BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Apple Home, HomePod & Apple's Home Hub

The Home app, HomePod, HomeView, Apple TV and your smart-home gadgets — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for families and grandparents

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For iOS 27, HomePod software 27 & tvOS 27 · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to Apple's smart home: the **Home** app on your iPhone, the HomePod speakers, Apple TV and Apple's new HomeView display, and the lights, locks, plugs and cameras that work with them. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Every feature comes with what it actually does *for you*, and slow, step-by-step directions. Apple moves buttons around from time to time, so when one has moved, look for the same words nearby.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What Apple Home is, the handful of words you'll see over and over, and what you need before you begin. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you have an iPhone and you've wondered whether you could turn on the porch light from your chair, hear a smoke alarm while you're out, or let the grandkids in without hiding a key under the mat — this guide is for **you**. Apple builds all of that into a free app that's already on your iPhone, called **Home**.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help families here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything you don't need.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain, in plain words, what the Home app does and what a **home hub** is — and why you need one.
- Walk you through setting up a **HomePod** or **HomePod mini**, step by step.
- Give you an honest, checked look at Apple's new home devices from fall 2026: **HomeView**, the new **HomePod mini** and the new **Apple TV 4K**.
- Show you how to add lights, plugs, locks and cameras, and how to read the labels on the box.
- Help you build simple **scenes** and **automations** that do things for you.
- Show you how to share your home with family — safely — and give a guest a door code.
- Fix the most common problem of all: an accessory that says **No Response**.

The big promise: you can't break anything

Almost everything in this guide can be undone. If an automation turns the lights on at the wrong time, you change the time or switch it off. If you add a lamp to the wrong room, you move it. If something really gets tangled, an accessory can be removed and added again. Go slowly, and you'll be fine.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

A smart home isn't about gadgets. It's about small comforts and a little more safety: lights that come on before you walk into a dark house, a door you can check from bed, an alert on your phone if a smoke alarm goes off while you're at church. Apple's version keeps all of it in one app, on the iPhone you already know.

GOOD TO KNOW

You don't need everything at once

Many people start with one HomePod mini and one smart plug, and add things over months or years. That's the right way to do it. This guide is written so you can stop at any point and still have something useful.

And I'm only a phone call away

If anything here leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question.

Let's start with what Apple Home actually is.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Apple Home Is & the Words You'll See

Apple Home is Apple's name for its smart-home system. You control it with the **Home** app (the icon is an orange-and-white house) on your iPhone, iPad, Mac or Apple Watch, and with Siri. The gadgets it controls — lights, plugs, locks, thermostats, cameras, blinds — are called **accessories**.

The words, in plain English

Word	What it means
Home app	The free Apple app that shows and controls everything in your home.
Accessory	Any smart gadget in the Home app: a bulb, a plug, a lock, a camera, a sensor.
Home hub	An Apple device that stays at home, plugged in, and runs things while you're away: a HomePod, HomePod mini, Apple TV or HomeView. Chapter 4 explains it.
HomeKit	Apple's older name for the system. You'll still see "Works with Apple Home" or HomeKit on many boxes.
Matter	A shared smart-home language agreed on by Apple, Amazon, Google, Samsung and others. A Matter gadget can work with Apple Home even if it was made for another system.
Thread	A low-power wireless network many newer gadgets use to talk to each other. It needs a Thread-capable home hub, such as a HomePod mini.
Setup code	The code (often a QR code) printed on an accessory or its box. You scan it once to add the accessory.
Room	A label you give accessories, such as Kitchen or Bedroom, so you can say "turn off the kitchen lights."
Scene	Several accessories set at once with one tap or one sentence — "Good Night" turns off the lamps and locks the door.
Automation	Something the Home app does on its own: at a time, when you arrive, or when a sensor notices something.
Owner / shared user	The person who created the home is the owner. Family you invite are shared users; you choose what they can do.

GOOD TO KNOW

HomeKit, Apple Home — same thing

Apple has slowly renamed HomeKit to Apple Home. If a box says "Works with Apple Home," "Works with HomeKit" or shows the Matter logo, it can be added to the Home app. Chapter 11 has more on reading the box.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You don't need to memorize any of this. But knowing these few words makes Apple's own help pages — and the boxes in the store — much less puzzling. Come back to this list whenever a word trips you up.

CHAPTER 3

What You Need Before You Begin

Apple Home is free. There's no subscription for the basics. Here's what you need to get going.

The short list

- **An iPhone or iPad** with up-to-date software. In November 2026 the current versions are **iOS 27** and **iPadOS 27**. (Apple's HomePods run **HomePod software 27** and Apple TV runs **tvOS 27**.)
- **An Apple Account** (Apple's new name for what used to be called your Apple ID), signed in on the iPhone, with iCloud turned on.
- **Home Wi-Fi** that you know the name and password of.
- **A home hub** — a HomePod, HomePod mini, Apple TV or HomeView that stays at home. Not strictly required to switch on a lamp from the couch, but you'll want one for almost everything else.

The "new Home architecture" — what it means for you

In 2022 Apple rebuilt the inside of Apple Home to make it faster and more reliable. Apple calls this the **new Home architecture**, and for a few years homes could choose when to upgrade. That choice is over: Apple says support for the previous version of Apple Home ended on **February 10, 2026**. If your home hasn't been upgraded, the Home app will ask you to update it.

- Every Apple device that uses your home needs at least iOS 16.2, iPadOS 16.2, macOS 13.1, tvOS 16.2 or watchOS 9.2. Older devices lose access to the home until they're updated.
- An **iPad can no longer be your home hub**. You can still use the Home app on an iPad to control everything — it just can't be the device that runs things while you're away.
- Sharing your home with others and getting Home notifications now need a home hub.

HEADS UP

"Software Update Required" or "Home Hub Required"

If you see one of these messages on your iPhone or iPad, Apple is telling you either that a device needs updating or that your home has no hub. Update the device in **Settings** > **General** > **Software Update**, and see Chapter 4 about hubs.

