BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Your Car's Touchscreen & Bluetooth

Pairing your phone, calls, contacts and music, resets, updates and keeping your data private

A plain-English guide for every driver

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For iPhone & Android with most cars · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your manual for the screen in your dashboard and the Bluetooth link to your phone. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind. Every chapter explains what a feature does *for you*, with slow, step-by-step directions for iPhone and Android phones. Cars differ, so where the car's words vary, I've given you the usual ones. Do your setting-up with the car parked, and if a screen looks a little different in your car, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting to Know Your Car's Screen

What the screen in your dashboard really does, what Bluetooth is, and how to find your way around without feeling rushed. Start here, with the car safely parked.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you've ever sat in your driveway with the engine running, staring at the screen in the middle of your dashboard and wondering why your phone won't talk to it, this manual is for you. Maybe you bought a newer car and the radio now looks like a tablet. Maybe your phone connected beautifully last year and then, one day, simply stopped. Or maybe a family member set it all up and you'd like to understand it for yourself. Wherever you're starting, you're in the right place.

I'm Bill. I've spent 30+ years helping people make friends with their technology, and I've written this the way I'd explain it sitting in the passenger seat beside you: slowly, in plain English, one step at a time. When a new word comes up, I'll stop and explain it on the spot.

What this manual covers

- **Your car's own screen** — often called the touchscreen, the infotainment system, the head unit or the multimedia system. They all mean the same thing: the screen and buttons in the middle of the dashboard.
- **Bluetooth** — the invisible, wireless connection that lets your phone play through the car's speakers and lets you make calls without holding the phone.
- **Calls, contacts, text messages and music** through the car, and how to fix them when they misbehave.
- **Resets and software updates** for the car's system, explained honestly.
- **Safety, Ohio's hands-free law, privacy and scams** — the things that protect you and your information.

If your car offers Apple CarPlay or Android Auto (where your phone's own apps appear on the car screen), I've written a separate manual just for that, called *CarPlay & Android Auto*. This one focuses on the car's own system and plain Bluetooth, which nearly every car from the last fifteen years or so has, with or without CarPlay.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this manual does for you

By the end, you'll be able to connect your phone to your car, make and answer calls without touching the phone, see the right names when someone calls, play your own music, get things working again when they stop, and clear your personal information out of a car before you sell it or return a rental. Most of all, the screen in your dashboard will feel like a helper again instead of a puzzle.

The big promise: you can't break it

Here's the most important thing I'll tell you. **You can't damage your car by exploring its screen.** Every menu has a way back, and almost every car has a **Home** button (sometimes a little house, sometimes the word HOME, sometimes a button with the maker's logo) that takes you straight back to the main screen. The worst that can happen is that you end up somewhere unfamiliar and press Home.

There's one rule I'll repeat all through this manual, because it matters more than any button: **do the setting-up while the car is parked.** Many cars won't even let you open certain menus while the car is moving, and that's on purpose. A few calm minutes in the driveway saves a lot of fumbling on the road.

FROM BILL

You're never on your own

If you get stuck, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. We can often sort out a phone-and-car problem over the phone, or I can come out and work on it right in your driveway. There's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What the Touchscreen Actually Does

Not long ago, a car radio had a volume knob, a tuning knob and a row of buttons. Today, most cars combine the radio, the phone, the music, the camera for backing up and a handful of settings into one screen. Car makers give these systems their own brand names, which can make it feel like every car speaks a different language. Underneath, they all do the same few jobs.

The jobs almost every system does

What it's called on screen	What it does for you
Audio	AM and FM radio, often satellite radio (SiriusXM), and music from your phone over Bluetooth or a USB cable.
Phone	Hands-free calling through the car's speakers and microphone, your recent calls, your contacts, and on many cars, your text messages.
Settings	Screen brightness, the clock, sound adjustments, the list of paired phones, and the system's software updates.
Camera	The backup camera picture when you shift into Reverse. This comes on by itself.
Navigation	On some cars, a built-in map. Others rely on your phone's maps through CarPlay or Android Auto.
Vehicle info	On many cars: tire pressure, maintenance reminders, fuel economy and similar details.

Some of the names you might see

You don't need to memorize these. They simply help you search for help about your own car. If your owner's manual or the dealer uses one of these names, it's talking about the screen in your dashboard.

- **Ford and Lincoln:** SYNC (with a version number, such as SYNC 3 or SYNC 4).
- **Toyota:** Entune on older models; newer models call it the Audio Multimedia system.
- **Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep and Ram:** Uconnect.
- **Other makers** have their own names. The owner's manual will have a chapter on it, often called "Audio", "Multimedia" or "Infotainment".

GOOD TO KNOW

Touch, knob or both

Some cars are touch-only. Others also have a knob or a set of buttons near the gearshift, plus buttons on the steering wheel. They all reach the same menus. Use whichever feels most comfortable, and lean on the steering-wheel buttons once you're driving, because they keep your hands where they belong.

The buttons on your steering wheel

Most cars put the everyday controls right on the steering wheel, so you never have to reach for the screen while driving. The symbols are fairly standard:

Symbol you'll usually see	What it normally does
A telephone handset (often green)	Answers a call, or opens the phone menu
A handset pointing down (often red), or a slash	Ends or declines a call
A face with sound waves, or a microphone	Voice commands: the car's own, or your phone's assistant if you press and hold
Plus and minus, or a volume symbol	Volume up and down
Arrows pointing up and down, or left and right	Next or previous song or radio station
A speaker with a slash	Mutes the sound

Exact symbols vary, so take one quiet minute in the driveway to look at yours. Press each one with the car parked and watch what the screen does. It's the quickest lesson you'll ever get.

CHAPTER 3

Bluetooth in Plain English

Bluetooth is a short-range wireless connection between two gadgets that are close to each other, like your phone and your car, or your phone and a pair of earbuds. It doesn't use the internet and it doesn't use your cell phone data. It simply lets the two devices talk across a few feet of air.

