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BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

AirPods

Everything your AirPods can do — and how they help you — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for every AirPods owner

Take your time — you can't break them

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Covers AirPods 4 & 5, AirPods Pro 2 & 3, AirPods Max · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your plain-English guide to Apple's AirPods: the regular AirPods, AirPods Pro and the over-the-ear AirPods Max. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind. If a step looks different on your screen, Chapter 8 shows you where every AirPods setting lives.

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PART 1

Meet Your AirPods

A friendly welcome, the whole AirPods family in one place, how to tell exactly which model you own, and a quick tour of the case, the light and the buttons.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If a small white case of AirPods showed up under the tree, arrived as a birthday gift from the grandkids, or came home with you after a trip to the store, you've come to the right place. AirPods are wonderful little things, but they arrive with almost no instructions. There's a tiny leaflet, a charging cable if you're lucky, and an assumption that you'll just figure it out. This guide is the instruction book Apple didn't put in the box.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology professionally, and these days I help folks across Portage County, Ohio, get comfortable with theirs, in person and remotely. I've written this the way I'd explain it sitting beside you at the kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, with every new word explained the first time it comes up.

What AirPods can do for you

At their simplest, AirPods are wireless earphones. You put them in your ears and hear your phone calls, music, audiobooks, podcasts and TV shows without any wires and without bothering anyone else in the room. But the newer models do a great deal more than that:

- They can make phone calls clearer, because the microphones focus on your voice and turn down the noise around you.
- They can quiet a noisy room, an airplane cabin or a lawn mower next door with **Noise Cancellation**.
- On AirPods Pro 2 and AirPods Pro 3, they can give you a five-minute **hearing test** and work as an FDA-authorized, over-the-counter **hearing aid** for people with perceived mild to moderate hearing loss.
- They can read your text messages aloud, let you answer a call with a nod of your head, and help you talk with someone who speaks another language.
- If you leave one behind, your iPhone can show you where it is on a map and even play a sound so you can find it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end, you'll know which AirPods you have, how to connect them to your phone, tablet, computer or TV, what every press and squeeze does, how to use the hearing features if you have them, how to keep them charged and clean, and what to do if one goes missing. You'll also know how to avoid the fake AirPods and phony deals that are all over online marketplaces.

A promise: you can't break them

Nothing in this guide will harm your AirPods. Every setting can be changed back. If something goes truly sideways, there's a reset that puts them back the way they came out of the box, and I'll walk you through it in Chapter 27. So go ahead and press, tap and explore. That's how everyone learns.

And I'm only a phone call away

If you ever get stuck, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. Getting AirPods paired, setting up the hearing features or tracking down a missing earbud is everyday work for me, and there's no such thing as a silly question. Help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. Now let's meet the family.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

The AirPods Family in 2026

Apple sells three kinds of AirPods, and it's worth knowing the difference, because the features in this guide depend on which kind you have. Here's the family as it stands in November 2026, with Apple's own prices. Stores and online sellers often charge less during sales.

Model	Style	Apple price	Best for
AirPods 5	Open earbud, no rubber tip	$129	Everyday listening and calls, with noise cancellation
AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case	Open earbud, no rubber tip	$149	Same, plus volume swipe, longer battery and a case you can find with a sound
AirPods Pro 3	In-ear, soft silicone tips	$249	The strongest noise cancellation, plus hearing test, hearing aid and hearing protection
AirPods Max 2	Over-the-ear headphones	$549	Long listening sessions at home or on a plane, big comfortable cushions

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple on November 2026

Apple introduced AirPods 5 in September 2026 and AirPods Max 2 in March 2026. AirPods Pro 3 arrived in September 2025. Apple no longer sells AirPods 4 or AirPods Pro 2 new, but plenty of people own them, and they keep getting software updates. This guide covers them too.

The three styles, in plain words

AirPods (the regular ones)

These are the classic white earbuds with a short stem that hangs down. They rest in the bowl of your ear rather than sealing it, so many people find them comfortable and easy to put in. AirPods 4 came in two versions, one with Active Noise Cancellation and one without. Both versions of AirPods 5 include noise cancellation. The difference is the case: the $149 Wireless Charging Case version lasts longer, lets you swipe the stem to change the volume, charges on a wireless pad, and has a little speaker so Find My can make it beep.

AirPods Pro

AirPods Pro have soft silicone ear tips that seal your ear canal, like a foam earplug. That seal blocks more outside noise, and it's what makes the hearing features possible. AirPods

Pro 2 and AirPods Pro 3 can give you a hearing test, act as a hearing aid, and protect your ears from loud noise. AirPods Pro 3 can also measure your heart rate during workouts.

AirPods Max

AirPods Max are full-size headphones that sit over your ears, with soft mesh cushions and a mesh headband. Instead of pressing a stem, you turn a knob called the **Digital Crown**, just like the one on an Apple Watch. They're heavier than earbuds but wonderfully comfortable for a long movie, and their battery lasts up to 20 hours. AirPods Max 2 can't do the hearing test or hearing aid feature, but they do have Loud Sound Reduction and Live Translation.

What each model can do

Use this table to see at a glance which features your AirPods have. A dash means the feature isn't available on that model.

Feature	AirPods 4	AirPods 4 (ANC) / AirPods 5	AirPods Pro 2 / Pro 3	AirPods Max 2
Noise Cancellation	—	Yes	Yes (strongest)	Yes
Transparency & Adaptive	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conversation Awareness	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hearing Test & Hearing Aid	—	—	Yes	—
Hearing Protection	—	—	Yes	Loud Sound Reduction
Live Translation	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
Volume swipe on stem	—	AirPods 5 Wireless case only	Yes	Turn the Digital Crown
Heart rate in workouts	—	—	Pro 3 only	—

TIP

Not sure which to buy as a gift?

For someone who mainly wants to hear phone calls and music comfortably, AirPods 5 are plenty. For someone who struggles to follow conversations in restaurants or wants a hearing check, AirPods Pro 3 are the only current model with the hearing test and hearing aid feature. For someone who dislikes anything inside the ear, AirPods Max sit outside it.

CHAPTER 3

Which AirPods Do I Have?

AirPods from different years look a lot alike, and many of the features in this guide depend on the exact model. The good news is that your iPhone already knows. It takes about thirty seconds to find out.

Look it up on your iPhone or iPad

1. Put your AirPods in your ears, or open the case lid near your iPhone, so they're connected.
2. Open the **Settings** app.
3. Tap the name of your AirPods near the top of the screen. If you don't see it there, tap **Bluetooth**, then tap the round **More Info** button (a small letter *i*) next to your AirPods.
4. Scroll down to the **About** section. You'll see the **Model Name**, the **Model Number** (it starts with the letter A), the serial number and the firmware version.

Look on the AirPods themselves

If your AirPods aren't connected to anything yet, the model number is printed on the hardware in very small gray letters. A magnifying glass or your phone's Magnifier helps.

- **AirPods and AirPods Pro:** on the underside of each earbud, starting with the letter A.
- **AirPods Max:** behind the cushion on the left ear cup. The cushions come off with a gentle pull because they're held on by magnets.
- **The case's serial number:** on the underside of the lid on current cases.

Match the model number

If the number is…	You have…
AirPods 5	A3531, A3532, A3533 (2026)
AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case	A3439, A3440, A3441 (2026)
AirPods 4 (ANC)	A3055, A3056, A3057 (2024)
AirPods 4	A3050, A3053, A3054 (2024)
AirPods Pro 3	A3063, A3064, A3065 (2025)
AirPods Pro 2 (USB-C case)	A3047, A3048, A3049 (2023)

If the number is…	You have…
AirPods Pro 2 (Lightning case)	A2698, A2699, A2931 (2022)
AirPods 3	A2564, A2565 (2021)
AirPods Max 2	A3454 (2026)
AirPods Max (USB-C)	A3184 (2024)
AirPods Max (Lightning)	A2096 (2020)
AirPods Pro (1st generation)	A2083, A2084 (2019)
AirPods 2	A2031, A2032 (2019)

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

These model numbers come from Apple's "Identify your AirPods" article, updated September 2026. Apple's list also covers the original 2016 AirPods (A1523, A1722). If your number isn't on the list at all, that's a warning sign. See Chapter 29 about fake AirPods.

Write it down

Once you know your model, jot it in the "Keep this handy" table in Chapter 31. It saves time if you ever call Apple, order a replacement earbud, or call me.

CHAPTER 4

A Quick Tour: Case, Light, Stems and Buttons

Before we connect anything, let's get to know the parts. Once you know what's what, every later chapter makes more sense.

The charging case

The little white case isn't just a box. It's a battery that recharges your AirPods every time you put them away. Magnets pull each earbud into place, and the lid snaps shut. Get in the habit of putting your AirPods back in the case whenever they're out of your ears. It keeps them charged, keeps them safe, and keeps them from rolling under the couch.

- **The status light** is a small dot on the front of the case on all current models. It glows green, amber or white to tell you about the battery and pairing. Chapter 22 explains every color.
- **The charging port** is on the bottom. Current cases use USB-C, the small oval plug that also charges newer iPhones. Older cases use Apple's Lightning plug.
- **The setup button** is a small flat button on the back of older cases (AirPods 2 and 3, AirPods Pro and Pro 2). AirPods 4, AirPods 5 and AirPods Pro 3 have no button at all. On those, you double-tap the front of the case instead.
- **The speaker** is a tiny grille on the bottom of the AirPods Pro 2 and Pro 3 cases and the AirPods 4 (ANC) and AirPods 5 Wireless Charging Cases. It chimes when charging starts and can beep to help you find the case.
- **The lanyard loop** on the side of the AirPods Pro 2 and Pro 3 cases lets you attach a strap.