How to check your iPhone's software

1. Open **Settings**.
2. Tap **General**, then **Software Update**.
3. If an update is offered, plug the phone in, connect to Wi-Fi and tap **Update Now**.
4. Do the same on your iPad, and update your Apple TV and HomePods too (Chapter 6 shows how).

TIP

Owner first

Decide who in the family will be the **owner** of the home — usually whoever sets it up. Only the owner can add HomePods, Apple TVs and HomeView to the Home app. Everyone else can be invited later (Chapter 19).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Ten minutes of updates now saves an hour of puzzling later. Most "it won't work" problems in Apple Home turn out to be one device that's a few versions behind.

PART 2

The Home Hub

The one device that keeps your smart home running while you're away — which Apple devices can do the job, Apple's new home devices for fall 2026, and how to tell your hub is working.

CHAPTER 4

Home Hubs Explained

Your iPhone leaves the house with you. So who turns the porch light on at sunset when you're at your daughter's for dinner? That's the job of a **home hub**: an Apple device that stays at home, plugged in and on your Wi-Fi, and quietly runs your smart home in the background.

What a home hub does for you

- **Control from anywhere.** Check the front door or turn off a lamp while you're away.
- **Automations.** Lights at sunset, the heat turned down when everyone leaves.
- **Sharing.** Let family control the home, and get Home notifications.
- **Security cameras.** HomeKit Secure Video recording (Chapter 14).
- **Adaptive Lighting** on bulbs that support it, so light warms up toward evening.
- **Matter and Thread accessories** — many need a hub to work properly.

Which Apple devices can be a home hub

Device	Hub?	Thread?	Notes
HomePod mini	Yes	Yes	Becomes a hub automatically when set up.
HomePod mini (2nd generation, new fall 2026)	Yes	Check specs	Becomes a hub automatically when set up.
HomePod (2nd generation)	Yes	Yes	Becomes a hub automatically when set up.
Apple HomeView (new, fall 2026)	Yes	Check specs	Becomes a hub automatically when set up.
Apple TV 4K	Yes	Most models	Becomes a hub when you add it to a room in the Home app.
Apple TV HD	Yes	No	Older model; works as a hub but can't run Thread gadgets.
iPad	**No**	No	No longer a hub under the new Home architecture. Still fine for control.

GOOD TO KNOW

More than one hub is fine

If you have two HomePods and an Apple TV, they all act as hubs. One is in charge at a time, and if it's unplugged, another takes over on its own. You don't have to choose.

HEADS UP

Not every Apple TV 4K has Thread

Apple lists Apple TV 4K among the Thread hubs, but not every Apple TV 4K model includes Thread. If you plan to buy Thread gadgets and your only hub is an Apple TV, check that model's tech specs on Apple's website — or add a HomePod mini. The same goes for the brand-new devices: check the tech specs for the word Thread.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One small HomePod mini on a kitchen shelf is enough to turn "a few gadgets I control from my phone" into a home that runs itself and that you can check from anywhere.

CHAPTER 5

Apple's New Home Devices for Fall 2026

On October 13, 2026, Apple announced three new home devices: a home display called **Apple HomeView**, a new **HomePod mini**, and a new **Apple TV 4K**. Here is what Apple itself says about each, as of November 2026. Prices are U.S. prices from Apple; stores may differ.

Apple HomeView — Apple's first home display

HomeView is a **7-inch** touch screen with a speaker and a camera, made to sit in the kitchen or hang by the door. Apple says it went on sale on **November 13, 2026**, for **$299** (U.S.).

What	What Apple says
Two versions	**Tabletop**, which sits on a domed speaker base (four colors), and **wall-mounted**, in space gray or silver. Both $299.
Wall version	Needs a wall mount and power, sold separately. Apple says the mounts start at $59.95 (as of November 2026). The tabletop version includes its cable and power adapter.
Home control	Touch or voice control of lights, thermostat, locks and blinds; a camera view that can show up to nine camera feeds at once.
FaceTime	Hands-free FaceTime video calls with a 12-megapixel Center Stage camera that keeps people in the frame.
Family	Recognizes up to six people by face and voice, and shows each person's own calendar, reminders and messages — only when that person's paired iPhone or iPad is nearby and recently unlocked.
Siri	Runs **Siri AI**, Apple's new Siri, which Apple still labels **beta** (HomeView software 27.2), in English in the U.S. and several other countries.
Home hub	Yes — it becomes a home hub automatically when you set it up.

GOOD TO KNOW

Personal features need a newer iPhone

Apple says the personal side of HomeView — your own calendar, messages and so on — needs a paired iPhone or iPad that supports Apple Intelligence, with Siri AI turned on. Home control and FaceTime don't depend on that. If your iPhone is several years old, ask before you buy.

HomePod mini (2nd generation)

- Apple announced it on October 13, 2026; it went on sale **October 30, 2026**, for **$149** (U.S.).
- Five colors: white, midnight, blue, green and pink.
- Runs HomePod software 27.2. Apple says **Siri AI will come to it in a later software update** — it isn't there at launch. Until then it uses the familiar Siri.
- Listens for smoke and CO alarms with Sound Recognition (Chapter 18), and works as a home hub.

Apple TV 4K (4th generation)

- Announced October 13, 2026; available **November 13, 2026**. Apple lists it at **$299** (U.S.), as of November 2026.
- A faster chip (A19), and **Siri AI** in beta with tvOS 27.2. Apple says Siri AI on Apple TV also comes to Apple TV 4K (2nd generation) and later, and needs the home's owner to have an iPhone or iPad that supports Apple Intelligence.
- Apple says the new Apple TV 4K can work with HomePod mini (2nd generation) or HomePod (2nd generation) speakers as a four-speaker home theater.

TIP

Do you need to upgrade?