Pairing, then connecting

There are two words you'll hear a lot, and the difference between them clears up most confusion:

The word	What it means
Pairing	The one-time introduction. You tell the phone and the car to trust each other. You do this once per phone, usually with the car parked, and you may be asked to confirm a matching number on both screens.
Connecting	What happens every time you get in the car after that. Once they're paired, the phone and car find each other on their own within a few seconds of starting the car, as long as the phone's Bluetooth is turned on.

So if your phone was paired last month but isn't connecting today, you usually don't need to start over. Something is just keeping them from shaking hands, and the fixes in Chapter 20 usually sort it out.

What Bluetooth carries between your phone and your car

Behind the scenes, Bluetooth has separate "lanes" for different jobs. You never have to set these up by name, but knowing they exist explains why calls can work while music doesn't, or why your contacts might be missing even though calls ring through.

The lane	What travels in it	Its technical name, if you ever see it
Phone calls	Your voice and the caller's voice	Hands-Free Profile (HFP)
Music and audio	Songs, podcasts, audiobooks, directions spoken by a map app	A2DP, with AVRCP for the skip and pause buttons
Contacts and call history	Copies of your phone's names and numbers, and recent calls	Phonebook Access Profile (PBAP)
Text messages	New texts, so the car can show or read them	Message Access Profile (MAP)

GOOD TO KNOW

Why the lanes matter to you

Each lane can be switched on or off separately, on the phone and sometimes on the car. If one job stops working while the others are fine, it's almost always that lane's switch, not a broken car. Chapter 9 shows you where those switches live.

Is Bluetooth safe?

For everyday use, yes. A phone and car only pair after both have agreed to it, usually by showing you the same number on both screens. The real privacy concern isn't someone snooping on the connection; it's the copy of your contacts and call history that stays in the car's memory. That matters most when the car leaves your hands, and Chapter 23 shows you how to clear it.

One more reassuring fact: Bluetooth only reaches a short distance. Your car can't reach your phone from across the house, which is also why your phone sometimes connects to the car while it's parked in the garage next to the kitchen. That's harmless, and Chapter 10 explains how to keep it from interrupting you.

CHAPTER 4

Your Car's Screen, CarPlay & Android Auto

This is the part that trips up the most people, so let's untangle it. A car screen can work in two quite different ways, and many newer cars can do both.

The two ways	What you see
The car's own system	The car's menus, made by the car maker. Your phone connects over Bluetooth and the car handles calls, contacts and music in its own way. This is what this manual covers.
Apple CarPlay or Android Auto	Your phone takes over the car screen and shows a simplified set of your phone's own apps: maps, music, messages and calls. It usually starts with a USB cable, and some cars do it wirelessly. My separate *CarPlay & Android Auto* manual covers this in detail.

How to tell which one you're looking at

- If the screen shows your phone's familiar app icons in a row or a grid, and a little "Home" or dashboard button in the corner, that's **CarPlay** (iPhone) or **Android Auto** (Android phone).
- If you see the car maker's own menus, with words like Audio, Phone, Media and Settings, you're in **the car's own system**.
- Many cars let you switch back and forth. In CarPlay or Android Auto, there's usually an icon with the car maker's logo or a word like "Exit" or "Return" that takes you back to the car's own menus.

TIP

Even with CarPlay, Bluetooth still matters

Wireless CarPlay and wireless Android Auto use Bluetooth to get started, and if you ever unplug from CarPlay, the car falls back to plain Bluetooth for calls and music. So the pairing, privacy and fix-it steps in this manual are worth knowing even if CarPlay is your everyday choice.

Apple itself recommends CarPlay as the best way to connect an iPhone when the car offers it, with Bluetooth or a USB cable as the fallback for cars that don't. Either way works. If you're happy with what you have, there's no need to change it.

CHAPTER 5

Finding Your Way Around the Screen

Every car's screen looks a little different, but they're laid out on the same idea: a home screen with a handful of large buttons, and each button opens its own set of choices. Here's how to explore yours without stress.

A calm first tour

1. Park the car somewhere comfortable, put it in **Park**, and set the parking brake.
2. Start the car (or turn it to the accessory position) and wait for the screen to finish starting up. Some screens show a safety message first. Read it and press **OK** or **I Agree**.
3. Find the **Home** button. It might be on the screen, beside it, or on the knob near the gearshift. Press it a few times and notice that it always brings you back to the same main screen.
4. Touch **Audio** or **Media**, look around, then press Home.
5. Touch **Phone**, look around, then press Home.
6. Touch **Settings** (often a gear symbol), look around, then press Home.

That's the whole trick: open one thing, look, go home. Once you've done this a couple of times, the screen stops feeling crowded.

Words that mean the same thing

Car makers don't all use the same words, so if my directions say **Settings** and your car says **Setup**, you're in the right place. Here are the common stand-ins:

If I say	Your car might say
Settings	Setup, Menu, System, Options, a gear symbol
Bluetooth	Connections, Devices, Phone, Connected Devices, Device Manager
Add a phone	Add Device, Pair New Device, Add Phone, Connect Phone, Add New, a plus sign
Media	Audio, Source, Entertainment, Music
Forget a phone	Delete, Remove, Unpair, Delete Device, a trash can symbol

TIP

The owner's manual is your friend

If you can't find something, look in the owner's manual's index under "Bluetooth" or "Phone". Many car makers also post the owner's manual free on their website: search for your car's year, make and model plus the words "owner's manual". Bookmark the official site rather than a look-alike one that asks you to pay.

When the screen won't let you do something

If a menu is grayed out or the car shows a message like "Not available while driving," it's the safety lockout at work. Many cars block typing, pairing and long menus once the car is moving, even for a passenger. Pull over somewhere safe, put the car in Park, and try again.

HEADS UP

Keep your eyes up

If you find yourself reading a menu while the car is moving, that's the moment to stop. The screen will still be there when you're parked. Your steering-wheel buttons and voice commands are the safe way to do things on the road.

PART 2

Pairing Your Phone with Your Car

The one-time introduction between your phone and your car, for iPhone and Android, plus the questions your phone asks along the way and what to do when two people share the car.