The earbuds

Each earbud is marked with a tiny **L** or **R** for left and right. The stem, the part that hangs down, is where the controls are. On every current earbud model there's a **force sensor** on the flat part of the stem. You don't tap it; you gently pinch or press it between your thumb and finger, and you'll feel or hear a soft click. Chapter 10 has the full list of presses.

The small black or silver mesh openings on the earbud are microphones and speaker vents. Keep them clean and dry, and they'll keep working well. Chapter 25 explains how.

AirPods Max

- **The Digital Crown** is the round dial on top of the right ear cup. Turn it for volume, press it to play or pause.

- **The listening mode button** is the long button on top of the same ear cup, next to the Digital Crown. Press it to switch between Noise Cancellation and Transparency. (Apple used to call this the noise control button.)
- **The status light** and the **USB-C port** are on the bottom of the right ear cup.
- **The Smart Case** is the soft cover that comes with them. Slipping them into it puts them in a power-saving state when you're not listening.

TIP

A gentle word on the force sensor

Many people tap the stem with one finger and nothing happens. The trick is a light squeeze, the way you'd check whether a peach is ripe. Hold the stem between your thumb and the side of your finger and press until you hear the click. Practice once or twice while music is playing, and it becomes second nature.

PART 2

Getting Connected

Pairing your AirPods with an iPhone or iPad, a Mac, an Apple Watch or an Apple TV, and with Android phones and Windows computers too, plus the one Settings page where every AirPods option lives.

CHAPTER 5

Pairing with Your iPhone or iPad

"Pairing" just means introducing your AirPods to your phone so the two remember each other. You do it once, and from then on they connect by themselves whenever you open the case or put them on. With an iPhone or iPad, it takes less than a minute.

Before you start

- Update your iPhone or iPad first if you can: **Settings** > **General** > **Software Update**. Apple's current AirPods guide is written for iOS 27 and iPadOS 27, and some features need the latest version.
- Make sure your AirPods have some charge. Put them in the case and plug the case in for a few minutes if you're not sure.
- Unlock your iPhone and go to the Home Screen.

Pair AirPods or AirPods Pro

1. On your iPhone, open **Settings**, tap **Bluetooth**, and make sure Bluetooth is turned on.
2. Go back to the Home Screen.
3. Open the AirPods case with the AirPods inside, and hold it right next to your iPhone.
4. Wait a few seconds for the setup animation to slide up from the bottom of the screen.
5. Follow the onscreen instructions, then tap **Done**.

That's it. Because you're signed in to your **Apple Account** on your iPhone, your AirPods are now also set up for your other Apple devices signed in to the same account, such as your iPad, Mac or Apple Watch. (Apple Account is the new name for what Apple used to call your Apple ID: the email and password you use for the App Store and iCloud.)

Pair AirPods Max

1. On your iPhone, make sure Bluetooth is turned on in **Settings** > **Bluetooth**.
2. Take your AirPods Max out of the Smart Case.
3. Within 60 seconds, hold them next to your iPhone until the setup animation appears.
4. Follow the onscreen instructions, then tap **Done**.

TIP

No animation? Use pairing mode

If the setup animation never appears, put your AirPods into **pairing mode** by hand, then pick them from the list in **Settings** > **Bluetooth**. On AirPods 4, AirPods 5 and AirPods Pro 3, double-tap the front of the case until the light flashes white. On older AirPods and AirPods Pro 2, press and hold the setup button on the back of the case for about 5 seconds, until the light flashes white. On AirPods Max, press and hold the listening mode button for about 5 seconds.

Pairing mode at a glance

Model	How to start pairing mode
AirPods 4, AirPods 5, AirPods Pro 3	Open the lid, then double-tap the front of the case until the status light flashes white.
AirPods 2 and 3, AirPods Pro and Pro 2	Open the lid, then press and hold the setup button on the back of the case for about 5 seconds, until the light flashes white.
AirPods Max and Max 2	Press and hold the listening mode button for about 5 seconds. AirPods Max (USB-C) and Max 2 can also be paired by plugging them into an iPhone or iPad with a USB-C cable (iOS 18.4 or later).

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against the AirPods User Guide on November 2026

These steps and button names match Apple's AirPods User Guide for iOS 27. Pairing mode is the same trick you'll use for Android phones, Windows computers and smart TVs in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 6

Mac, Apple Watch and Apple TV

If your AirPods are paired with your iPhone and your Mac or iPad is signed in to the same Apple Account, you usually don't need to do anything. Your AirPods already appear on those devices. If they don't, or if a device uses a different account, here's how to connect them by hand.

Mac

1. Put your AirPods in pairing mode (see the table in Chapter 5).
2. On your Mac, choose the **Apple menu** at the top left, then **System Settings**.
3. Click **Bluetooth** in the sidebar.
4. In the list of devices, find your AirPods and click **Connect**.

Once they're paired, you can switch your Mac's sound to your AirPods any time from **Control Center**, the icon of two little switches at the top right of the screen. Click **Sound**, then choose your AirPods.

Apple Watch

AirPods paired with your iPhone are normally available on your Apple Watch too. To connect by hand:

1. Put your AirPods in pairing mode.
2. On your watch, open **Settings** and tap **Bluetooth**.
3. Tap your AirPods when they appear.

This is handy for a walk without your phone: music or podcasts saved on the watch play straight to your AirPods.

Apple TV

Watching TV with AirPods is one of the nicest uses of all. You hear every word at the volume you like, and the rest of the household hears nothing.

1. Put your AirPods in pairing mode.
2. On the Apple TV, open **Settings**, then **Remotes and Devices**, then **Bluetooth**.
3. Below **Headphones**, select your AirPods.

TIP

Watching TV together

If one person needs the TV louder than everyone else, AirPods solve that nicely: the AirPods wearer hears it as loud as they like, and the TV speaker can stay at a comfortable level for the room. Our Smart TVs and Apple TV manuals cover other ways to make dialogue clearer.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against the AirPods User Guide on November 2026

The Mac, Apple Watch and Apple TV steps above follow Apple's current pairing article for macOS 27, watchOS 27 and tvOS 27.

CHAPTER 7

Android, Windows and Other Devices

AirPods aren't only for Apple products. They work as ordinary Bluetooth headphones with nearly anything that has Bluetooth: an Android phone, a Windows laptop, many smart TVs, even some cars. You'll get sound and a working microphone for calls. You'll lose some of the extras, though, so it's good to know what to expect.

Android phones and tablets

1. Put your AirPods in pairing mode (see the table in Chapter 5). The light on the case flashes white.
2. On the Android phone, open **Settings** and go to the Bluetooth section. On most phones that's **Connected devices** > **Pair new device**. On Samsung Galaxy phones, it's **Connections** > **Bluetooth**.
3. Wait for your AirPods to appear in the list of available devices, then tap them.
4. Tap **Pair** if asked.

Windows 11 computers

1. Put your AirPods in pairing mode.
2. On the computer, click **Start**, then **Settings**, then **Bluetooth & devices**.
3. Click **Add device**, then choose **Bluetooth**.
4. Click your AirPods in the list. When it says your device is ready to go, click **Done**.

Smart TVs and other gadgets

Most smart TVs, streaming boxes and tablets have a Bluetooth or "Headphones" section somewhere in their settings. Put your AirPods in pairing mode, open that section, and choose them from the list. The menu names differ from brand to brand. If you can't find it, look for words like **Bluetooth**, **Sound Output** or **Remotes & Accessories**. Some TVs can't send sound to Bluetooth headphones at all.

What you give up away from Apple

Works on Android & Windows	Needs an Apple device
Music, videos and phone calls	Siri
Play, pause and skipping with the stem	Automatic switching between devices

Works on Android & Windows	Needs an Apple device
Noise Cancellation and Transparency (switch with a press and hold)	Changing settings, such as what press and hold does
	Hearing Test, Hearing Aid and Live Translation
	Finding them in Find My, and automatic firmware updates

SCAM ALERT

Watch out for "AirPods helper" apps

The app stores are full of apps that promise to show your AirPods battery or unlock extra features on Android. Some are harmless, some are full of ads, and a few ask for permissions they don't need. You don't need any app to use AirPods with Android. If you do try one, read its reviews and never pay for a subscription you don't understand.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against the AirPods User Guide on November 2026

Apple's own guide says that with a non-Apple device "you can't use Siri, but you can listen and talk." To update firmware on AirPods used only with non-Apple devices, Apple suggests an appointment at an Apple Store or Apple Authorized Service Provider.

CHAPTER 8

Your AirPods Settings Page

Almost every AirPods option in this guide lives on one page of your iPhone's Settings app. Once you know how to get there, nothing about AirPods is out of reach.

How to get there

1. Put your AirPods in your ears, or open the case near your iPhone, so they connect.
2. Open the **Settings** app.
3. Tap the name of your AirPods near the top of the screen, just below your own name. It only appears while they're connected.
4. If you don't see it, tap **Bluetooth**, then tap the **More Info** button (the small *i*) next to your AirPods.

On iOS 27 some options have moved into small groups on this page. If a step in this guide says to tap something and you don't see it, look inside **Audio & Routing**, **Controls & Gestures**, **Battery** or **Hearing Health** first. Apple's own guide gives the same advice.

What you'll find there

Setting	What it's for
Battery	How much charge each earbud and the case has, plus charging options (Chapter 22).
Listening Mode	Noise Cancellation, Transparency, Adaptive and Off (Chapter 14).
Press and Hold AirPods	Choose what a long squeeze of the left or right stem does (Chapter 10).
Hearing Health	Hearing Test, Hearing Assistance and Hearing Protection on AirPods Pro 2 and Pro 3 (Part 4).
Automatic Ear Detection	Pauses your audio when you take an earbud out.
Connect to This iPhone	Controls automatic switching between your Apple devices (below).
Microphone	Use whichever AirPod is in, or always the left or right one.
Find My network	Keeps your AirPods findable even far from home (Chapter 23).
Name	Tap the name at the top to rename them, such as "Mom's AirPods."
About	Model, serial number and firmware version (Chapters 3 and 24).