Probably not. An original HomePod mini, a HomePod (2nd generation) or a recent Apple TV 4K still works as a home hub and still gets software updates. Buy new because you want a feature — the HomeView screen, say — not because you think the old one stopped counting.

SCAM ALERT

Watch for fake "HomeView" deals

New products bring fake ads and look-alike websites offering them at a big discount, or "free" for a survey. Buy from Apple, or a store you already know. If the price looks too good, it isn't real.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You'll know what's actually on the shelf this fall — and what's still "coming later" — before you spend a penny.

CHAPTER 6

Setting Up Your Home Hub & Checking It

Good news: in most homes the hub sets itself up. Here's what to do for each kind, and how to make sure it's doing its job.

HomePod, HomePod mini or HomeView

These become a home hub automatically when you set them up with the iPhone of the home's owner. Chapter 7 walks through HomePod setup. There's nothing extra to switch on.

Apple TV

1. On the Apple TV, make sure you're signed in with the **same Apple Account** as the home's owner.
2. On your iPhone, open **Home** and make sure the Apple TV appears in a room. Apple says the Apple TV becomes a home hub when it's added to a room in the Home app.
3. Leave the Apple TV plugged in. It can be "asleep" and still act as a hub.

GOOD TO KNOW

Only the owner can add hubs

Apple says only the owner of the home can add a HomePod, HomeView or Apple TV to the Home app. If a family member set up the speaker on their own iPhone, it went into *their* home, not yours.

How to check that your hub is working

1. Open the **Home** app.
2. Tap the **More** button (three dots in a circle), then **Home Settings**.
3. Look for **Home Hubs & Bridges**. Your hubs are listed there; one should say **Connected**, and the others **Standby**.
4. If nothing is listed, or it says **Not Responding**, see Chapter 23.

TIP

Keep the hub on good Wi-Fi

A hub tucked behind the TV in the basement may have weak Wi-Fi. A spot near the middle of the house, with a strong signal, makes everything respond faster.

Keep your hubs updated

HomePods update through the Home app: **More** > **Home Settings** > **Software Update**, where you can turn on automatic updates. An Apple TV updates itself from **Settings** > **System** > **Software Updates** on the TV.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Two minutes of checking means your automations run on time, your cameras record, and family can reach the home from anywhere — without you having to wonder why something didn't happen.

PART 3

HomePod & Siri

Setting up a HomePod or HomePod mini, pairing two for stereo, using a HomePod as the TV's speaker, talking to Siri, and calling the family to dinner with Intercom.

CHAPTER 7

Setting Up a HomePod or HomePod mini

Setting up a HomePod takes about five minutes, and your iPhone does most of the work. You'll need an iPhone or iPad — Apple says you can't set up a HomePod with a Mac.

Before you start

- Update your iPhone (Chapter 3).
- Turn on **Bluetooth** and **Wi-Fi** on the iPhone, and make sure the iPhone is on your home Wi-Fi.
- Use the iPhone of the person who will own the home.
- Choose a spot on a firm surface, near an outlet, where you'll talk to it.

Step by step

1. Plug the HomePod in. Wait until you see a slow white light on top — that means it's ready.
2. Unlock your iPhone and hold it right next to the HomePod.
3. When a setup card appears on the iPhone, tap **Set Up**.
4. Pick the room the HomePod is in, and follow the rest of the onscreen steps. Your iPhone shares your Wi-Fi and Apple Account settings with it.
5. When Siri greets you, you're done. Try: "Siri, what's the weather today?"

> **TIP**
>
> **If the setup card doesn't appear**
>
> Lock your iPhone and unlock it again, still right next to the HomePod. Still nothing? Open **Home**, tap the **Add** button (+), tap **Add Accessory**, then **More options**, and choose the HomePod from the list of nearby accessories.

Settings worth a look afterward

In the Home app, touch and hold the HomePod's tile, then scroll down and tap the settings (gear) button. Here you can rename the speaker, move it to another room, and set things like **Recognize My Voice** (so Siri knows who's asking) and **Personal Requests** (so it can read you your messages or reminders). Leave the rest alone until you're comfortable.

STAY SAFE

Personal requests and visitors

If Personal Requests is on, someone standing near the HomePod may be able to ask it to read your messages or add to your calendar. In a home with frequent visitors or caregivers, think about whether you want that on.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A HomePod is a good speaker, a kitchen timer, a weather report, a music player and — most importantly — your home hub, all from one setup.

CHAPTER 8

Stereo Pairs & HomePod with Apple TV

Two HomePods can play together as a left and right pair, and a HomePod can be the speaker for your Apple TV. Both are set up in a few taps.

Make a stereo pair

You need **two HomePods of the same model** — two HomePod minis, or two HomePods (2nd generation) — in the same room.

1. Open **Home** and touch and hold one of the HomePods.
2. Scroll down and tap the settings (gear) button.
3. Tap the option to create a stereo pair (Apple calls it **Create Stereo Pair**) and choose the second HomePod.
4. Check that left and right are the right way around; you can swap them in the same place.
5. Tap **Back**, then **Done**.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **One speaker answers**
>
> Apple says that in a stereo pair, only one of the two HomePods answers Siri, plays alarms and works as the speakerphone. That's normal. To undo the pair, go back to the same settings; there's an option there to split the pair back into two speakers.

Use a HomePod as your TV's speaker

With an **Apple TV 4K (2nd generation or later)** and a TV that supports **HDMI ARC** or **eARC** (most TVs from the last several years do), your HomePod or stereo pair can play all the TV's sound — including the cable box or antenna.

1. Make sure the Apple TV and the HomePod are in the **same room** in the Home app.
2. On the Apple TV, open **Settings** > **Video and Audio** > **Audio Output**.
3. Choose your HomePod as the **Default Audio Output**.
4. Still in **Audio Output**, find **Audio Return Channel** and choose **Play Television Audio**. It says **On (ARC)** or **On (eARC)** when it's working.