CHAPTER 6

Before You Start: A Parked-Car Checklist

Pairing takes about five minutes when everything is ready, and it can feel endless when it isn't. Run through this short list first and you'll usually get it on the first try.

1. **Park the car**, shift into Park and set the parking brake. Most cars only allow pairing when parked.
2. **Start the car** or put it in accessory mode so the screen stays on. If you're in a closed garage, open the garage door before running the engine, or use accessory mode instead.
3. **Charge your phone** a little if it's nearly empty. Low-power modes can make Bluetooth slow to respond.
4. **Unlock your phone** and keep it in your hand. Your phone will ask you to confirm things, and it can't ask while it's locked in your pocket.
5. **Turn off other Bluetooth gadgets** nearby that might grab the phone first, like earbuds or a hearing aid streamer, just for these few minutes.
6. **Have your glasses handy.** You'll be comparing a six-digit number on two screens.

> TIP
>
> **If someone else's phone is already paired**
>
> That's fine. Most cars remember several phones. But if the car has a long list of old phones, from a previous owner or phones you no longer use, delete the ones you don't need first. Chapter 20 shows how. A full list is one of the most common reasons a new phone won't pair.

Who starts the pairing: the car or the phone?

This depends on the car. Some cars want you to start on the car's screen ("Add Phone"), and the phone then sees the car. Others want the car to be "discoverable" and you pick the car from the phone's list. Google's own Android help says it plainly: check your car's manual to learn whether to pair from your phone or your car. Apple says most cars need the phone set up on the car's display.

In practice, the most reliable method is to do both halves at once: open the Bluetooth screen on your phone and leave it open, then start "Add Phone" on the car. The next two chapters walk you through exactly that.

CHAPTER 7

Pairing an iPhone

These steps work on any recent iPhone. The car's words will vary a little, so I've given you the usual ones. Take it slowly; there's no timer you have to beat.

Step by step

1. On your iPhone, open **Settings** (the gray gear) and tap **Bluetooth**. Make sure the Bluetooth switch at the top is **on** (green). Leave this screen open.
2. On the car's screen, go to **Phone** or **Settings**, then the Bluetooth or Connections menu, then choose **Add Phone**, **Add Device** or **Pair New Device**. The car will say it's searching or that it's ready to pair, and it may show its own name, such as the car's model.
3. Watch your iPhone's Bluetooth screen. Under **Other Devices**, the car's name should appear within about half a minute. Tap it. (If instead the car shows a list of phones, pick your iPhone's name on the car's screen.)
4. Both screens should show the **same six-digit number**. If they match, tap **Pair** on the iPhone and press **Yes** or **OK** on the car. If they don't match, cancel and start again.
5. Your iPhone may ask whether to allow the car to **sync your contacts** and favorites, and whether to show notifications. These are explained in Chapter 9. If you'd like names to appear when people call, choose **Allow**.
6. Wait a moment. The car usually shows a "Connected" message, and your iPhone lists the car under **My Devices** with the word **Connected** beside it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Apple's own advice for car Bluetooth

Apple's help page for connecting an iPhone to a car lists these first steps when Bluetooth gives trouble: restart the iPhone; go to **Settings > Bluetooth**, turn Bluetooth off, wait about five seconds and turn it back on; check the car's manual for its pairing steps; if several phones are connected to the car, rename your iPhone in **Settings > General > About > Name**; update the iPhone; and make sure the car's stereo has the latest software from the car maker.

Seeing the car's settings on your iPhone

Once paired, you can check on the connection any time. Go to **Settings > Bluetooth** and tap the little **i** in a circle (the info button) next to the car's name. Depending on your car, you may see switches for syncing contacts and for showing notifications, and you'll always see

Forget This Device, which removes the pairing.

> **HEADS UP**
>
> **Don't tap Forget This Device by accident**
>
> Forgetting the car is harmless, but you'll have to pair again from the beginning. If you only want to stop the car from connecting for a while, simply turn Bluetooth off in Control Center or Settings and back on later.

If your car offers CarPlay

After pairing, some cars ask whether you'd like to use CarPlay. If you're curious, say yes; you can always go back. If you'd rather keep things simple, say no or not now, and the car will use plain Bluetooth for calls and music. My *CarPlay & Android Auto* manual covers that choice in detail.

CHAPTER 8

Pairing an Android Phone

Android phones come from many makers, including Samsung, Google (Pixel) and Motorola, so the menu names vary a little. The steps below follow Google's own Android help; I've noted where Samsung phones word things differently.

Pairing from your phone

1. Make sure the car is ready to pair: on the car's screen choose **Add Phone**, **Add Device** or **Pair New Device**, or make it "discoverable" as your owner's manual describes.
2. On your phone, open the **Settings** app.
3. Tap **Connected devices**. If you see **Bluetooth**, tap it. (On Samsung phones, tap **Connections**, then **Bluetooth**.)
4. Tap **Pair new device**, then tap your car's name when it appears.
5. If asked, check that the number on the phone and the car's screen match, then tap **Pair**.

Pairing from your car

If your car wants to do the searching, Google's help gives these steps:

1. On your phone, open the **Settings** app.
2. Tap **Connected devices**. If you see **Bluetooth**, tap it.
3. Keep this screen open. It lets the car find your phone.
4. On your car's list of devices, pick your phone's name.
5. If asked, check that the PINs shown on your phone and the car's screen match.
6. Tap **Allow access to your contacts and call history** if you'd like names and recent calls in the car.
7. Tap **Pair**, **Accept** or **Confirm**.

TIP

The car asks for a passcode you don't have

Older cars sometimes ask you to type a code instead of showing a matching number. Google's help suggests trying **0000** or **1234**, the most common passcodes. If neither works, the code will be in your owner's manual.

Checking the connection afterward

On most Android phones, go back to **Settings > Connected devices** (or **Connections > Bluetooth** on Samsung). Your car appears with a small gear or settings symbol beside it. Tap that symbol to see switches such as **Phone audio** (for calls) and **Media audio** (for music), and the **Forget** option. Many phones also show switches for contacts and text messages here.

