If you don't know it, it's often on a sticker on your router, or we can recover it together before you start.

5 Renew the Network Address

Every device on your home network is given an address, like a house number, so information knows where to go. Sometimes after sleep the Mac's address gets muddled. Renewing it is a safe, clean way to fix a connection that looks joined but won't actually load pages.

1. Open System Settings Wi-Fi, then open the Details for your network.
2. Click the "TCP/IP" section.

3. Click "Renew DHCP Lease."
4. Click OK/Apply and test a web page.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> “Connected but no internet” — full Wi-Fi bars yet nothing loads — is the classic sign that the address, not the Wi-Fi itself, is the problem. Renewing the address is the targeted fix for exactly that.

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6 Put Your Network at the Top

Your Mac keeps a list of the ways it can connect, and it tries them in order. If something else (like an old connection, or a VPN) sits above your Wi-Fi in that order, the Mac can get confused about which to use after waking.

1. Open System Settings Network.
2. Look for a way to edit "Service Order" (often under a “…” or settings button in that screen).
3. Drag your Wi-Fi to the top of the list.
4. Save, then restart the Mac and see whether it wakes more reliably.

> **TIP**
> This is a little more technical, so if the screen looks unfamiliar, it's fine to skip it and try the other steps — or let me set the order correctly in a moment on a visit.

7 Refresh the Network Settings Safely

If the drops persist, the Mac's stored network settings may have become tangled. There's a clean, safe way to refresh them: create a new Wi-Fi "location." Think of it as giving the Mac a fresh notebook for its network settings while keeping the old one intact.

1. Open System Settings Network.
2. Find the "Location" option (often under a "…" menu) and choose to add a new location, naming it something like "Fresh."
3. Switch to that new location.
4. Rejoin your Wi-Fi by selecting it and entering the password.
5. Test whether the connection now survives sleep.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Because this creates a new location rather than deleting the old one, it's reversible — you can switch back anytime. That makes it a safe thing to try.

8 Check the Router's Side

Sometimes the Mac is fine and the router is the cause. Modern routers broadcast on two "bands" — a wider-reaching 2.4GHz band and a faster 5GHz band — and some automatically shuffle devices between them in a way that trips up a Mac waking from sleep.

- If your network bands have separate names, try connecting the Mac to just one and see if it's steadier.
- A simple router restart (unplug 30 seconds, plug back in) clears many router-side glitches.
- An old or overheating router drops connections for everything — not just the Mac.
- If several devices drop after idle time, the router is the likelier cause than the Mac.

WATCH OUT

Router settings like band steering can be the real culprit, and they live a layer deeper than most people want to go. If the Mac behaves but the router keeps dropping it, that's a quick thing for me to adjust — and I'll check your other devices while I'm at it.

9 Keep an Eye on Bluetooth Interference

Here's a lesser-known cause: Bluetooth and the 2.4GHz Wi-Fi band share the same airspace, so a busy Bluetooth setup — wireless mouse, keyboard, headphones — can occasionally interfere with Wi-Fi reconnecting cleanly after sleep.

1. As a test, turn Bluetooth off from the top-of-screen menu for a short while.
2. See whether the Wi-Fi reconnects more reliably after sleep without it.
3. If it does, the fix is usually making sure your router uses the 5GHz band, which doesn't clash with Bluetooth.

GOOD TO KNOW

You don't have to give up your wireless mouse or keyboard — this is just a way to identify the cause. The real fix is on the router side, which is easy to set up.

10 Update and Restart

Out-of-date software is a quiet source of Wi-Fi glitches, and both macOS and your router's software get fixes over time. A pair of updates and a clean restart clears a surprising number of stubborn cases.

1. Install any macOS update: System Settings General Software Update.
2. Restart the Mac fully from the Apple menu.
3. Restart your router too (unplug 30 seconds, plug back in, wait a few minutes).
4. Test whether sleep now leaves the Wi-Fi intact.

TIP

Do these two things — update and restart both the Mac and the router — before assuming anything is broken. Together they resolve a great many “it keeps dropping” complaints.