TIP

If the HomePod won't show up as the default speaker

Apple's fix: put the HomePod and the Apple TV in the same room in the Home app, then try again. Some TVs also need ARC or eARC switched on in their own sound menu — check your TV's settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

The new four-speaker option

Apple says the new Apple TV 4K (4th generation) can use two pairs of HomePod mini (2nd generation) or HomePod (2nd generation) speakers as a four-speaker home theater. Nice, but not something you need to enjoy the TV.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Clearer dialog without a separate soundbar, and one less remote — the Apple TV remote controls the volume.

CHAPTER 9

Talking to Siri About Your Home

Once your accessories are in the Home app, you can control them by voice from a HomePod, HomeView, Apple TV, iPhone, iPad or Apple Watch. You don't need special words — just say what you want.

Things to try

- "Siri, turn on the living room lamp."
- "Siri, turn off all the lights."
- "Siri, set the thermostat to 70."
- "Siri, is the front door locked?"
- "Siri, lock the front door." (Siri may ask you to confirm on your iPhone first.)
- "Siri, good night." — runs a scene named Good Night, if you've made one (Chapter 16).

TIP

Name things the way you talk

If you call it "the lamp by my chair," name the accessory **Chair Lamp**. Names that are short and different from each other work best. Avoid two accessories named just "Light" in different rooms.

Siri AI and Siri Classic

In fall 2026 Apple began rolling out a new, more conversational Siri called **Siri AI**. Apple still labels it **beta**. On an iPhone you turn it on in **Settings** > **Siri** > **Try Siri AI (Beta)**; the older Siri, called **Siri Classic**, stays available. Here's where things stand for the home, as of November 2026:

Device	Siri AI status
HomeView	Runs Siri AI (beta).
Apple TV 4K	Siri AI (beta) with tvOS 27.2, on Apple TV 4K (2nd generation) and later.
HomePod mini (2nd generation)	Apple says Siri AI comes in a later software update.
Other HomePods	Apple hasn't said; they keep the familiar Siri.

Device	Siri AI status
Requirement	The home's owner needs an iPhone or iPad that supports Apple Intelligence, with Siri AI turned on, set to a supported language.

GOOD TO KNOW

Turning on lights works either way

Everyday home commands — lights, locks, thermostats, scenes — work with both versions of Siri. You don't need Siri AI to get the most out of this guide.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

When your hands are full, or getting up is hard, a sentence does the job. Many people find this the single most useful part of a smart home.

CHAPTER 10

Intercom: Announcements Around the House

Intercom lets you speak a message on one HomePod (or your iPhone) and have it play on the other HomePods in the house — like an old-fashioned intercom, without the wiring. It's on by default after your HomePods are updated.

Send a message

- To the whole house: "Siri, intercom: dinner's ready."
- To one room: "Siri, intercom to the bedroom: the car is here."
- From an iPhone, you can also ask Siri on the phone to send an intercom message.

Apple says intercom messages go to every HomePod in the home and to every iPhone, iPad and Apple Watch that has Intercom notifications turned on. When you send to one room, a reply goes back only to the device that sent the message.

Choose who gets intercom messages on their phone

1. Open **Home**, tap **More**, then **Home Settings**.
2. Tap **Intercom**.
3. Under notifications, choose **Never**, **When I'm Home** or **Anywhere**.
4. For iPhone notifications, **Location Services** needs to be on.

TIP

A gentle way to check in

If a parent or grandparent lives with you and has a HomePod in their room, a quick "Siri, intercom to the den: lunch in ten minutes" saves trips up and down the stairs.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Fewer shouts up the stairs, and an easy way for someone who doesn't walk as easily to stay in touch with the rest of the house.

PART 4

Adding Your Smart Gadgets

Choosing accessories that will work, adding them with their setup code, sorting them into rooms, and the special cases: security cameras and door locks.

CHAPTER 11

Buying Accessories That Will Work

The most common smart-home disappointment is a gadget that won't show up in the Home app. A minute reading the box prevents it.

Look for one of these on the box

Label	What it means for you
"Works with Apple Home"	Made and tested for the Home app. Adds directly.
"Works with HomeKit"	The older wording for the same thing.
Matter logo	Works with Apple Home and with other systems. Most Matter gadgets need a home hub.
Thread	A bonus, not a requirement: Thread gadgets respond quickly and are kind to batteries, but need a Thread-capable hub such as a HomePod mini.

HEADS UP

"Works with Alexa" alone isn't enough

A box that only says "Works with Alexa" or "Works with Google" — with no Matter logo and no Apple wording — usually won't appear in the Home app. If you're unsure, ask the store before you buy, or check the maker's website.

Good first accessories

- **A smart plug** — turns any lamp into a smart lamp. The easiest place to start.
- **Smart bulbs** — dimmable, some can change color.
- **A smart lock** or **video doorbell** — more involved; Chapter 15 covers locks.
- **A contact or motion sensor** — useful for automations, such as a hallway light at night.

TIP

Keep the box or the code

Every Apple Home or Matter accessory has a **setup code**, usually a QR code with numbers under it, on the gadget itself, on a card, or in the manual. Take a phone photo of it before you install anything. If you ever need to add it again, you'll be glad you did.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A minute with the label saves a trip back to the store — and the frustration of a gadget that "should" work but doesn't.

CHAPTER 12

Adding an Accessory to the Home App

Adding an accessory is mostly a matter of pointing your iPhone's camera at its setup code. Do it near the accessory, with your iPhone on your home Wi-Fi.