GOOD TO KNOW

Android Auto may pop up

On cars with Android Auto, your phone may offer to start it after pairing. That's optional. If you'd just like Bluetooth calls and music, you can decline, and everything in this manual still applies.

CHAPTER 9

The Questions Your Phone Asks: Contacts, Calls & Messages

Right after pairing, your phone usually asks permission to share a few things with the car. These questions can feel alarming, especially when they mention "contacts" and "messages". Here's what each one really means, so you can decide calmly.

What each permission does

If your phone asks about	What it lets the car do
Contacts (phonebook)	The car copies your phone's names and numbers so it can show *who* is calling and let you call people by name. Without it, calls still work, but you'll see bare numbers.
Call history (recent calls)	The car shows your recent calls so you can call someone back with one press. Usually shared along with contacts.
Messages or notifications	The car can show new text messages, and many cars can read them aloud. Without it, texts stay on your phone only.
Favorites	Some cars copy your phone's favorite contacts as quick-dial buttons.

FROM BILL

My honest recommendation

For your own car, I generally suggest allowing contacts and call history. Seeing "Dr. Patel's Office" instead of a string of digits is safer, because you don't have to glance at your phone to decide whether to answer. Messages are more personal; allow them if you'd like texts read to you, skip them if you wouldn't. For a rental or a borrowed car, I suggest saying **no** to all of them.

Changing your mind on an iPhone

On an iPhone, go to **Settings > Bluetooth** and tap the **i** button next to your car. If your car supports it, you'll find switches such as **Sync Contacts** and **Show Notifications**. Turn them on or off as you like. If your car doesn't offer those switches here, the choice is made on the car's screen instead.

Changing your mind on Android

On Android, go to **Settings > Connected devices** (Samsung: **Connections > Bluetooth**), tap the settings symbol beside your car, and look for switches labeled for contacts, call

history or text messages. The exact words vary by phone maker.

The car side of the same question

Many cars have their own matching settings under Phone or Bluetooth, such as "Download Contacts", "Phonebook", "Auto Sync" or "Text Message Notifications". If you allowed something on the phone and it still doesn't appear in the car, check here too. Both sides have to agree.

GOOD TO KNOW

It's a copy, not a link

The car keeps its own copy of your contacts. If you add someone new on your phone, the car usually picks it up the next time it connects, but not always instantly. And because it's a copy, it stays in the car's memory until you delete it, which is exactly why Chapter 23 matters before you sell the car.

CHAPTER 10

Two Phones, One Car

If you and a spouse or partner share a car, both phones can be paired. Most cars remember several phones and connect to one of them as the main phone for calls. The trick is making sure it's the right one.

How cars usually choose

- Many cars connect to the **last phone that was connected**, or to a phone you've marked as the **primary** or **preferred** device.
- Some newer cars let each driver have a **profile** that remembers their phone, seat position and radio presets. Toyota's newer systems, for example, let you mark a phone as the primary device for your profile.
- Some cars can connect two phones at once, one for calls and one for music. Others only connect one at a time.

Making sure the driver's phone wins

1. On the car's screen, open the list of paired phones (under Phone, Bluetooth or Connections).
2. Look for a setting such as **Primary**, **Preferred**, **Favorite** or **Priority** and set it for the phone that usually drives.
3. If your car has driver profiles, attach each phone to its own profile.
4. When the other person drives, pick their phone from the list, or have the passenger turn off Bluetooth on their phone for the trip.

> **TIP**
>
> **Give each phone a clear name**
>
> If both phones are called "iPhone", the car can't tell you which is which. Renaming them to something like "Mary's iPhone" and "Tom's iPhone" makes the car's list easy to read. Apple even suggests renaming an iPhone when several phones are connected to the same car. Chapter 20 shows you how to rename an iPhone or an Android phone.

The phone that connects from the kitchen

If the car is in an attached garage, your phone may connect to it when you start the car to warm it up, or a call may suddenly go to the car speakers while you're inside the house. It's

not a fault; the car is simply close enough. If it bothers you, turn the car off fully when you're not in it, or turn off the car's Bluetooth from its Settings menu when it's parked for long stretches.

PART 3

Calls, Contacts & Messages

Making and answering calls without touching the phone, hearing and being heard clearly, getting the right names on the screen, and handling text messages safely.

CHAPTER 11

Making & Taking Hands-Free Calls

Once your phone is paired, every call can ring through the car. The caller's voice comes out of the car's speakers and a small microphone, usually in the ceiling near the dome light or near the rear-view mirror, picks up your voice. You don't hold anything.

Answering a call

- When a call comes in, the radio quiets down, the car rings, and the screen shows the caller's name or number.
- Press the **answer** button on the steering wheel (usually a green handset), or touch **Answer** on the screen.
- Talk normally. There's no need to raise your voice or lean toward the microphone.
- To hang up, press the **end** button on the steering wheel (usually a red handset) or touch **End**.
- To decline a call, press the end button while it's ringing. The caller goes to voicemail.

Making a call

There are three ways, from safest to least safe while moving:

Method	How it works
By voice	Press the voice button on the steering wheel and say a name, like "Call Susan mobile." Some cars use their own voice system; pressing and holding the button often calls up Siri or your Android phone's assistant instead. Try both while parked to learn which yours does.
From Recents or Favorites	On the car's Phone screen, touch Recents (or Call History) or Favorites and pick a name. Best done at a stop.
By dialing a number	The car's on-screen keypad. Most cars lock this while moving, and in Ohio, typing a phone number while driving isn't allowed. Do this parked.

STAY SAFE

Ohio's rule in one line

Ohio's hands-free law lets adult drivers make and take calls through a connected car, as long as they don't hold the phone or type letters or numbers into it. Dialing a number by hand is listed as off limits. Use voice dialing or a saved contact instead. Chapter 18 explains the whole law.

Moving a call between the car and your phone

Pulling into the driveway in the middle of a call? You can move the call back to the phone so you can keep talking as you walk inside. Most cars have a button on the call screen labeled something like **Handset**, **Use Phone** or **Privacy**. On an iPhone, you can also tap the audio button on the call screen and choose **iPhone** instead of the car. On Android, look for the audio or speaker button on the call screen. Once you're parked, it's safe to pick up the phone.