Automatic switching between your Apple devices

If you have an iPhone and an iPad or Mac on the same Apple Account, your AirPods can hop to whichever one you start using. Start a show on the iPad and the sound moves there; a call comes in on the iPhone and it moves back. Many people love this. Others find it confusing when a grandchild picks up the family iPad. You can choose.

1. With your AirPods connected, open **Settings** and tap your AirPods' name.
2. Tap **Connect to This iPhone** (it may be inside **Audio & Routing**).
3. Choose **Automatically** to let them switch on their own, or **When Last Connected to This iPhone** to make them stay put until you switch them yourself.
4. Repeat on your iPad or Mac if you want the same behavior there.

To move your AirPods to a device by hand, open **Control Center** on that device (swipe down from the top-right corner of an iPhone or iPad), tap the small AirPlay icon in the music controls, and choose your AirPods.

TIP

Give them a name you'll recognize

If two people in the house have AirPods, rename yours so you never connect to the wrong pair. Tap the name at the top of the AirPods settings page, type a new one, and tap **Done**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against the AirPods User Guide on November 2026

Apple's guide confirms the settings live under your AirPods' name near the top of Settings, with a fallback through **Bluetooth** and the **More Info** button, and that some options sit inside **Audio & Routing** on iOS 27.

PART 3

Everyday Listening

A comfortable fit, every press and squeeze, head gestures and Siri, clear phone calls, the listening modes that quiet the world or let it in, and sharing a show with someone you love.

CHAPTER 9

A Comfortable Fit, Ear Tips and the Fit Test

AirPods sound best, stay in best and cancel noise best when they fit well. A good fit isn't about pushing them in hard. It's about the right angle and, on AirPods Pro, the right size of ear tip.

Putting in regular AirPods

1. Hold the earbud by the stem, with the stem pointing down toward your jaw.
2. Set the rounded head into the bowl of your ear, just inside the opening.
3. Give it a gentle twist so the stem angles slightly forward, toward your mouth. It should feel snug but not pushed in.

Putting in AirPods Pro

1. Check the tiny **L** and **R** on each earbud.
2. Hold the stem and slide the soft tip into your ear canal with a slight twist, the way you'd put in a foam earplug.
3. The tip should seal gently. Outside noise sounds muffled when it's right.

Choosing the right ear tip size

AirPods Pro come with the medium tips already on, and extra sizes in the box. Your two ears may even need different sizes; that's perfectly normal.

Model	Ear tip sizes
AirPods Pro 3	Five sizes: XXS, XS, S, M and L. M comes on the earbuds.
AirPods Pro 2	Four sizes: XS, S, M and L. M comes on the earbuds.
AirPods Pro (1st generation)	Three sizes: S, M and L.

HEADS UP

Ear tips aren't interchangeable

Ear tips for one generation of AirPods Pro don't fit another. If you buy replacements, get the ones made for your exact model. The tips are oval, not round, so line them up with the oval opening and press until they click.

Run the Ear Tip Fit Test

Your iPhone can check the seal for you. It plays a short sound and listens through the earbuds' inside microphones to see whether sound is leaking out.

1. Put both AirPods Pro in your ears and connect them to your iPhone.
2. Open **Settings** and tap your AirPods' name near the top.
3. Tap **Ear Tip Fit Test** or **Test Acoustic Seal**. The name depends on your model. If you don't see it, look under **Hearing Health** > **Hearing Protection**.
4. Follow the onscreen steps. A short sound plays; hold still for a few seconds while it listens.
5. If it says to adjust the earbud or try a different tip size, swap the tip and run the test again.

TIP

Comfort comes first

If an earbud aches after a while, try the next size down. If it keeps falling out or the bass sounds thin, try the next size up. Many people find the left and right sizes differ.

CHAPTER 10

Controls on the Earbuds

All current AirPods and AirPods Pro use the same basic controls: gentle squeezes of the stem. Once you learn the presses, you'll rarely need to take your phone out of your pocket.

The presses, for music and podcasts

Do this	To do this
Press once	Play or pause.
Press twice	Skip to the next song or chapter.
Press three times	Go back to the previous song.
Press and hold	Switch listening mode (Noise Cancellation, Transparency and so on) or use Siri. You choose which, separately for each ear.
Swipe up or down	Change the volume, on AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 and AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case. Lightly slide your thumb along the stem.

The presses, for phone calls

Do this	To do this
Press once	Answer an incoming call. During a call, press once to mute or unmute yourself.
Press twice	Decline an incoming call, or hang up.

You can swap these two if you prefer pressing once to hang up. In your AirPods settings, look for **Mute & Unmute** and **End Call** and choose **Press Once** or **Press Twice**.

Choose what press and hold does

1. With your AirPods connected, open **Settings** and tap your AirPods' name.
2. Under **Press and Hold AirPods**, tap **Left** or **Right**.
3. Choose **Listening Mode** to switch between modes, or **Siri** to talk to Siri.
4. If you chose Listening Mode, tick the modes you want the squeeze to cycle through.

GOOD TO KNOW

Plain AirPods 4 are a little different

AirPods 4 without noise cancellation have no listening modes, so press and hold is used for Siri. AirPods 4 and the $129 AirPods 5 have no volume swipe; use your iPhone's volume buttons or ask Siri, "Turn it up."

Two newer tricks

- **Take a photo:** on AirPods 4, AirPods 5, AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 and AirPods Max 2, with iOS 26 or later, a press of the stem can work the iPhone's camera shutter. Turn it on in your AirPods settings under **Camera Remote** (inside **Controls & Gestures**) and choose **Press Once** or **Press and Hold**. It's handy for a group photo with the phone propped up.
- **Pause when you doze off:** the same models can pause your audiobook or podcast when they sense you've fallen asleep. Look for **Pause Media When Falling Asleep** under **Audio & Routing**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

The press counts, volume swipe models, Camera Remote and sleep pause options above match Apple's AirPods controls article and the AirPods User Guide for iOS 27.

CHAPTER 11

Controls on AirPods Max

AirPods Max skip the stems entirely. Everything happens with two controls on top of the right ear cup: the round **Digital Crown** and the long **listening mode button** beside it.

Do this	To do this
Turn the Digital Crown	Change the volume.
Press the Digital Crown once	Play or pause. During a call: answer, or mute and unmute.
Press it twice	Skip to the next song. During a call: decline or hang up.
Press it three times	Go back to the previous song.
Press and hold the Digital Crown	Talk to Siri.
Press the listening mode button	Switch between Noise Cancellation and Transparency (and Adaptive on Max 2).
Press and hold the listening mode button (Max 2)	Start Live Translation (Chapter 21).

Wearing AirPods Max comfortably

- The Digital Crown belongs on your right ear. If the controls feel backward, the headphones are on backward.
- Pull the stainless steel arms down or push them up until the cushions sit evenly over your ears.
- There's no power button. Slip them into the Smart Case when you're done, to save battery.

CHAPTER 12

Head Gestures, Siri and Announced Messages

Your AirPods can keep you in touch without your hands. Siri can read messages to you, you can answer by speaking, and on newer models you can simply nod or shake your head.

Talk to Siri

Siri is the voice assistant on your iPhone. With AirPods in, just say **"Siri"** or **"Hey Siri"** followed by what you'd like: "Call my daughter," "Read my messages," "What's the weather tomorrow?" or "Turn the volume down." You can also press and hold the stem if you've set it to Siri (Chapter 10).

- Saying just "Siri" works on AirPods 4, AirPods 5, AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 and AirPods Max 2. Older models need "Hey Siri."
- To choose which phrase your iPhone listens for, go to **Settings** > **Siri** > **Requests**.
- With iOS 27, Apple is rolling out a smarter Siri, which Apple calls Siri AI, in beta on newer iPhones in certain languages. You talk to it the same way through your AirPods.

Have messages read aloud

Announce Notifications has Siri read incoming texts and other alerts to you while you're wearing AirPods. You can reply out loud without touching your phone.

1. Open **Settings** > **Notifications** > **Announce Notifications**.
2. Turn on **Announce Notifications**.
3. Choose **Headphones** so it only reads things aloud when your AirPods are in.
4. Below, pick which apps may announce. Many people choose just **Messages** and **Phone** to start.

When a message is read to you, just speak your answer after Siri finishes. Siri reads your reply back and asks if you want to send it.

Nod yes, shake no

On AirPods 4, AirPods 5, AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 and AirPods Max 2, you can answer Siri with head gestures. When a call comes in or Siri reads a message, **nod your head up and down** to accept or reply, or **shake your head side to side** to decline or dismiss. It's perfect when your hands are full or you're somewhere you'd rather not speak.

- Head gestures only respond to Siri announcements, so **Announce Calls** and **Announce Notifications** need to be on.
- If your AirPods settings page shows a **Head Gestures** option, that's where you can turn them off or change what nodding does.

STAY SAFE

Keep it short while driving

Announced messages can be handy in the car, but any conversation pulls attention from the road. If you use AirPods while driving, keep one ear free or use the car's own speaker system, and check your state's rules, since many states restrict earphones behind the wheel. Our CarPlay and Android Auto manual covers the car's built-in options.

CHAPTER 13

Phone Calls with AirPods

AirPods make wonderful phone headsets. The microphones sit close to your mouth, they focus on your voice, and you can walk around the house with your hands free.

The basics

- **Answer:** press the stem once (or the Digital Crown on AirPods Max), or nod your head if head gestures are on.
- **Mute and unmute yourself:** press the stem once during the call.
- **Hang up or decline:** press the stem twice.
- **Make a call:** say "Siri, call" and the person's name.
- **Use just one earbud:** that's fine. The microphone switches to whichever AirPod you're wearing.