Step by step

1. Plug in or power on the accessory (put batteries in, screw in the bulb and switch the lamp on). Follow any first steps in its own instructions.
2. Open **Home** on your iPhone.
3. Tap the **Add** button (+), then **Add Accessory**.
4. Point the camera at the accessory's **QR code**, or hold the iPhone near it if it has an NFC tag.
5. No QR code? Tap the option to enter the code by hand. Apple Home codes are **8 digits**; Matter codes are **11 or 21 digits**.
6. Follow the prompts: give it a name, choose a room, and decide whether to show it in Favorites.
7. Tap **Done**. Try switching it on and off from the Home app.

If the gadget is already in another app

A Matter gadget you've already set up with Alexa, Google Home or the maker's app can usually be added to Apple Home too, without starting over. In the **other** app, look for an option to share or pair the device with another system; it gives you a new pairing code. Then in Apple's Home app, choose the option for an accessory that's already been paired with another app, and enter that code.

TIP

Some gadgets want their own app first

Many lights, cameras and locks ask you to install the maker's app first, then send you to the Home app. That's normal. Follow the box's instructions, and add it to Apple Home when the maker's app offers.

HEADS UP

It won't add?

Check it has power, is close to your iPhone and hub, and that your iPhone is on the home Wi-Fi (not a guest network). If it was used before, it may need a factory reset first — see its instructions. Chapter 22 has more.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once it's in the Home app, the gadget can be controlled by Siri, used in scenes and automations, and shared with your family — from one place, instead of a dozen apps.

CHAPTER 13

Rooms, Favorites & Everyday Control

The Home app is laid out like your house. Accessories are sorted into **rooms**, and the ones you use most can be pinned as **favorites** on the main screen.

Controlling an accessory

- **Tap** a tile to switch it on or off.
- **Touch and hold** a tile to see more: brightness, color, thermostat temperature, and the settings button at the bottom.
- Swipe down from the top right of the iPhone for **Control Center**; the Home controls can be added there for quick access.

Move an accessory to a different room

1. Touch and hold the accessory's tile.
2. Tap the settings (gear) button, or scroll down to its settings.
3. Tap **Room** and pick the right one. You can rename the accessory here too.

Add a room

Rooms are added from the Home app's Add (+) button or from Home Settings, depending on the version. Name them the way your family does — "Mom's Room," "Den," "Porch" — so Siri requests sound natural.

TIP

Show only what you use

In an accessory's settings you can choose whether it appears on the main Home screen. Hiding the garage-door sensor you never touch keeps the screen simple.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menus may look a little different

Apple rearranges the Home app every year or two. If a button isn't exactly where this chapter says, touch and hold the tile and look for the same words — Room, Name, Settings.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Well-named rooms make Siri easy ("turn off the porch") and make the app less cluttered for anyone who isn't comfortable with technology.

CHAPTER 14

Security Cameras & HomeKit Secure Video

Many cameras and video doorbells can show their live view in the Home app. Some also support **HomeKit Secure Video**, Apple's way of recording camera clips privately in iCloud.

What HomeKit Secure Video does

- Your home hub looks at the video at home to notice people, animals, vehicles and packages, and sends you a notification.
- Clips are encrypted and stored in iCloud. Apple says the recordings **don't count against** your iCloud storage.
- You watch clips in the Home app on your iPhone, iPad, Mac or Apple TV.

What you need

- A camera that says it supports HomeKit Secure Video.
- A home hub (Chapter 4).
- A paid **iCloud+** plan. The plan decides how many cameras can record:

iCloud+ plan	Cameras that can record	U.S. price (as of November 2026)
50 GB	1 camera	$0.99 a month
200 GB	Up to 5 cameras	$2.99 a month
2 TB and larger	Unlimited	From $9.99 a month

To check or change your plan: **Settings** > your name > **iCloud**. Prices can change; your iPhone always shows the current price before you pay.

Turning on recording for a camera

1. Add the camera to the Home app (Chapter 12).
2. Touch and hold the camera's tile, then open its settings.
3. Under recording options, choose when to **Stream & Allow Recording** — for example, only when nobody is home — and what kinds of activity to record.

STAY SAFE

Respect privacy

Point cameras at your own property, not into a neighbor's windows. Inside the house, tell family, guests and caregivers where cameras are. Turning off indoor cameras when you're home is easy to set in the same recording options.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can see who's at the door from anywhere, get a note when a package arrives, and keep recordings private — without a separate monthly camera subscription, if your iCloud plan covers it.

CHAPTER 15

Smart Locks & Home Key

A smart lock that works with Apple Home lets you lock and check the door from the Home app, from Siri, and — on supported locks — with a tap of your iPhone or Apple Watch, like paying at a store.

Adding a lock

Locks are added like any other accessory (Chapter 12), though most also ask you to install the lock maker's app first. Install the lock on the door completely, with fresh batteries, before you start.

Home Key in Apple Wallet

Some locks support **home key**. Apple says that when you pair a supported lock in the Home app, a home key is added to **Apple Wallet** on your iPhone automatically. To unlock, you hold your iPhone or Apple Watch near the lock.

TIP

Look for the home key wording

Not every Apple Home lock supports home key. The box or the maker's website will say so. Without it, you can still lock and unlock from the Home app and with Siri.

Access codes for visitors

For people who need temporary access — a dog walker, a cleaner, a grandchild visiting for the week — Apple says you can set up an **access code** in the Home app for locks with a keypad. Chapter 20 shows how to give someone guest access on a schedule.

HEADS UP

Keep a real key

Batteries run down, and phones get lost. Keep a physical key, or a keypad code, somewhere you can get to it. The Home app warns you when a lock's battery is low — don't ignore it.

STAY SAFE

Locks and Siri

For security, Siri usually asks you to unlock your iPhone or confirm before it will unlock a door. That's on purpose — it stops someone shouting "unlock the front door" through a window.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No more "did I lock the door?" halfway to the store. Open the Home app, look, and lock it from wherever you are.

PART 5

Making It Automatic

Scenes that set several things at once, automations that run on their own, and a HomePod that listens for your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

CHAPTER 16

Scenes: Several Things with One Tap

A **scene** is a saved set of accessory settings. "Good Night" might turn off every lamp, lock the front door and turn the thermostat down. You run it with one tap, or by saying its name to Siri.