TIP

Calls going to the car when you're not in it

If you're inside the house and calls suddenly come out of the car in the garage, that's the car grabbing the connection. Move the call back to the phone as described above, then switch the car fully off.

Voicemail

Most cars can call your voicemail but can't play it like a list. If you need to dial a voicemail PIN, do it parked. Many phones also show visual voicemail and transcripts; those are best read at home, not on the road.

CHAPTER 12

Hearing Calls Clearly — and Being Heard

A car is a noisy room: road noise, the heater fan, rain on the roof. Most "bad connection" complaints are really about noise, volume or the phone doing something unexpected. Here's how to make calls sound their best, for you and for the person you're talking to.

If you can't hear the caller

1. **Turn the volume up during the call.** Most cars keep a separate volume for calls and for the radio. Turning it up while you're on a call raises the call volume, and the car remembers it for next time.
2. **Lower the fan** on the heater or air conditioning a notch or two. Fans are the biggest source of noise.
3. **Close the windows and the sunroof.**
4. **Check that the call is really in the car.** If the sound is coming from your phone instead, see Chapter 11 for moving a call back to the car.
5. **Check for earbuds or a hearing aid connection.** If your phone is also connected to earbuds or Bluetooth hearing aids, the call may go there instead. Choose the car from the call screen's audio button.

If the caller can't hear you

- **Speak toward the microphone**, not the screen. Look in your owner's manual's phone section for a picture of where it is. It's often in the overhead console.
- **Don't block the microphone** with a sun visor, a clip-on gadget or a hat brim.
- **Close the windows** and lower the fan, as above.
- **Turn off the radio** rather than just turning it down, if your car doesn't mute it automatically.
- **Don't talk over the phone in your hand.** If the phone is also on speaker, the car and the phone compete, and callers hear an echo.

GOOD TO KNOW

Hearing aids and the car

If you wear Bluetooth hearing aids, your phone may send calls to them instead of the car. Some people prefer that, because the sound goes right into their ears. Others prefer the car's speakers. Either is fine. On the phone's call screen, the audio button lets you choose. If you'd like help setting a sensible default, this is a good thing to sort out together, and my *Hearing Help Tech* manual covers the phone side.

If calls cut out or crackle

- **Weak cell signal** is the most common cause, especially on country roads. The car can't improve the phone's signal. If the call drops in the same spot every day, that's the cell coverage, not the car.
- **A phone in a bag on the floor or the back seat** can sometimes have a weaker Bluetooth link. Keep it in a cup holder or a mount.
- **Wi-Fi Calling** on your phone can hiccup as you drive away from home Wi-Fi. That usually settles within a minute.
- **An out-of-date phone or car system** can cause odd audio problems. Chapter 22 covers updates.

CHAPTER 13

When Your Contacts Don't Show Up

Calls ring through, but the screen shows only a number, or your contact list in the car is empty or out of date. This is one of the most common car-phone puzzles, and it almost always comes down to a permission or a stale copy. Work down this list in order, with the car parked.

The fix list

1. **Wait a minute.** After the phone connects, the car may take a minute or more to copy a long contact list. Many cars show a "Downloading" or "Syncing" message.
2. **Check the phone's permission.** iPhone: **Settings > Bluetooth**, tap **i** next to the car, and turn on **Sync Contacts** if you see it. Android: **Settings > Connected devices** (Samsung: **Connections > Bluetooth**), tap the settings symbol by the car, and turn on contacts.
3. **Check the car's setting.** On the car's Phone or Bluetooth menu, look for Download Contacts, Phonebook, Auto Sync or Update Contacts, and turn it on or run it.
4. **Turn Bluetooth off and on** on the phone, wait for it to reconnect, and give it another minute.
5. **Forget and pair again.** Remove the car on the phone and remove the phone on the car, then pair as in Chapter 7 or Chapter 8, and say **Allow** when asked about contacts.

GOOD TO KNOW

Where your contacts are stored matters

Some cars only copy contacts that live in the phone's main contact list. If some of your contacts are only saved on a SIM card, or in an email account that isn't set to sync contacts, the car may skip them. On an iPhone, Apple Community answers point to checking that **All Contacts** is chosen in the Contacts app's Lists or Groups, if your car offers that switch. This is a good thing to have someone look at in person if the list above doesn't fix it.

Names showing up wrong

- **Names in the wrong order** (Smith John instead of John Smith) usually come from a car setting for sorting by first or last name. Look under the car's Phone settings.
- **The car offers the wrong number** for someone with several numbers. Say the label too: "Call Dad mobile" or "Call Dad home." Make sure numbers are labeled on your phone.
- **Voice dialing can't find someone** with an unusual name. Try the full name as it's saved, or add a nickname to the contact on your phone.

CHAPTER 14

Text Messages on the Car Screen

Many cars can show new text messages, read them aloud and let you reply by voice or with a short canned message like "I'm driving, I'll call you later." This uses the message lane of Bluetooth (MAP, from Chapter 3), and it's the feature that varies most from car to car.

Turning it on

1. **On the phone:** allow messages or notifications for the car (Chapter 9). On an iPhone, that's the **Show Notifications** switch under the car's **i** button, if your car offers it.
2. **On the car:** look in the Phone or Bluetooth settings for Text Messages, Messaging or Message Notifications and turn it on.
3. Send yourself a test: ask a family member to text you while you're parked with the car on, and watch what the car does.

Using it safely

- **Let the car read the message to you.** Many cars have a Play or Read button on the notification.
- **Reply with voice or a preset reply**, never by typing. Ohio's law allows hands-free voice-to-text for adult drivers, but typing letters or numbers by hand while driving is off limits.
- **Long conversations can wait.** If a message needs more than a quick reply, pull into a parking lot.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why texts work in one car but not another

Text support depends on the car's system, the phone and the phone's software. Some cars show texts from Android phones but not iPhones, or the other way around; some only show them through CarPlay or Android Auto. If your car simply doesn't offer it over plain Bluetooth, nothing you set on the phone will add it. In that case, your phone's own driving setting (Driving Focus on an iPhone) can send people an automatic "I'm driving" reply for you, as Chapter 19 explains.