Make your voice clearer: Voice Isolation

On AirPods 4, AirPods 5, AirPods Pro 2 and AirPods Pro 3, **Voice Isolation** filters out background noise, like wind, traffic or a running dishwasher, so the person you're calling hears you clearly.

1. During a call, open **Control Center** by swiping down from the top-right corner of your iPhone.
2. Tap the call controls at the top (Apple calls them FaceTime Controls, but they work for regular calls too).
3. Tap **Voice Isolation**.

If the other person can't hear you

- Check that you're not muted. Press the stem once and listen for the tone.
- Make sure the sound is going to your AirPods: tap **Audio** on the call screen and choose your AirPods.
- Clean the small mesh openings on the stems. Chapter 25 shows how.
- In your AirPods settings, tap **Microphone** and choose **Automatically Switch AirPods**.

CHAPTER 14

Listening Modes: Quiet the World or Let It In

Many AirPods can change how much of the outside world you hear. Apple calls these **listening modes** (older guides call them noise control). Here's what each one does.

Mode	What it does
Noise Cancellation	Tiny microphones hear outside noise and the AirPods play an exact opposite sound to cancel it. Engines, fans, traffic and chatter fade away. Wonderful on planes, buses and in noisy waiting rooms.
Transparency	The opposite: the microphones pass outside sound through, so you can hear people and traffic naturally while you listen. Good for walks and for chatting at the counter.
Adaptive	A blend of the two that changes by itself. It quiets loud sounds and lets in quieter ones, adjusting as your surroundings change. A good everyday setting.
Off	No cancellation and no pass-through. On AirPods Pro 2 and Pro 3 you must turn on **Off Listening Mode** first, and Apple notes your hearing is not protected in Off.

Which models have which: AirPods 4 (ANC), AirPods 5, AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 and AirPods Max 2 have all of these. The original AirPods Pro and the first AirPods Max have Noise Cancellation and Transparency only. Plain AirPods 4 have no listening modes.

Three ways to switch modes

1. **On the AirPods:** press and hold the stem until you hear a chime. On AirPods Max, press the listening mode button.
2. **From Control Center:** swipe down from the top-right corner of your iPhone, touch and hold the volume slider, then tap the **Listening Mode** button at the bottom left and pick a mode.
3. **From Settings:** tap your AirPods' name, then **Listening Mode**. For Adaptive, you can drag a slider to let in a bit more or less of the world.

Conversation Awareness

With **Conversation Awareness** on, when you start talking to someone the AirPods lower your music and let in their voice. When you stop talking, the volume comes back. It's available on AirPods 4 (ANC), AirPods 5, AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 and AirPods Max 2. Turn it on or off in your AirPods settings (look inside **Audio & Routing**), or from the volume control in Control Center.

Loud Sound Reduction

On AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 and AirPods Max 2, **Loud Sound Reduction** softens sudden loud noises, like a siren or a jackhammer, even in Transparency mode, while keeping voices natural. It's on by default. It's part of what Apple calls Hearing Protection, covered in Chapter 19.

STAY SAFE

Stay aware near traffic

Noise Cancellation is so good that you may not hear a car, a bicycle bell or someone calling your name. When you're walking near traffic, crossing parking lots or out on the trail, use **Transparency** or **Adaptive** instead.

TIP

One earbud and noise cancellation

Normally noise cancellation needs both earbuds in. If you like to wear just one, you can allow it: **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **AirPods**, then turn on **Noise Cancellation with One AirPod**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against the AirPods User Guide on November 2026

Mode names, supported models, the Control Center steps and the Off Listening Mode warning match Apple's AirPods User Guide for iOS 27.

CHAPTER 15

Spatial Audio, Sound Settings and Sharing

A few more features can make listening more enjoyable: sound that seems to come from all around you, an equalizer to adjust the tone, and the ability to share what you're hearing with a second pair of AirPods.

Spatial Audio

With movies and music mixed in Dolby Atmos, **Spatial Audio** makes the sound seem to come from all around you, like a theater. **Head tracking** goes a step further: turn your head, and the sound stays put, as if the TV speakers were really in front of you. It works on AirPods 3, 4 and 5, and all AirPods Pro and AirPods Max.

1. While something is playing, open **Control Center**.
2. Touch and hold the volume slider.
3. Tap **Spatial Audio**, then choose **Off**, **Fixed** or **Head Tracked**.

> TIP
> **If it makes you dizzy, choose Fixed**
> Some people find head tracking a bit disorienting, especially lying down. **Fixed** keeps the surround effect without the movement. **Off** gives you plain stereo.

Personalized Spatial Audio

Your iPhone can use its front camera to take a quick 3D look at your ears and tune Spatial Audio to your shape. It takes a couple of minutes and needs an iPhone X or later.

1. Open **Settings**, tap your AirPods' name, then **Personalized Spatial Audio** (inside **Audio & Routing** on iOS 27).
2. Tap **Personalize Spatial Audio** and follow the prompts. You'll hold the phone up to see your face, then turn your head to show each ear.
3. Your profile syncs to your other Apple devices signed in to the same Apple Account.

Adjusting the tone

A firmware update in fall 2026 added an **Equalizer** control to the AirPods settings page for AirPods 4 and later, AirPods Pro 2 and later, and AirPods Max 2. It lets you bring up the bass or the treble to taste. If voices sound muffled to you, the hearing-focused **Headphone**

Accommodations in Chapter 20 are designed for exactly that.

Share audio with a second pair

Two people can listen to the same movie or song from one iPhone, each with their own AirPods or Beats headphones, each with their own volume. It's lovely on a plane or a long car ride, or for a quiet movie in bed.

1. Start playing something on your iPhone with your AirPods connected.
2. Tap the **AirPods icon** on the Now Playing screen, the Lock Screen, or in Control Center.
3. Tap **Share Audio**.
4. Bring the other person's AirPods, in their case with the lid open, close to your iPhone. (If they have their own iPhone with their AirPods connected, they can bring the iPhone close instead.)
5. When their AirPods appear on your screen, tap **Share Audio**.

To stop sharing, tap the AirPods icon again and deselect the other person's headphones.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **Checked against the AirPods User Guide on November 2026**
>
> The Spatial Audio steps, Personalized Spatial Audio path and Share Audio steps follow Apple's AirPods User Guide. The Equalizer control was added in AirPods firmware 9A348, according to Apple's firmware notes.

PART 4

Hearing Help and Translation

The hearing test, the FDA-authorized hearing aid feature and hearing protection on AirPods Pro, the listening aids that work on every model, and Live Translation for conversations across languages.

CHAPTER 16

Hearing Health: What AirPods Can Do

For many people, this is the most important part of the guide. Since 2024, Apple has turned AirPods Pro into a genuine hearing tool. They can check your hearing in about five minutes, work as an over-the-counter hearing aid for mild to moderate hearing loss, and protect your ears in loud places. Other AirPods have helpful listening aids too.

Feature	What it does	Which AirPods
Hearing Test	A five-minute check of how well you hear different pitches, with results saved to the Health app	AirPods Pro 2 and AirPods Pro 3
Hearing Aid	Amplifies voices and sounds around you, tuned to your test results	AirPods Pro 2 and AirPods Pro 3
Hearing Protection	Lowers loud noise around you, at concerts, sporting events or with power tools	AirPods Pro 2 and AirPods Pro 3
Live Listen	Your iPhone becomes a microphone that sends sound to your AirPods	Most AirPods, with current iOS
Headphone Accommodations	Boosts the soft sounds and frequencies you find hard to hear	AirPods 2 and later, all AirPods Pro, AirPods Max
Conversation Boost	Focuses on the person talking in front of you	AirPods Pro

GOOD TO KNOW

AirPods 5 and AirPods Max don't have the hearing test or hearing aid

Apple's own store page for AirPods 5 says plainly that they have no Hearing Test, Hearing Aid or Hearing Protection features. The same is true of AirPods 4 and AirPods Max. If hearing help is the main reason for buying, AirPods Pro 3 is the current model that has it.

Who the hearing aid feature is for

Apple's Hearing Aid feature is meant for adults **18 years or older** with **perceived mild to moderate hearing loss**. "Perceived" means you've noticed it yourself: turning the TV up, asking people to repeat themselves, struggling in restaurants. You don't need a prescription or a doctor's visit to use it.

In September 2024, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized it as the first over-the-counter hearing aid software device, after a clinical study. That's a real medical authorization, not a marketing term.

STAY SAFE

When to see a professional instead

AirPods aren't meant for severe or profound hearing loss, for children, or for sudden changes in your hearing. See a doctor or audiologist promptly if you have sudden hearing loss, hearing loss in one ear, ear pain or drainage, dizziness, or ringing that won't go away. A hearing test on AirPods is a helpful check, not a medical diagnosis. Our Hearing Help Tech manual covers traditional hearing aids too.

What you need

- AirPods Pro 2 or AirPods Pro 3, updated to the latest firmware (Chapter 24).
- An iPhone or iPad with up-to-date software. Apple first required iOS 18 or iPadOS 18; Apple now simply says the latest software.
- For the Hearing Aid on a Mac: macOS Sequoia or later.
- A country or region where the feature is offered. The United States is included. Apple keeps the full list on its AirPods Pro feature availability page.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple and the FDA on November 2026

The age, "perceived mild to moderate hearing loss," supported models and FDA authorization (September 12, 2024, the first over-the-counter hearing aid software device) were checked against Apple's Hearing Aid article, apple.com, and the FDA's announcement.

CHAPTER 17

Taking the Hearing Test

The Hearing Test plays soft tones at different pitches, one ear at a time, and you tap the screen each time you hear one. It takes about five minutes. You'll get a clear result, and you can share it with your doctor.