Make a scene

1. Open **Home**.
2. Tap the **Add** button (+), then **Add Scene**.
3. Pick one of Apple's suggested scenes, or choose **Custom** and give it a name — something easy to say, like **Good Night** or **Movie Time**.
4. Tap **Add Accessories**, choose the accessories you want, and tap **Done**.
5. Touch and hold each accessory to set it the way you want — on, off, dimmed to 30 percent, locked.
6. Tap **Done**. If you see an option to test the scene, try it first.

Run a scene

- Tap its tile in the Home app.
- Say "Siri, good night" or "Siri, movie time."
- Use it inside an automation (Chapter 17), so it runs by itself.

TIP

Three scenes most homes like

Good Morning (kitchen lights on, heat up), **Leaving** (everything off, door locked), and **Good Night** (all off except a hallway light, door locked). Start with one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Locks and garage doors in scenes

Scenes that unlock a door or open a garage may ask you to confirm on your iPhone when you run them by voice. That's a safety feature, not a fault.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Bedtime goes from a walk around the house checking lamps and locks to one sentence from your pillow.

CHAPTER 17

Automations: Let the House Do It

An **automation** tells the Home app to do something on its own when something happens. Automations need a home hub (Chapter 4) — the hub is what actually runs them.

The four kinds of trigger

Trigger	What it means
People Arrive / People Leave	When you, or a family member, arrive home or leave. Uses your iPhone's location.
A Time of Day Occurs	At a set time, or at sunrise or sunset — which shift with the seasons on their own.
An Accessory Is Controlled	When something is switched — for example, when the front door is unlocked, turn on the hall light.
A Sensor Detects Something	When a motion, contact, leak or other sensor notices something.

Make an automation: porch light at sunset

1. Open **Home**, tap the **Add** button (+), then **Add Automation**.
2. Choose **A Time of Day Occurs**.
3. Choose **Sunset**, pick the days, and tap **Next**.
4. Choose the porch light (or a scene), and tap **Next**.
5. Set it to **On**. Tap **Done**.
6. Make a second automation to turn it off at, say, 11 p.m.

Arriving and leaving

For People Arrive and People Leave automations, your iPhone has to share its location with the Home app. Apple's steps: turn on **Share My Location** and make sure **My Location** is set to **This Device**. You can pick a particular person, a location and a time window.

> **TIP**
>
> **Where those location settings live**
>
> On most iPhones, they're under **Settings** > your name > **Find My**. If you share your location with family already, they're probably on.

TIP

Turn one off without deleting it

Open the Home app's **Automation** section, tap the automation, and switch it off. Handy when you're away for a week and don't want lights going on and off at the wrong times — or the opposite, if you do.

HEADS UP

Unlocking automations

Be careful with automations that unlock a door. A phone's location can be wrong by a block or two. Many people prefer to let the house *lock* by itself, and unlock by hand.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You never come home to a dark house, the porch light never stays on all day, and you stop having to remember the small stuff.

CHAPTER 18

Sound Recognition: Smoke & CO Alarm Alerts

Your HomePod can listen for the sound of a **smoke alarm** or **carbon monoxide alarm** going off, and send an alert to your iPhone, iPad or Apple Watch. If you're out, or in the garden, or hard of hearing, that's a real comfort.

Turn it on

1. Open **Home**, tap **More**, then **Home Settings**.
2. Tap **Safety & Security**.
3. Tap **Sound Recognition** and turn on **Smoke & CO Alarm**.
4. Choose which HomePods listen. Pick the ones nearest your alarms.

When an alert comes

- Apple says the alert stays in the Home app until the alarm sound stops.
- Tapping it lets you check in: the HomePod announces that someone is checking in, and you can use **Talk** to speak to whoever is at home.
- If you can't reach anyone and think there's a fire, call **911**.

Which HomePods can do it

Apple lists Sound Recognition for HomePod mini, HomePod mini (2nd generation) and HomePod (2nd generation). It needs the new Home architecture (Chapter 3), and every Apple device that uses the home should be on current software.

STAY SAFE

Not a replacement for real alarms

Apple is clear: Sound Recognition shouldn't be relied on in high-risk or emergency situations, and it isn't a monitored alarm service. Keep working smoke and CO alarms on every level, test them monthly, and replace them by their expiration date.

TIP

Test it once

Press the test button on a smoke alarm near a HomePod and see whether your iPhone gets the alert. Warn the household first.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

An ordinary, battery-powered smoke alarm can now reach your phone. You don't need to replace every alarm in the house to get a warning when you're away.

PART 6

Sharing Your Home

Inviting family to control the home, giving a visitor limited access on a schedule, seeing who unlocked the door, and keeping control in trusted hands.

CHAPTER 19

Inviting Family to Your Home

You can invite family members to share your home in the Home app. Each person uses their own iPhone and their own Apple Account — you never need to share your password.

Before you invite anyone

- You need a **home hub**. Apple says that on the latest version of Apple Home, a hub is required to share control. Without one, shared users can only control things while they're at your home, on your Wi-Fi and in range of the accessories.
- The person needs an iPhone or iPad with current software, signed in to their own Apple Account.

Send the invitation

1. Open **Home**. Tap the **Add** button (+), then **Add People**. (On some versions, it's under **More** > **Home Settings** > **Invite People**.)
2. Choose the role you want to give the person — a member of the household, or a **Guest** with limited access (Chapter 20).
3. Choose the person from your contacts, or type their Apple Account email, and send the invitation.
4. They'll get a notification on their iPhone. When they accept, your home appears in their Home app.