SCAM ALERT

A text that appears on the car screen is still a text

Scam texts look just as official on a big dashboard screen as they do on your phone, sometimes more so. Texts about unpaid tolls, a package or a "vehicle software update" with a link are the classic ones. Never act on them from the car. Chapter 24 shows you how to spot them.

PART 4

Music, Radio & Audio

Playing your own music, audiobooks and podcasts through the car, switching between the radio and your phone, and adjusting the sound to suit your ears.

CHAPTER 15

Playing Music from Your Phone

Once your phone is paired, anything that plays sound on the phone can play through the car: your music, an audiobook from the library, a podcast, a church service you saved, or a baseball game on a radio app. This uses Bluetooth's music lane (Chapter 3), sometimes shown on the car's screen as **Bluetooth Audio** or **BT Audio**.

Getting your music playing

1. With the car parked, make sure your phone shows as connected to the car.
2. On the car's screen, touch **Audio**, **Media** or **Source**, then choose **Bluetooth** or **Bluetooth Audio**.
3. On your phone, open the app you'd like to listen to, such as Music, Spotify, Libby, Audible or a podcast app, and press **Play**.
4. The sound should come from the car's speakers. From now on, the steering-wheel buttons can usually pause and skip, and the car's volume controls the loudness.

> **TIP**
> **Start it before you go**
> Choose your audiobook or playlist before you pull out of the driveway. Ohio's law allows audio apps that are switched on before you drive, or started with a single touch or swipe. Picking through a long list while moving isn't one of those.

If calls work but music doesn't

This is the classic sign that the music lane is switched off. Google's Android help gives the exact fix for Android phones, and the same idea applies everywhere:

1. Check that the volume is up on both the phone and the car.
2. Check that no other Bluetooth gadget, like earbuds or a speaker in the house, is grabbing the music.
3. On Android: open **Settings**, tap **Connected devices** (and **Bluetooth** if you see it), tap **Saved devices** if you see it, tap the settings symbol next to your car, and turn on **Media audio**.
4. On the car: make sure the source is set to **Bluetooth Audio**, not FM or USB.
5. If it still won't play, turn the phone's Bluetooth off and on, or restart the phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not every car plays music over Bluetooth

Google's help notes that not all cars can play music by Bluetooth. Some older cars with Bluetooth only handle phone calls. If your car's Audio menu has no Bluetooth choice at all, that's likely yours, and a USB cable or an auxiliary jack may be the way to play your music.

Song titles and album art

Most cars show the song title and artist, and some show the album cover. If the car shows nothing or shows the wrong song, it's a small display glitch, not a sign that anything is broken. Pausing and playing again usually refreshes it.

CHAPTER 16

Radio, USB & Other Sources

Your car can usually play from several **sources**, and it plays one at a time. If the car is silent when you expected music, it's often just set to the wrong source.

Source	What it is
AM and FM	Regular radio, free, no phone needed. Use the presets (numbered buttons on the screen) to save favorite stations: tune to the station, then touch and hold a preset until it beeps.
SiriusXM	Satellite radio, on many cars. It's a paid subscription after any free trial that comes with a car. Watch for automatic renewal.
Bluetooth Audio	Whatever is playing on your paired phone.
USB	Music from a phone plugged in with a cable, or from a USB flash drive with music files on it. On cars with CarPlay or Android Auto, plugging in a phone may start those instead.
AUX	On older cars, a small round headphone-style jack for a cable. Many newer cars no longer have one.

HEADS UP

Free trials that turn into charges

New and used cars often come with a trial of satellite radio or a connected-services plan. These can renew automatically onto your card when the trial ends. When you buy a car, ask the dealer which trials are active and when they end, and mark the date on your calendar so you can decide whether to keep them.

Switching sources

1. Touch **Audio**, **Media** or **Source** on the screen, or press the **Source** or **Media** button if your car has one.
2. Choose the source you'd like.
3. Many steering wheels also have a Source or Mode button that steps through the sources each time you press it.

Charging through the USB port

Most cars' USB ports can charge a phone, but some charge slowly, especially older ones. If your car has more than one USB port, one may be for charging only and another for music and CarPlay; they're sometimes marked with a small phone or lightning symbol. Apple's help

suggests trying another cable or port if a USB connection misbehaves, and checking the phone's charging port for lint.

CHAPTER 17

Sound Settings: Volume, Balance & Tone

The car's sound menu is worth one visit. A few small changes can make voices on calls and audiobooks much clearer, which matters even more if your hearing isn't what it used to be.

Where to find it

Look under **Settings > Sound**, **Audio > Settings**, **Tone** or **EQ**. Some cars have a **Sound** or **Tone** button on the screen while the radio is playing.

Setting	What it does
Bass and Treble	Bass is the low, rumbling sound; treble is the crisp, high sound. Turning treble up a little often makes speech easier to understand. Turning bass down can reduce muddiness.
Midrange	On cars that have it, this is where voices live. Nudging it up can help with talk radio and audiobooks.
Balance	Moves the sound left or right. Useful if you hear better from one side.
Fade	Moves the sound to the front or back seats. Moving it forward keeps rear passengers from being blasted and brings voices closer to you.
Speed-sensitive volume	Raises the volume a little as the car speeds up to make up for road noise. Sometimes called Auto Volume, Speed Compensated Volume or similar.
Ring and call volume	Separate from music on most cars. Set it while on a call, as described in Chapter 12.

TIP

One change at a time

Make one small change, play something familiar, and listen for a minute. If you don't like it, set it back. Most sound menus also have a **Reset** or **Flat** choice that puts everything back to normal.

Navigation voices and the radio

If you use a map app on your phone over Bluetooth, the spoken directions come through the car and briefly lower the music. If you can't hear the directions, turn the volume up *while a direction is being spoken*; many cars keep a separate volume for these announcements too.

PART 5

Driving Safely & Ohio's Hands-Free Law

What Ohio's law actually allows, and simple habits that keep the screen from pulling your eyes off the road.