Before you begin

- Find a quiet room where you won't be interrupted for five minutes. The test listens to the room and tells you if it's too noisy.
- Charge your AirPods Pro.
- Wait a day if you've had a cold, sinus or ear infection, or allergies flaring, or you've been somewhere very loud in the last 24 hours. Those can affect the results.

Take the test

1. Put your AirPods Pro in your ears and make sure they're connected to your iPhone.
2. Open **Settings** and tap your AirPods' name.
3. If you see **Hearing Health**, tap it.
4. Tap **Take a Hearing Test** and follow the prompts. If you're asked to run a quick check first, put the AirPods in the case, close the lid, tap **OK**, then put them back in and tap **Take Hearing Test**.
5. Each time you hear a tone, tap the screen. Each tone pulses three times. It's OK if you miss one; that's the point of the test.

You can also start the test from the **Health** app.

Understanding your result

Your result is shown for each ear in a unit called dBHL, which measures how loud a sound has to be before you can hear it. Lower numbers are better.

Result	What it means
Up to 25 dBHL	Little to no hearing loss
26 to 40 dBHL	Mild hearing loss
41 to 60 dBHL	Moderate hearing loss
61 to 80 dBHL	Severe hearing loss

Tap **Show Details** to see your **audiogram**, the chart audiologists use. Your results are saved in the Health app: **Health** > **Browse** > **Hearing** > **Hearing Test Results**. From there you can tap **Export PDF** to print it or send it to your doctor.

TIP

Make it a yearly habit

Hearing often changes slowly. Retaking the test once a year and comparing results in the Health app (tap **Show More Data**) gives you and your doctor a picture over time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

The steps, the five-minute length, the 18-and-over guidance, the dBHL ranges and the Health app path match Apple's Hearing Test article, updated September 2026.

CHAPTER 18

Using the Hearing Aid Feature

Once you've taken the hearing test, your AirPods Pro can use the results to boost the sounds you find hard to hear, so voices around you become clearer. Your settings are saved on the AirPods themselves.

Set it up

1. Put your AirPods Pro in your ears and connect them to your iPhone.
2. Open **Settings**, tap your AirPods' name, then **Hearing Health** > **Hearing Assistance**.
3. Tap **Set Up Hearing Assistance**.
4. Tap **Take a Hearing Test**, or **Use a Prior Test Result** if you've already taken one. If you have an audiogram from an audiologist, you can add it instead, either by scanning the paper with your camera or typing in the numbers.
5. Tap **Set Up Hearing Aid**, then **Get Started**, then **Next**, then **Turn On Hearing Aid**.

Depending on your results, your iPhone might suggest **Media Assist** instead. That improves the sound of music, videos and calls for your hearing, without amplifying the room around you.

How it works day to day

- The Hearing Aid amplifies the world around you only in **Transparency** mode. In Noise Cancellation it steps aside.
- Music, calls and TV still play through the AirPods as usual, tuned with Media Assist if you turned it on.
- With AirPods Pro 3, Apple rates battery life at up to 10 hours in Transparency with the Hearing Aid on.
- In the U.S. and some other regions, **Conversation Boost** switches on automatically with iOS 26 or later, focusing on the person in front of you in noisy places.

Fine-tune it

Go to **Settings** > your AirPods > **Hearing Health** > **Hearing Assistance** > **Adjustments**. You'll find:

Adjustment	What it changes
Amplification	How much the Hearing Aid boosts sound overall.

Adjustment	What it changes
Balance	More in the left ear or the right.
Tone	Darker (more bass) or brighter (more treble).
Ambient Noise Reduction	Turns down steady background noise.
Conversation Boost	Focuses on voices in front of you.
Swipe to Control Amplification	Lets you swipe the stem to change amplification instead of volume.

For quick changes, open **Control Center** and touch and hold the volume control. You'll see a separate amplification slider. Control Center also gets a **Hearing** button that opens **Hearing Assistance**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Traditional hearing aids can cost thousands of dollars, and many people put off getting them for years. If you already own AirPods Pro 2 or Pro 3, the Hearing Aid feature costs nothing extra. It may be a comfortable first step, and the test results are useful to bring to an audiologist either way.

TIP

Give it a couple of weeks

Hearing aids of any kind take some getting used to. Everyday sounds like paper rustling or the refrigerator may seem loud at first. Start at a lower amplification and turn it up gradually.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

The setup path, adjustment names, Transparency-only amplification, Media Assist and automatic Conversation Boost (iOS 26 or later, in some regions including the U.S.) match Apple's Hearing Aid article and AirPods Pro feature availability page.

CHAPTER 19

Hearing Protection and Headphone Safety

Loud noise is one of the most common causes of hearing loss, and it's preventable. Your AirPods and iPhone can help in two ways: by lowering loud sound around you, and by keeping an eye on how loud your own music is.

Hearing Protection on AirPods Pro

On AirPods Pro 2 and AirPods Pro 3, **Hearing Protection** is on by default in all three main listening modes. In Transparency and Adaptive, it lowers sound more as your surroundings get louder. In Noise Cancellation, it gives steady protection.

Situation	Apple suggests
A concert or a grandchild's band recital	Transparency, so music still sounds natural while the peaks are lowered
Commuting, shopping, a ball game	Adaptive
Mowing, leaf blowing, steady machinery	Noise Cancellation, for the most consistent protection

To see the details, go to **Settings** > your AirPods > **Hearing Health** > **Hearing Protection**. A good seal matters, so run the Ear Tip Fit Test from Chapter 9.

STAY SAFE

Know the limits

Apple says Hearing Protection is not suitable for extremely loud sudden sounds like gunfire, fireworks or jackhammers, or for steady sound louder than 110 decibels, and it's not suitable for every workplace. It doesn't work when the AirPods' battery is dead, in Off mode, or if Loud Sound Reduction has been turned off. At the shooting range or the fireworks show, wear proper rated hearing protection.

Headphone Safety on your iPhone

Your iPhone keeps track of how loud your music and videos are. If you've been listening above a safe level for too long during a week (for example, over 80 decibels for a total of 40 hours over seven days), it sends a notification and lowers the volume.

1. Open **Settings** > **Sounds & Haptics** > **Headphone Safety**.
2. Turn on **Headphone Notifications** if it isn't already on.

3. Turn on **Reduce Loud Audio** and drag the slider to set a maximum volume.

To check how loud your listening has been, open **Health** > **Browse** > **Hearing** > **Headphone Notifications**. While you're listening, the **Hearing** button in Control Center shows the live level.

TIP

A good setting for grandchildren

Setting **Reduce Loud Audio** on a child's or teen's iPhone or iPad is an easy way to protect young ears. It works with any headphones, not only AirPods.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

Hearing Protection's models, modes and limits (110 dBA, impulse sounds) match Apple's Hearing Protection article updated September 2026. The Headphone Safety path matches Apple's headphone notifications article.

CHAPTER 20

Live Listen, Conversation Boost and Headphone Accommodations

Even if you don't have AirPods Pro, your AirPods and iPhone have built-in listening aids. They're tucked away in the Accessibility settings, and they're worth knowing about.

Live Listen: your iPhone as a microphone

With **Live Listen**, your iPhone picks up sound and sends it straight to your AirPods. Put the phone on the table in front of a speaker at a meeting, or near the person talking at a noisy restaurant, and you'll hear them in your ears.

1. Put in your AirPods and connect them.
2. Open **Control Center** and tap the **Hearing** button (it looks like an ear).
3. Tap **Live Listen** to turn it on.
4. Set your iPhone close to the person or sound you want to hear.
5. To stop, open Control Center, tap the Hearing button, and tap Live Listen again.

TIP

No Hearing button in Control Center?

Add it: open Control Center, touch and hold an empty spot, tap **Add a Control**, then tap **Hearing**. Apple's own pages sometimes call this button Hearing Devices.

HEADS UP

Use Live Listen kindly

Live Listen is meant to help you hear people you're with. Recording or listening in on people who don't know about it can be against the law and is never kind. Let others at the table know if you're using it.

Headphone Accommodations: tune the sound to your ears

Headphone Accommodations boosts the soft sounds and certain pitches you find hard to hear, for music, movies and phone calls. It works with AirPods 2 and later, every AirPods Pro, and AirPods Max.

1. Open **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Audio & Visual** > **Headphone Accommodations**.

2. Turn on **Headphone Accommodations**.
3. Tap **Customize Audio** and follow the steps. You'll compare samples and pick what sounds clearer.
4. Or choose a tuning yourself: **Balanced Tone**, **Vocal Range** or **Brightness**, at **Slight**, **Moderate** or **Strong**. Tap **Play Sample** to hear the difference.
5. Choose whether it applies to **Phone**, **Media** or both.

Conversation Boost on AirPods Pro

On AirPods Pro, **Conversation Boost** focuses the microphones on the person talking in front of you and turns down the noise around you. If you use the Hearing Aid feature, Conversation Boost is one of its adjustments (Chapter 18). Without the Hearing Aid, you'll find it under **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Audio & Visual** > **Headphone Accommodations** > **Transparency** > **Customize Transparency**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against the AirPods User Guide on November 2026

The Live Listen, Headphone Accommodations and Conversation Boost paths and supported models follow Apple's AirPods User Guide for iOS 27.

CHAPTER 21

Live Translation

Live Translation lets you have a conversation with someone who speaks another language. They talk, and you hear their words in your language through your AirPods. You answer in your own language, and your iPhone shows or speaks your words in theirs. It's still labeled beta, which means Apple is still improving it.

What you need

- **AirPods:** AirPods 4 (ANC), AirPods 5 (either model), AirPods Pro 2, AirPods Pro 3 or AirPods Max 2, with the latest firmware.
- **iPhone:** one that supports Apple Intelligence: iPhone 15 Pro, iPhone 15 Pro Max, or any iPhone 16 or later, with **Apple Intelligence** turned on.
- **Software:** iOS 26 or later; the latest version is best.
- **Languages:** as of November 2026, English (U.S. and U.K.), French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese (Brazil), Spanish (Spain), and Mandarin Chinese (Simplified and Traditional). Some languages and regions have limits; Apple keeps the current list on its feature availability page.