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11 Rule Out "Helper" Apps and VPNs

Some add-on software gets between your Mac and its connection — a VPN app, a "Wi-Fi booster" utility, or a security tool — and these can interfere with how Wi-Fi reconnects after sleep.

- If you use a VPN, try disconnecting it and see whether the drops stop.
- Be wary of free “Wi-Fi optimizer” or “speed booster” apps — several cause the very problems they claim to fix.
- A security suite's network feature can occasionally hold up reconnection — worth testing with it paused.

WATCH OUT

If a “Wi-Fi helper” or “optimizer” app appeared that you don't remember installing, treat it with suspicion — it may have come bundled with something else. Don't wrestle with removing it blindly; that's worth a careful hand.

12 Move Closer, or Help the Signal Reach You

Sometimes the Mac drops Wi-Fi after sleep simply because it's at the edge of your signal's reach, where even a small dip knocks it off. A weak signal is harder to recover from than a strong one, so it's worth ruling out before blaming settings.

1. Look at the Wi-Fi icon — fewer “waves” filled in means a weaker signal where you sit.
2. As a test, move the Mac closer to the router for a day and see whether the after-sleep drops stop.
3. If they do, the real answer is better coverage where you use the Mac, not a Mac setting.
4. Keep the router out in the open — not in a cabinet or behind the TV — which alone can improve reach.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> If a spot in your home has always had weak Wi-Fi, a modern “mesh” system or a well-placed extender can blanket the whole house in a steady signal. We have guides on that — and it fixes drops for every device, not just the Mac.

13 Watch for a Pattern

A little detective work makes this far easier to solve — for you or for me. The clues are usually in when and how it drops.

- Does it drop only after long sleeps (overnight) or even short ones? Long-only often points to the router's idle behavior.
- Does it drop for just the Mac, or do the phone and tablet lose Wi-Fi too? All devices means the router; just the Mac means the Mac.
- Did it start right after a software update, a new router, or a settings change? That timing names the likely cause.
- Does moving closer to the router prevent it? Then it's signal strength, not settings.

> **TIP**
> Jot down what you notice over a few days. Even one sentence — “only after it sleeps overnight, and only the Mac” — tells me almost exactly where to look, and saves time on a visit.

14 Stop It Coming Back

Once your Wi-Fi is steady again, a few settings keep it that way.

- Make sure your Wi-Fi network sits at the top of the Mac's connection order.
- Favor the 5GHz band on your router if your Mac is close enough — it avoids Bluetooth clashes.
- Keep macOS and your router updated.
- Restart the router every month or two to keep it fresh.

> **TIP**
> If you'd rather not fiddle with router settings, I can set this up once so your Mac holds its connection through sleep — and leave you a simple note of the 30-second toggle in case it ever hiccups.

15 When to Call Bill

Wi-Fi that drops after sleep is usually cured by a quick toggle or a fresh rejoin, and this guide gets most people there. But if it keeps happening no matter what, if the fix lives in router settings you'd rather not touch, or if a mystery “hoelper” app is involved, you don't have to keep wrestling with it.

- It drops every time, no matter which step you try.
- The real fix seems to be in router settings you'd rather not change.
- Several devices — not just the Mac — drop after idle time.
- A “Wi-Fi helper” or VPN app may be involved and you're unsure.

I come to you, find whether it's the Mac or the router, fix it properly so the connection survives sleep, and check the rest of your devices while I'm there — so the whole house stays connected.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this by the Mac. Try the quick fixes first; stop when Wi-Fi stays put.

I want to…	Do this…
Get back online fast	Click the Wi-Fi icon off wait 5 seconds on
Clear stale info	System Settings Wi-Fi Forget network rejoin with password
Fix “connected, no internet”	Wi-Fi Details TCP/IP Renew DHCP Lease
Refresh settings safely	Network add a new Location rejoin Wi-Fi
Calm the router	Restart it; try one band; favor 5GHz near the Mac
Update & restart both	Update macOS; restart the Mac and the router
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

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KEY SPECS

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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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