CHAPTER 18

Ohio's Hands-Free Law in Plain English

Ohio's distracted driving law, Senate Bill 288, took effect on **April 4, 2023**. Police gave warnings for the first six months, and since **October 5, 2023** they have been writing tickets. Holding or using a phone while driving is now a **primary offense**, which means an officer can pull you over for it alone. Here's what it means for you, in plain words.

The basic rule

It's illegal to use or hold a phone or other electronic device in your hand, in your lap or against any other part of your body while driving on Ohio roads. Drivers 18 and older may make and receive calls hands-free, which includes speakerphone, an earpiece, a wireless headset, a watch, or **connecting the phone to the vehicle**. In the state's own words, in most cases anything more than a single touch or swipe is against the law.

What's allowed and what isn't

Generally allowed for drivers 18 and over	Off limits while driving
Calls through your car's Bluetooth, without holding the phone	Dialing a phone number by hand
Answering or ending a call with a single touch or swipe	Typing a text message
Voice-to-text, hands-free	Video calls, including FaceTime
Audio apps and navigation you start before driving, or with a single touch or swipe	Browsing the internet or social media
GPS and map displays	Watching or recording video, playing games

The exceptions

- Calling to report an emergency to police, a hospital, a doctor, the fire department or a similar emergency service.
- Holding the phone to your ear during a call, if the call is started and ended with a single touch or swipe.
- Using the phone while stopped at a traffic light, or while parked on the road during an emergency or a road closure.

HEADS UP

Drivers under 18: no phone use at all

Ohio doesn't allow drivers under 18 to use their phones in any way while driving, **including** hands-free features. Worth knowing if you share a car with a teenage grandchild.

The penalties

Offense	Penalty, per the state's fact sheet
First offense	Up to a $150 fine and 2 points on your license. Completing a distracted driving course can help avoid the fine and points.
Second offense	Up to a $250 fine and 3 points.
Third and later offenses	Up to a $500 fine, 4 points and a possible 90-day license suspension.
In a work zone	Fines are doubled.

FROM BILL

Even if you can, that doesn't mean you should

That's the state's own advice about the red-light exception, and I agree with it. The law sets the minimum. The safest habit is to set everything up before you pull out, let calls go to voicemail when traffic is busy, and save conversations for the parking lot. For the full and current wording, the state's site is **PhonesDown.Ohio.gov**. I'm not a lawyer, so for a question about a specific ticket, ask one.

Traveling? Other states have their own rules, and some are stricter. If you're driving out of state, assume hands-free only and look up that state's law before you go.

CHAPTER 19

Setting Things Up Before You Roll

The safest way to use your car's screen is to do almost everything before the car moves. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for about five seconds; at 55 miles an hour, that's like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed. NHTSA counts 3,275 people killed in crashes involving distracted drivers in 2023.

A thirty-second driveway routine

1. Make sure the phone shows as **connected** on the car's screen.
2. Start your audiobook, podcast or music, and set the volume.
3. If you're using directions, enter the address and start the route.
4. Put the phone somewhere it won't slide around: a cup holder, a console tray or a proper mount. Not in your lap.
5. Turn on your phone's driving mode if you use one (more below).
6. Then pull out, and leave the screen alone except for single touches.

Let the phone quiet itself

Both iPhone and Android phones have a driving setting that silences most notifications while you drive. On an iPhone it's called the **Driving Focus**. Apple says it can turn on automatically when the iPhone connects to your car's Bluetooth, and that incoming calls are allowed only when the iPhone is connected to CarPlay, a car Bluetooth system or a hands-free accessory. It can also send people an automatic reply saying you're driving. Android phones have similar driving modes; the name and menu vary by phone maker.

> **TIP**
>
> **Use the voice button for everything you can**
>
> Press the steering wheel's voice button and say what you want: "Call Susan," "FM 98.1," "Play Bluetooth audio." Each car's voice system understands slightly different phrases, so try a few while parked. Many owner's manuals include a list of voice commands.

When to pull over

- Pairing a phone, changing settings or fixing a connection problem.
- Typing an address or looking through a long list.

- Any call that needs your full attention, like a doctor's office or bad news.
- Anything where you notice yourself looking at the screen for more than a quick glance.

STAY SAFE

If the screen freezes while you're driving

Don't try to fix it on the move. Your brakes and steering don't depend on the touchscreen. Keep driving normally, and when you're safely parked, try the restart steps in Chapter 21. The one thing to keep in mind: on many cars the backup camera picture shows on that screen, so if it's frozen, back up the old-fashioned way, looking over your shoulder and using your mirrors.

PART 6

Fixing Problems, Resets & Updates

What to do when the phone won't connect, how to restart or reset the car's screen without losing more than you mean to, and how software updates for your car really work.

CHAPTER 20

When the Phone Won't Connect

It worked yesterday and today it doesn't. Or a brand-new phone simply refuses to pair. Don't worry; this is the single most common car-tech problem, and it usually yields to the same short list. Park the car and work through these in order, stopping as soon as it works.

The fix-it ladder

1. **Check the obvious.** Is the phone's Bluetooth on? Is the phone unlocked? Is the car in Park with the screen awake?
2. **Turn Bluetooth off and on.** On the phone, turn Bluetooth off, wait about five seconds, and turn it back on. (iPhone: **Settings > Bluetooth**. Android: **Settings > Connected devices**, or **Connections > Bluetooth** on Samsung.)
3. **Pick the phone on the car.** On the car's list of paired phones, select yours and choose Connect.
4. **Restart the phone.** Turn it fully off and back on.
5. **Restart the car's system.** Turn the car off, open and close the driver's door, wait a couple of minutes, then start it again. Chapter 21 has other restart methods.
6. **Clear out old phones.** Delete phones you no longer use from the car's list, and delete old cars and gadgets you no longer use from your phone's list.
7. **Forget and pair fresh.** Remove the car from the phone and the phone from the car, then pair again as in Chapter 7 or Chapter 8.
8. **Update.** Update your phone's software, and check whether the car has a system update (Chapter 22).