Set it up once

1. Put in your AirPods and connect them.
2. Open **Settings**, tap your AirPods' name, then **Translation** (tap **Live Translation** first if you see it).
3. Tap **Languages** and download both your language and the other person's.
4. Open the **Translate** app, tap **Live**, and choose **Their Language** and **Your Language**.

Start a conversation

Use whichever of these is easiest:

- Press and hold the stems of **both** AirPods at the same time. On AirPods Max 2, press and hold the listening mode button.
- Say, "Siri, start Live Translation."
- In the Translate app, tap **Live**, then **Start Translation**.
- Use the Translate button in Control Center, or the Action button on iPhones that have one.

When it starts, your AirPods switch to Adaptive mode so you can still hear the person's real voice softly under the translation. To reply, just speak naturally. Your iPhone shows your translated words on screen so you can hold it up for the other person, or it can speak them aloud. If the other person also wears compatible AirPods, you can both talk hands-free.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Travel, a new neighbor, a caregiver or a son- or daughter-in-law's family who speak another language: Live Translation can turn an awkward exchange of smiles into an actual conversation.

HEADS UP

Double-check anything important

Translation is good but not perfect. For medical instructions, legal papers or money matters, use a professional interpreter or ask the person to write it down so you can check it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple on November 2026

Models, iPhone requirements, the beta label, setup steps and the language list come from Apple's AirPods User Guide and Apple's iOS feature availability page.

PART 5

Battery, Finding and Care

Keeping your AirPods charged and reading the status light, finding a lost earbud with Find My, how updates arrive, and cleaning and caring for them the way Apple recommends.

CHAPTER 22

Charging and the Status Light

AirPods charge whenever they're in their case, and the case charges whenever it's plugged in or sitting on a charger. If you make a habit of putting them away after each use and charging the case every few days, you'll rarely run out.

How long a charge lasts

Model	Listening time, one charge (Noise Cancellation on)	Total with the case
AirPods 5	Up to 4 hours (up to 6 with it off)	Up to 20 hours
AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case	Up to 5 hours (up to 7 with it off)	Up to 22 hours
AirPods Pro 3	Up to 8 hours	Up to 24 hours
AirPods Max 2	Up to 20 hours	No battery in the case

These are Apple's tested figures at half volume. Real-life time varies with volume, features in use and the age of the battery. Like all rechargeable batteries, AirPods batteries hold less charge as they age.

Ways to charge the case

Method	Works with
USB-C cable	Every current case, and AirPods Max. Plug into any USB-C power adapter, such as the one for a newer iPhone.
Lightning cable	Older cases (AirPods Pro 2 with Lightning case, AirPods 3 and earlier, original AirPods Max).
Qi wireless pad	AirPods Pro, AirPods Pro 2 and 3, AirPods 3, AirPods 4 (ANC) and AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case. Set the case on the pad with the light facing up and the lid closed.
MagSafe charger	AirPods Pro 2 and Pro 3 cases snap onto it magnetically.
Apple Watch charger	AirPods Pro 2 and Pro 3 cases, and the AirPods 4 (ANC) and AirPods 5 Wireless Charging Cases. Center the case flat on the charger.

TIP

Check before you rely on it

The $129 AirPods 5 and plain AirPods 4 charge only by USB-C cable, not on a wireless pad. If someone in the family has a wireless charger, it's worth knowing which case you have before you leave them on it overnight.

What the status light means

Light	What it means
Green	Fully charged. With the AirPods in the case and the lid open, it's showing the AirPods' charge; with them out, the case's charge.
Amber	Less than one full charge remains (or, on a charger, charging is under way).
Brief amber pulse	On AirPods 4 and later, Pro 2 and Pro 3: the AirPods or case are under 95% charged.
Brief amber flashes	The AirPods are under 95% and the case is below 25%. Time to charge the case.
Flashing white	Ready to pair with a new device (pairing mode).
Flashing amber, then white	You've just reset your AirPods (Chapter 27).
No light	The case may be out of charge. Plug it in for a while.

Checking the battery on your iPhone

- Open the case lid with the AirPods inside and hold it close to your unlocked iPhone. After a few seconds, a card shows the charge of each AirPod and the case.
- Or open **Settings** and tap your AirPods' name. The battery levels appear at the top.
- Your iPhone also warns you when the AirPods drop to 20, 10 and 5 percent, and a tone plays in your ears at 10 percent and again just before they shut off.

Optimized charging: making the battery last for years

Batteries age faster when they sit at 100% all the time. Your AirPods can learn your routine and hold off the last bit of charging until shortly before you usually use them.

- **Optimized Battery Charging** is on by default on AirPods Pro and AirPods 3 or later. Find it at **Settings** > your AirPods > **Battery**.

- **AirPods Pro 3** go a step further with an **Optimized Charge Limit**, also on by default with iOS 26 or later. You can turn it off on the same page, either entirely or just for one day before a long trip.
- **Charging Notifications** on newer models (with iOS 26 or later) can tell you when the case is charged. Same page.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

Charging methods, status light meanings, low-battery warnings and the Battery settings match Apple's "Charge your AirPods" article, updated October 2026. Battery figures come from Apple's AirPods compare page.

CHAPTER 23

Finding Lost AirPods with Find My

AirPods are small, and sooner or later one ends up in a coat pocket, a car seat or under the bed. Apple's **Find My** app can show you where they are on a map, play a sound, and on newer models guide you right to them. Set it up now, before anything goes missing.

Make sure Find My is on

1. On your iPhone, open **Settings**, tap your name at the top, then **Find My**, and make sure **Find My iPhone** is on.
2. With your AirPods connected, go to **Settings** > **Bluetooth**, tap the **More Info** button next to your AirPods, and check that **Find My network** is on.

The **Find My network** is Apple's anonymous, encrypted network of hundreds of millions of Apple devices. If your AirPods are lost far from home, any nearby iPhone can quietly report their location to you. Nobody else sees it, not even the owner of that iPhone.

Find them

1. Open the **Find My** app and tap **Devices**.
2. Tap your AirPods. If the earbuds are in different places, you may be asked to choose the left or right one.
3. If they're nearby, tap **Play Sound** and listen for a series of beeps. Take the AirPods out of your ears first if you're wearing one, since the sound can be loud.
4. If you see **Find Nearby**, tap it. Your iPhone shows an arrow and the distance and guides you right to them. This depends on your AirPods and iPhone model.
5. If they're farther away, tap **Get Directions** to open Maps.

On AirPods 4 (ANC), AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case and AirPods Pro 2 or later, the case has its own speaker, so you can make the *case* beep too, and you can tap the **More** button to mark each earbud and the case as lost separately.

If they show "Offline" or "No location found"

That usually means the battery is dead or they're out of range of any Apple device. You can still see their last known location and get directions there, but you can't play a sound. You'll get a notification when they're back online.

Mark them as lost

1. In Find My, tap your AirPods and swipe up.
2. Under the lost device section, tap **Lost Mode** (or **Show Contact Info**).
3. Follow the steps to leave a phone number or message. If someone finds them and connects them, they'll see it.

Get a reminder before you leave them behind

Notify When Left Behind has your iPhone or Apple Watch alert you if you walk away from your AirPods at a place that isn't home. It's a lifesaver at restaurants and doctors' offices. In Find My, tap **Devices**, tap your AirPods, and look under **Notifications** for **Notify When Left Behind**. You can add trusted places, like a family member's house, where you won't be alerted.

TIP

No iPhone handy?

You can also find your AirPods from any web browser at **icloud.com/find**. Sign in with your Apple Account.

SCAM ALERT

Found AirPods? Lost AirPods? Watch for these

If you lose AirPods, beware of messages claiming someone "found" them and asking you to sign in at a link or pay a fee. Apple will never text you a link asking for your Apple Account password. Only sign in through the Find My app or by typing icloud.com yourself. If you find someone else's AirPods, connect them to your iPhone briefly: Lost Mode may show the owner's contact information.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

The Find My steps, Find Nearby, separate case marking, offline behavior and the Find My network wording match Apple's "If you lose your AirPods" article, updated September 2026.

CHAPTER 24

Firmware Updates

Firmware is the software inside your AirPods themselves. Apple updates it now and then to fix problems and add features. The Hearing Aid, Live Translation and the new Equalizer all arrived through firmware updates. There's no button to press; updates happen on their own. But knowing how to check helps when a feature is missing.

How updates happen

Apple says updates are delivered automatically while your AirPods are charging and in Bluetooth range of your iPhone, iPad or Mac, and that device is connected to Wi-Fi. In everyday terms: put them in the case, plug in the case near your iPhone overnight, and they'll update themselves.

Check your firmware version

1. Connect your AirPods to your iPhone.
2. Open **Settings** > **Bluetooth**.
3. Tap the **More Info** button next to your AirPods.
4. Scroll to the **About** section and look for **Version**.

On a Mac: **Apple menu** > **System Settings** > **Bluetooth**, then the info button next to your AirPods.

Model	Latest firmware, November 2026
AirPods Max 2, AirPods Pro 3, AirPods Pro 2, AirPods 5, AirPods 4	9B47
AirPods Max (USB-C)	7E108
AirPods Max (Lightning)	6F25
AirPods Pro (1st generation), AirPods 3, AirPods 2	6F21

If yours is behind: nudge it along

1. Update your iPhone: **Settings** > **General** > **Software Update**.
2. Make sure Bluetooth is on and your iPhone is on Wi-Fi.
3. Connect your AirPods to the iPhone once.
4. Put the AirPods in the case, close the lid, and plug the case into power.