Choose what each person can do

Open **Home**, tap **More**, then **Home Settings**, and tap the person's name under **People**. The two switches that matter most:

Setting	What it does
Control Accessories Remotely	On: they can control things from anywhere. Off: only when they're at your home, on your Wi-Fi.
Add and Edit Accessories	On: they can add and remove accessories, scenes, automations and other people. Leave this off for most family members.

GOOD TO KNOW

What shared users can't do

Apple says shared users can't add a HomePod, Apple TV, or AirPlay TV or speaker to the home. Only the owner can. If a grandchild wants to add a HomePod to your home, the owner's iPhone has to do it.

TIP

A good setup for a parent's home

If you help an older parent, ask them to invite you with remote control on. You can then check the door, turn on a light, or see a camera from your own iPhone — while they stay the owner of their home.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Everyone in the house can say "Siri, turn off the lights" from their own phone, and grown children can keep a gentle eye on a parent's home from miles away.

CHAPTER 20

Guests & Activity History

Not everyone needs full access. A dog walker, a cleaner or a visiting grandchild might only need to open the front door, and only at certain times. That's what the **Guest** role is for.

What a guest can do

- Control only the **locks and security accessories** you choose.
- Only on your home's Wi-Fi — guest access works on the **local network**, not from far away.
- Only on the schedule you set: **anytime**, on **specific dates**, or on **specific days and times**.

Guest access needs iOS 18 or later. Apple says you can only choose the Guest role if your home has security-related accessories, such as a lock.

Give someone guest access

1. Open **Home**, tap **Add** (+), then **Add People**.
2. Choose **Guest**.
3. Choose which locks or security accessories they can use.
4. Set the schedule — for example, weekdays from 9 a.m. to noon for a cleaner.
5. Send the invitation.

> TIP
> **No iPhone? Use a keypad code**
> If your lock has a keypad, an access code (Chapter 15) is often simpler for a visitor than an invitation — especially for someone who doesn't have an iPhone.

Activity History: who unlocked the door, and when

For locks, garage doors, security systems and some sensors, the Home app can keep an **Activity History** — a list of when the door was unlocked, and by whom. Look for it at the bottom of the accessory's controls in the Home app.

- Owners and household members can see it; **guests can't**.
- Apple says it's **end-to-end encrypted**, so Apple can't read it.

- Entries are permanently deleted after **30 days**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can let the dog walker in on weekdays only, and see that they came at 10:15 — without hiding a key or making copies.

CHAPTER 21

Sharing Safely & Removing Someone

Access to your home app is access to your front door. A few simple habits keep it in the right hands.

Good habits

- Share your home **only with people you trust**, and give each one only what they need.
- Use **Guest** with a schedule for workers and short-term visitors.
- Leave **Add and Edit Accessories** off for everyone but one or two trusted adults.
- Look through the list of people every few months, and remove anyone who no longer needs access.
- Protect your Apple Account with a strong password and two-factor authentication. Whoever gets into your Apple Account can get into your home.

Remove someone

1. Open **Home**, tap **More**, then **Home Settings**.
2. Under **People**, tap the person's name.
3. Scroll down and tap **Remove Person** (or similar), and confirm.
4. If they had a keypad code, delete or change that code too, in the Home app or the lock's own app.

STAY SAFE

If a relationship has changed

After a divorce or breakup, or if someone has misused access, remove them from the home, change keypad codes, and change your Apple Account password. If you feel unsafe, contact local police, or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

SCAM ALERT

Nobody needs your Apple Account to "set up your home"

A real helper — me included — never needs your Apple Account password to add a gadget. If someone on the phone or online asks for it, or for the six-digit code Apple sends you, hang up. Apple's own text messages warn: never share that code.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Peace of mind that only the people you choose can open your door or watch your cameras — and that you can change your mind any time.

PART 7

When Things Go Wrong

The dreaded "No Response," a HomePod or hub that stops answering, and the scams that borrow Apple's name.

CHAPTER 22

An Accessory Says "No Response"

Sooner or later a tile in the Home app will say **No Response** (or **Not Responding**). It means the Home app can't reach that accessory right now. It almost never means it's broken. Work down this list in order, and stop when it's fixed.

First, the simple things

1. Is it switched on at the wall? A smart bulb in a lamp that's been switched off at the lamp, or a light switch flipped off, will always show No Response.
2. Are the batteries good? Locks and sensors go quiet when batteries run low.
3. Has the power or the internet been out? Give everything ten minutes to reconnect.

If one brand's gadgets have stopped

1. Restart that brand's **bridge** or hub, if it has one (for example, a lighting bridge), and your Apple home hub.
2. Open the maker's own app and check for a **firmware update** for the accessory.
3. For Thread gadgets, Apple suggests unplugging them (or taking out the batteries) for about **five minutes**, then waiting about **ten minutes** after you power them back on for the network to settle.
4. Still stuck? Remove the accessory from the Home app, reset it the way its instructions say, and add it again (Chapter 12).

If lots of different gadgets have stopped

1. Update your iPhone or iPad (**Settings** > **General** > **Software Update**).
2. Close the Home app and open it again.
3. Check your iPhone is on the **same Wi-Fi** as your accessories — not a guest network or cell data.
4. Restart in this order: your **modem and router**, then your **home hubs** (HomePods, Apple TV), then your iPhone or iPad.
5. If you use a **VPN** or a security app on your iPhone, try turning it off; Apple says these can get in the way.

HEADS UP

New router, new Wi-Fi name?

If you replaced your router or changed the Wi-Fi name or password, Wi-Fi accessories don't know about it. Each one may need to be reset and added again — or, much easier, set the new router up with the *old* Wi-Fi name and password.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most No Response problems are fixed by steps 1–3 of the first list, in under a minute. You'll know where to start, and when it's worth calling for help.

CHAPTER 23

HomePod or Home Hub Not Responding

If a HomePod itself won't answer, or the Home app says there's no hub, try these in order.