5. Keep the iPhone nearby and wait at least 30 minutes.
6. Open the lid to reconnect, then check the version again.

For AirPods Max, plug the charging cable into the right ear cup, keep them near your iPhone, and wait at least 30 minutes. If an update still won't install, try a reset (Chapter 27) and repeat.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

The update process, the version-check path and the version numbers come from Apple's AirPods firmware article, updated November 10, 2026. Version numbers change; Apple's article always has the latest.

CHAPTER 25

Cleaning and Caring for Your AirPods

Earwax and dust build up in the small mesh openings, and that's a very common reason AirPods start to sound quiet or muffled. A gentle cleaning every few weeks keeps them sounding like new. Here's how Apple says to do it.

The golden rules

- Don't run AirPods under water.
- Don't use sharp objects, like pins or toothpicks, or anything abrasive.
- Don't put anything into the charging ports, and don't get liquid in them.
- Don't dry them with a hair dryer or compressed air.

Cleaning the earbuds

1. Wipe the AirPods with a cloth slightly dampened with fresh water.
2. Dry them with a soft, dry, lint-free cloth.

Cleaning the mesh (AirPods 3, 4 and 5)

For built-up wax in the speaker mesh, Apple describes a careful routine with a soft children's toothbrush, two small cups, distilled water and a micellar water (the kind sold for removing makeup) that contains an ingredient called PEG-6 Caprylic/Capric Glycerides. Belkin also sells an AirPods cleaning kit for this.

1. Dip the soft brush in the micellar water and gently brush the mesh in small circles for about 15 seconds. Blot with a paper towel. Do this three times.
2. Rinse the same way using distilled water.
3. Let the AirPods dry for at least two hours before using them or putting them in the case.

AirPods Pro ear tips

1. Pull the ear tips off gently.
2. Rinse them with water only. Don't use soap or household cleaners.
3. Dry them completely with a lint-free cloth.
4. Clean the mesh under the tips the same way as above.
5. Line up the oval tip with the oval opening and press it back on until it clicks.

The charging case

- Wipe it with a soft, dry, lint-free cloth. If needed, dampen the cloth slightly with isopropyl alcohol.
- Brush debris out of the charging port with a clean, dry, soft-bristled brush.

AirPods Max

- For the outside surfaces, Apple allows a 70 percent isopropyl alcohol wipe, a 75 percent ethyl alcohol wipe or a Clorox Disinfecting Wipe. Don't use them on the mesh headband or ear cushions, and don't use bleach or hydrogen peroxide.
- To wash the cushions and headband, mix 1 teaspoon of liquid laundry detergent in 1 cup of water. Remove the cushions, rub each part gently for about a minute with a cloth dipped in the mix, wipe with fresh water, and let them dry flat for at least a day.
- Apple says the original AirPods Max aren't water resistant, and it doesn't list a rating for AirPods Max 2. Keep them away from rain and drinks.

Water, sweat and the weather

Rating	Models
IP57 (best)	AirPods 5 (both models) and AirPods Pro 3, plus their cases. They can survive brief accidental submersion.
IP54	AirPods 4, AirPods 4 (ANC) and AirPods Pro 2 with USB-C case.
IPX4	AirPods 3, and AirPods Pro 2 with Lightning case. The original AirPods Pro earbuds only; their case isn't resistant.
No rating	AirPods Max. Apple lists no rating for AirPods 1 and 2 either.

HEADS UP

Water resistant isn't waterproof

Apple rates these for non-water sports and exercise. They're not for swimming, showering, the sauna or the washing machine, and resistance can wear down over time. If they get wet, wipe them dry and let them dry fully before charging.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

Cleaning steps follow Apple's AirPods, AirPods Pro and AirPods Max cleaning articles. Water and dust ratings come from Apple's water and sweat resistance article, updated September 2026.

PART 6

Fixing Problems and Staying Safe

Simple fixes for the most common AirPods problems, the reset for every model, replacing a lost earbud through Apple, warranty and AppleCare, and how to spot fake AirPods and phony deals.

CHAPTER 26

Troubleshooting Common Problems

Most AirPods problems have simple causes: a low battery, a dirty mesh, a confused Bluetooth connection, or out-of-date software. Work through the fixes below in order. Each one takes only a minute or two.

First, the three-step fix for almost anything

1. **Charge them.** Put both AirPods in the case, close the lid, and plug the case in for at least 15 minutes.
2. **Reseat them.** Close the lid, wait 30 seconds, then open it near your iPhone so they reconnect.
3. **Restart your iPhone.** Turn it off and back on. It clears many Bluetooth hiccups.

One AirPod isn't working

- Put both AirPods in the case and check that the light comes on. Both need to sit fully in their slots; a bit of lint or a case cover that doesn't fit can stop one from charging.
- Check each earbud's charge in **Settings** > your AirPods. If one shows no battery, clean the metal contacts on the bottom of the stem gently with a dry cotton swab.
- Check the balance: **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Audio & Visual**, and make sure the **Balance** slider is in the middle.
- Clean the mesh on the quiet side (Chapter 25). Wax buildup is often the culprit.
- If nothing helps, reset your AirPods (Chapter 27).

They won't connect

- Make sure Bluetooth is on: **Settings** > **Bluetooth**.
- Check where the sound is going. In Control Center, tap the AirPlay icon in the music controls and choose your AirPods.
- If they're connected to another device, such as an iPad, a Mac or a family member's phone, they may have switched there (Chapter 8).
- Make sure your iPhone is up to date: **Settings** > **General** > **Software Update**.
- Still stuck? Reset them and pair again.

Sound is quiet or muffled

- Clean the speaker mesh. This fixes more muffled AirPods than anything else.

- On AirPods Pro, try a different ear tip size and run the Ear Tip Fit Test (Chapter 9).
- Check **Reduce Loud Audio** in **Settings** > **Sounds & Haptics** > **Headphone Safety**. It may be capping the volume.
- Check whether Headphone Accommodations or the Equalizer is set in a way you don't like.

Sound cuts in and out

- Keep your iPhone closer. A phone in a back pocket or across the house can lose the signal, especially through walls.
- Microwave ovens and some Wi-Fi equipment can interfere. Move away from them.
- Turn off Bluetooth for things you're not using, such as an old speaker.

They keep pausing or switching

- **Automatic Ear Detection** pauses your audio when an earbud leaves your ear. If it's pausing at random, clean the earbuds; skin oil on the sensor can confuse it.
- If sound keeps jumping to another device, set **Connect to This iPhone** to **When Last Connected to This iPhone** (Chapter 8).

> **TIP**
>
> **Check Apple's status before you panic**
>
> If a new feature like Live Translation or the Hearing Aid simply doesn't appear, the cause is usually firmware or iOS that hasn't updated yet. Check both (Chapter 24) before resetting anything.

CHAPTER 27

Resetting Your AirPods

A reset erases your AirPods' pairing and settings and returns them to factory condition. It's the next step when the fixes in Chapter 26 don't help, and it's what you should do before giving AirPods away. You'll pair them again afterward, which takes a minute.

Step one, for every earbud model

1. Put your AirPods in the case and close the lid. Wait 30 seconds.
2. Open the lid.
3. On your iPhone, go to **Settings** > **Bluetooth** and tap the **More Info** button next to your AirPods.
4. Tap **Forget This Device**, then tap again to confirm.

Then, for AirPods 4, AirPods 5 and AirPods Pro 3 (no button)

1. With the lid open, double-tap the front of the case while the status light is on.
2. Double-tap again when the light flashes white.
3. Double-tap a third time when the light flashes faster.
4. When the light flashes amber and then white, the reset is done. Hold the open case near your iPhone to pair again.

Or, for AirPods 2 and 3, AirPods Pro and Pro 2 (with a setup button)

1. With the lid open, press and hold the setup button on the back of the case for about 15 seconds.
2. When the light flashes amber and then white, let go.
3. Hold the open case near your iPhone to pair again.

AirPods Max

Charge AirPods Max to at least 50 percent first.

- **To restart** (try this first): press and hold the listening mode button and the Digital Crown together until the light flashes amber.
- **To reset**: press and hold both for about 15 seconds, until the light flashes amber and then white. Then pair again.

HEADS UP

Before you give AirPods away or sell them

Reset them, and also remove them from your Apple Account: in the **Find My** app, tap **Devices**, tap the AirPods, then **Remove This Device**. Otherwise they stay linked to you and the new owner may not be able to set them up properly.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple Support on November 2026

The reset steps for each model, including the three double-taps on button-less cases and the AirPods Max restart and reset, match Apple's reset articles updated October 2026.

CHAPTER 28

Lost One? Replacements, Warranty and AppleCare

Losing a single AirPod is so common that Apple has a process for it. You don't have to buy a whole new set.

Replacing a lost or broken earbud or case

1. Find your serial number first (Chapter 3). If you still have the case, it's under the lid.
2. Go to Apple's support site, **getsupport.apple.com**, or open the **Apple Support** app, and choose AirPods.
3. Choose the problem, such as a lost or damaged left or right AirPod or case, and follow the steps to order a replacement.
4. Or make an appointment at an Apple Store or an Apple Authorized Service Provider and bring what you have.
5. When the replacement arrives, put both earbuds in the case and pair them again, the same way as new.

If the problem isn't covered by Apple's warranty, AppleCare or consumer law, such as a lost earbud, Apple charges an out-of-warranty fee. The fee depends on the model. Check the current price on Apple's AirPods service page before you order, so there are no surprises.

HEADS UP

Mixing pieces

Replacement earbuds must match your model, and each case only works with its own model of earbud. For example, a charging case for AirPods 5 won't charge AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case earbuds, and vice versa. Be careful buying single earbuds from other sellers online; they may be the wrong model, used, or fake.

The warranty

New AirPods come with Apple's one-year limited warranty, which covers manufacturing defects. It doesn't cover loss, theft or accidental damage like a trip through the washing machine.

AppleCare+ and AppleCare One

AppleCare+ is Apple's optional extended coverage. For AirPods, Apple says AppleCare+ includes coverage for accidents like drops and spills, battery replacement service and priority support. Theft and loss protection is included on eligible products. In some places Apple also offers **AppleCare One**, a monthly plan that covers several of your Apple products together.

- Prices and terms change. Check the current cost at **apple.com/applecare** or in the Apple Store app before you decide.
- You can usually add AppleCare+ within a limited time after purchase. Ask at checkout.
- To see whether your AirPods are covered right now, enter the serial number at Apple's coverage page, **checkcoverage.apple.com**.

FROM BILL

Is AppleCare+ worth it?

It depends on you. If you tend to misplace small things, or you're buying AirPods Pro or AirPods Max, the coverage can pay for itself with one mishap. If you're careful and buying the $129 AirPods 5, you might do just as well setting the money aside. I'm glad to talk it through. $49 remote · $99 in your home.

GOOD TO KNOW

Checked against Apple on November 2026

Apple's cleaning and lost-AirPods articles confirm the replacement process and out-of-warranty fee. AppleCare+ and AppleCare One coverage descriptions come from Apple's AirPods 5 announcement, September 2026. Current fees and plan prices weren't confirmed for this guide, so check Apple's pages.

CHAPTER 29

Fake AirPods and Other Scams

Because AirPods are so popular, fake ones are everywhere. Fakes can look almost identical in photos, and some are good enough copies to fool you at first glance. But they sound worse, the battery dies quickly, they can't get Apple's updates, they lack the hearing features, and some have poorly made batteries. Here's how to protect yourself and your gift budget.

Where fakes come from

- Online marketplaces and social media "deals," such as Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist and auction sites.
- Third-party sellers on big shopping sites, even when the listing says "genuine."
- Pop-up ads and websites made to look like Apple's, with prices that seem too good to be true.
- Strangers in parking lots or flea markets selling "sealed" boxes.

SCAM ALERT

If the price is far below Apple's, assume it's fake

Apple sells AirPods 5 for $129, AirPods Pro 3 for $249 and AirPods Max 2 for $549. Real sales at major stores knock off a modest amount. A "brand-new AirPods Pro 3" for $40 is not a deal; it's a counterfeit, or a scam where nothing arrives at all.

Buy from safe places

- Apple itself: an Apple Store, apple.com or the Apple Store app.
- Well-known retailers selling the item themselves, such as Best Buy, Target, Walmart, Costco or your wireless carrier's store. On big shopping websites, check that the item is "sold by" the store itself, not a third-party seller.
- Apple's own Certified Refurbished section at apple.com, if you'd like to save money on an older model.

Signs you may have fakes

- The model number on the earbuds isn't on Apple's list (Chapter 3), or the left and right numbers don't match the case.

- Your AirPods settings page is missing features your model should have, such as Hearing Health on AirPods Pro 2 or 3.
- They never receive firmware updates, or the version number doesn't match Apple's list (Chapter 24).
- Printing on the box or case is blurry or misspelled, or the box feels flimsy.
- They don't appear in the Find My app.

Check the serial number with Apple

1. Find the serial number in **Settings** > your AirPods > **About**, or under the case lid.
2. On a computer or phone, type **checkcoverage.apple.com** into the address bar yourself.
3. Enter the serial number and the verification code shown, then submit.
4. Apple shows the product name and its warranty status. Make sure the product matches what you were sold.

HEADS UP

A good serial number doesn't prove everything

Counterfeiters sometimes copy real serial numbers onto fake boxes. Check the serial shown in your iPhone's Settings, not just the one on the box, and look at the other signs above too. When in doubt, take them to an Apple Store and ask.

Other AirPods scams to know

- **Fake "you've won AirPods" messages and surveys:** they want your card number for "shipping." Delete them.
- **Fake Apple support calls and texts:** Apple won't call you out of the blue about your AirPods or ask for your Apple Account password or a gift card. Hang up and call Apple yourself at the number on apple.com.
- **Fake look-alike websites:** copycat shop pages can look exactly like apple.com. Check the address bar; it should read apple.com and nothing else before the slash.

FROM BILL

Got a pair you're not sure about?

If you bought AirPods online and something feels off, I can look them over with you and check them against Apple's records. Call or text (330) 200-8042. $49 remote · $99 in your home. Our Spotting and Avoiding Scams manual covers many more of these tricks.

PART 7

Help and Quick Reference

When it's worth calling for help, a cheat sheet of every press and setting, a place to write down your own details, and a short glossary of AirPods words.

CHAPTER 30

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But some jobs are simply easier with a second set of hands and eyes, and there's no shame in asking. Here's when a call is worth it.

Good reasons to call

- You'd like the **Hearing Test and Hearing Aid** set up and explained, with someone there to help you fine-tune the adjustments and Control Center shortcuts.
- Your AirPods won't pair, keep disconnecting, or one side has gone quiet and the fixes in Chapter 26 didn't help.
- You're setting up AirPods as a **gift** for a parent or grandparent and want them ready to go, named, updated and connected to their phone, TV and iPad.
- You've lost an AirPod and want help with Find My, Lost Mode or ordering a replacement through Apple.
- You think you may have bought **fake AirPods** or got a suspicious message about them.

What working with me is like

I've spent more than 30 years working with technology professionally, and I help people across Portage County, Ohio, both in person and remotely. I go at your pace, I explain what I'm doing as I do it, and I leave you with notes so you can do it yourself next time.

Remote help works well for most AirPods questions, since I can talk you through the steps on your iPhone while you watch. **In-home help** is best when several devices are involved, such as your AirPods, TV and iPad all at once, or when you'd simply rather have someone at the table with you.

FROM BILL

Call, text or book online

Call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. Help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. My AI receptionist, Sophie, may answer the main line and can help you find a time.

— Bill

CHAPTER 31

Cheat Sheet

Print this page and keep it handy near where you charge your AirPods.

Earbud stem presses

Do this	To do this
Press once	Play or pause · answer a call · mute and unmute during a call
Press twice	Next song · decline or end a call
Press three times	Previous song
Press and hold	Change listening mode, or Siri (your choice)
Press and hold both stems	Start Live Translation (supported models)
Swipe the stem	Volume (AirPods Pro 2, Pro 3, AirPods 5 with Wireless Charging Case)

AirPods Max

Do this	To do this
Turn the Digital Crown	Volume
Press the Digital Crown	Once: play or pause · twice: next · three times: previous
Press and hold the Digital Crown	Siri
Listening mode button	Switch modes · press and hold on Max 2 for Live Translation

Where things are

To find	Go to
All AirPods settings	Settings > your AirPods' name (near the top)
Model, serial, firmware	Settings > Bluetooth > More Info > About
Switch listening mode	Control Center > touch and hold volume > Listening Mode
Hearing Test & Hearing Aid	Settings > your AirPods > Hearing Health
Live Listen	Control Center > Hearing > Live Listen
Headphone Accommodations	Settings > Accessibility > Audio & Visual
Volume limit	Settings > Sounds & Haptics > Headphone Safety > Reduce Loud Audio
Read messages aloud	Settings > Notifications > Announce Notifications

To find	Go to
Find them	Find My app > Devices > your AirPods
Battery options	Settings > your AirPods > Battery

Pairing mode and reset

Task	How
Pair: AirPods 4, 5, Pro 3	Lid open, double-tap front of case until light flashes white
Pair: older AirPods, Pro, Pro 2	Hold setup button on back about 5 seconds
Pair: AirPods Max	Hold listening mode button about 5 seconds
Reset: AirPods 4, 5, Pro 3	Forget device, then double-tap the front three times as the light changes
Reset: with setup button	Forget device, then hold the button about 15 seconds
Reset: AirPods Max	Hold listening mode button and Digital Crown about 15 seconds

Keep this handy

Item	Write it here
My AirPods model	_____
Model number (A....)	_____
Serial number	_____
Date bought and where	_____
AppleCare+ until	_____
Apple Account email	_____
Ear tip sizes (left / right)	_____
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

CHAPTER 32

AirPods Words, Explained

Short, plain definitions of the words you'll meet in this guide and on your screen.

Word	What it means
Adaptive	A listening mode that blends Noise Cancellation and Transparency automatically.
ANC	Active Noise Cancellation. Microphones and a matching opposite sound cancel outside noise.
Apple Account	Your Apple sign-in (email and password). Apple used to call it your Apple ID.
Audiogram	A chart of your hearing at different pitches, from a hearing test.
Bluetooth	The short-range wireless connection AirPods use to talk to your phone.
Case	The charging case. It holds a battery that recharges your AirPods.
dBHL	Decibels hearing level, the unit for hearing test results. Lower is better.
Digital Crown	The dial on AirPods Max for volume and playback.
Firmware	The software inside the AirPods themselves. It updates automatically.
Find My	Apple's app and network for locating lost devices, including AirPods.
Force sensor	The pressure-sensitive spot on the stem that you squeeze.
IP rating	A code for dust and water resistance. IP57 resists more than IP54.
Listening mode	Apple's name for noise settings: Noise Cancellation, Transparency, Adaptive or Off.
MagSafe	Apple's magnetic wireless charging. AirPods Pro 2 and Pro 3 cases snap onto it.
Pairing	Introducing AirPods to a device so they remember each other.
Qi	The common wireless charging standard, pronounced "chee."
Spatial Audio	Surround-style sound that seems to come from around you.
Transparency	A listening mode that lets outside sound in so you stay aware.
USB-C	The small oval charging plug on current AirPods cases and newer iPhones.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

You made it

That's everything. You now know more about AirPods than most people who own them. Keep this guide handy, come back to it whenever you need it, and enjoy the music, the calls and the quiet.