A HomePod that won't respond

1. Open **Home** and look for an alert at the top, or on the HomePod's tile. Apple says alerts often explain the problem — a Wi-Fi issue, or an Apple Account that needs signing in again.
2. Restart it from the Home app: touch and hold the HomePod, open its settings, and look for the option to restart it.
3. Or simply unplug it, wait ten seconds, and plug it back in.
4. If it still won't respond, reset it (below).

Reset a HomePod (last resort)

Resetting erases the HomePod's settings so you can set it up fresh. In the Home app: touch and hold the HomePod, open its settings, scroll to the bottom and choose **Reset HomePod**, then follow the prompts. If the HomePod doesn't show in the app, Apple's reset article describes a reset using the touch surface on top; look up "Reset HomePod" on support.apple.com.

Afterward, set it up again as in Chapter 7.

"Home Hub Required" or a hub that says Not Responding

1. Check **More** > **Home Settings** > **Home Hubs & Bridges** (Chapter 6).
2. Make sure the hub is plugged in, updated, and on your home Wi-Fi.
3. For an Apple TV, check that it's signed in with the owner's Apple Account and is in a room in the Home app.
4. Restart the hub. If you have more than one, restart them all.
5. If you only had an iPad as a hub, that no longer works — you'll need a HomePod, HomePod mini, Apple TV or HomeView (Chapter 4).

TIP

Write down what you tried

If you end up calling for help, a note like "restarted the router and the HomePod, still No Response on the porch light" saves a lot of time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A clear order of steps turns a frustrating evening into a ten-minute fix — and keeps you from resetting things that didn't need it.

CHAPTER 24

Scams & Safety Around Apple Home

Scammers love Apple's name, and smart-home gadgets give them new stories to tell. Here are the ones to watch for.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "Apple Support" calls and pop-ups

A call, text or pop-up says your Apple Account or your home has been "hacked" and gives you a number to call. Apple doesn't call out of the blue. Hang up, close the pop-up, and if you're worried, go to support.apple.com yourself or open the Apple Support app.

SCAM ALERT

Search-result "HomePod support" numbers

Searching "HomePod help" or "smart home setup help" can turn up paid ads for look-alike support lines that charge for useless repairs or ask to take control of your computer. Use support.apple.com, or the maker's own website printed on the box.

SCAM ALERT

Requests for your six-digit code

Anyone who asks you to read them a code Apple has just sent to your iPhone is trying to break into your Apple Account. Apple never asks for it. Neither will I.

SCAM ALERT

Gift cards for "repairs"

No real company asks to be paid in gift cards, ever. If someone says your HomePod or camera needs a "security fix" paid by gift card, it's a scam.

SCAM ALERT

Too-good deals on new Apple devices

Ads for brand-new HomeView displays or HomePods at half price usually lead to fake shops. Buy from Apple or a store you know.

Everyday safety

- Share your home only with people you trust (Chapter 21).
- Keep your iPhone locked with a passcode; the Home app is only as safe as the phone.
- Keep a physical key or keypad code for every smart lock.
- Keep traditional smoke and CO alarms working — Sound Recognition is an extra, not a replacement.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few habits — never call a number from a pop-up, never share a code — keep the people who prey on Apple customers out of your accounts and your home.

PART 8

Getting Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep by the HomePod.

CHAPTER 25

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Getting started** — setting up a HomePod as your hub, adding your first few gadgets, naming rooms the way you talk, and making a Good Night scene, all in one visit.
- **A smart lock** — fitting it to the door, adding it to the Home app, setting up home key and guest codes, and making sure you still have a real key.
- **Lots of No Response tiles** after a new router, a power outage or a move.
- **Setting up a parent's home** so you can help from your own iPhone, with the right permissions.
- **Deciding whether HomeView or a new HomePod is worth it** for your home, with no sales pitch.
- **Cameras and HomeKit Secure Video** — choosing the iCloud+ plan you actually need.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, explain what I'm doing in plain words, and never talk down to anyone. I'll tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money, and I don't sell gadgets. I've been doing this kind of work for more than 30 years, and I serve Portage County, Ohio, in person, and folks farther away by remote help.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is yours to keep for free; if you'd like a hand, I'm only a phone call away.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might be greeted by **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. A real person — me — does the actual help.

Thank you for reading. Take it one gadget at a time — a smart home is built a lamp at a time, not all in one weekend.

— Bill

CHAPTER 26

Your Apple Home Cheat-Sheet

Keep this near the HomePod or on the fridge. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
The app	**Home** on iPhone, iPad, Mac and Apple Watch. Free.
Home hub	HomePod, HomePod mini, Apple TV or HomeView, plugged in at home. iPad no longer counts.
Check the hub	Home > More > Home Settings > Home Hubs & Bridges.
Add a gadget	Home > Add (+) > Add Accessory > scan the code.
Make a scene	Home > Add (+) > Add Scene.
Make an automation	Home > Add (+) > Add Automation.
Invite family	Home > Add (+) > Add People. Guests: locks only, on a schedule.
Smoke & CO alerts	More > Home Settings > Safety & Security > Sound Recognition.
HomePod as TV speaker	Apple TV: Settings > Video and Audio > Audio Output.
No Response	Power, batteries, Wi-Fi; restart router, then hubs, then iPhone.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Home owner (whose Apple Account)	_____
My home hubs and where they are	_____
Wi-Fi name the accessories use	_____
Where I keep the setup-code photos	_____
Spare key / keypad code is kept	_____
People sharing my home	_____
iCloud+ plan (for cameras)	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Is it switched on at the wall, with good batteries?
2. Is your iPhone on your home Wi-Fi?
3. Is the home hub plugged in and showing Connected?
4. Restart the router, then the hubs, then the iPhone.
5. Check for updates on the iPhone, the HomePod and the accessory's own app.
6. Remove the accessory and add it again.
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

STAY SAFE

If an alarm goes off

If you get a smoke or CO alert and can't reach anyone at home, call 911. Don't wait to check the app first.