Forgetting the car on your phone

Phone	Steps
iPhone	**Settings > Bluetooth**, tap the **i** next to the car, then **Forget This Device**.
Android (Google's steps)	**Settings > Connected devices > Saved devices** (or **Bluetooth** if you don't see Saved devices). Next to the car's name, tap the settings symbol, then **Forget**, then **Forget device**.
Samsung Galaxy	**Settings > Connections > Bluetooth**, tap the settings symbol next to the car, then **Unpair** or **Forget**.

Forgetting your phone on the car

Go to the car's list of paired phones (under Phone, Bluetooth, Connections or Devices), choose your phone, and look for **Delete**, **Remove**, **Forget** or a trash-can symbol. Google's Android help says to follow your car's manual for this half, because every car does it a little differently.

Rename your phone so the car can tell phones apart

If several phones have been paired with the car, Apple suggests renaming your iPhone and connecting again. A clear name also makes the car's list easy to read for everyone in the family.

1. **iPhone:** open **Settings > General > About > Name**, type a new name such as "Mary's iPhone", and tap Done.
2. **Android:** on most phones, open **Settings > About phone > Device name**. Some phones also have a separate Bluetooth name under the Bluetooth settings. The wording varies by phone maker.
3. Forget the old entry on the car, then pair again so the car shows the new name.

> **TIP**
>
> **If it connects and then drops**
>
> A phone that keeps connecting and disconnecting is often low on battery, in a battery-saver mode, or fighting with another gadget like earbuds or a smartwatch. Charge the phone, turn off battery saver for the drive, and try again. If it happens with only one car and every phone, the car's system may need an update or a dealer visit.

CHAPTER 21

Restarting & Resetting the System

Like a phone or a computer, the screen in your car is a small computer, and now and then it gets confused: it freezes, goes black, stops responding to touches or won't find your phone. There are three levels of fix, from gentle to drastic. Always start with the gentlest.

Level	What it does
1. A simple restart	Turns the system off and on. Loses nothing. Fixes most freezes and connection hiccups.
2. Forget one phone	Removes just one pairing so you can start that phone fresh. Covered in Chapter 20.
3. Factory reset	Erases **everything** you've set up on the screen: paired phones, contacts, saved addresses, radio presets and settings. Save this for selling the car, or when the dealer recommends it.

Level 1: restarting the screen

Cars vary, so try these in order. Do them parked.

1. **Turn the car fully off.** Shift into Park, turn the car off, and open and close the driver's door. On many cars, this is what tells the system to shut down completely. Wait two or three minutes, then start the car again.
2. **Press and hold the power button.** On many cars, pressing and holding the audio power button or the volume knob for several seconds restarts the screen. Your owner's manual will say if yours works this way and how long to hold it.
3. **Drive a short loop.** Some systems finish restarting or installing something in the background after a short drive. If the screen came back but is slow, give it a few minutes.

HEADS UP

Don't disconnect the battery to reset the screen

You may read online that unplugging the car's battery resets everything. That's a job for a mechanic, not a reset button. It can reset other systems in the car and, on some cars, cause more trouble than it fixes. If a restart doesn't help, call the dealer or me.

Level 3: a factory reset, when you really need one

Almost every car has a reset option somewhere in Settings, often called **Factory Reset**, **Reset All Settings**, **Restore Defaults**, **Master Reset** or **Clear Personal Data**. It's usually

under **Settings > System** or **Settings > General**. The car will ask you to confirm, and it may take a few minutes.

- **Use it when:** you're selling, trading in, donating or returning a leased car (Chapter 23), or a dealer has told you to.
- **Before you do it:** note your radio presets and any saved addresses you'd like to keep, so you can set them up again.
- **After you do it:** pair your phone again from scratch, as in Chapter 7 or Chapter 8.

GOOD TO KNOW

A reset doesn't touch your phone

Resetting the car's system clears the car's copy of your contacts and settings. Your phone keeps everything. The only thing on the phone you'll want to tidy afterward is the old pairing: forget the car there too.

CHAPTER 22

Software Updates: Over the Air or at the Dealer

Your car's screen runs software, just like your phone, and car makers release updates that fix bugs, improve phone connections and sometimes add features. Apple's own troubleshooting for car Bluetooth includes making sure the car's stereo has the latest software from the car maker. How you get those updates depends on your car.

The three ways cars get updates

Method	How it works
Over the air	The car downloads updates by itself, using its own cellular connection or your home Wi-Fi, and asks you to accept and install them. Many newer cars work this way. Ford, for example, calls these Power-Up updates.
USB drive	Some cars let you download an update from the car maker's website onto a USB flash drive and plug it into the car. Follow the maker's instructions exactly.
At the dealer	Older systems, and some updates on newer ones, are installed by the dealer's service department, often during regular service or for a recall.

Over-the-air updates, step by step (Ford as an example)

Ford's support pages describe a typical setup. On Ford's SYNC 4 and SYNC 4A, the connectivity settings need to be on, and automatic updates are switched on under the car's **Settings**, in the **Connectivity** area. When an update is waiting, an update icon appears in the SYNC status bar; you can touch it and choose **Update**, or look under **Settings**, then **System Updates**. Ford notes that connecting the car to Wi-Fi can make downloads faster, and that if automatic updates aren't arriving, the automatic update setting is probably turned off.

Other car makers use different words, but the pattern is the same: an update setting in the car's System or Settings menu, a notice on the screen when something is ready, and a choice to install now or later. Your owner's manual or the maker's website will have the details for your car.

STAY SAFE

Update parked, and read the screen

Many updates must be installed with the car parked, and some say the car can't be driven until the update finishes. Start an update when you don't need the car for a while, ideally at home, and don't turn the car off partway unless the screen says it's safe.

Don't forget the phone half

A car update and a phone update together fix most stubborn connection problems.

Phone	Where to check for updates
iPhone	**Settings > General > Software Update**. You can turn on **Automatic Updates** there too; they install overnight while the phone is charging and on Wi-Fi.
Android (Google's steps)	**Settings > System > Software update**. On Pixel phones, the wording may be "Software updates" or "System update".
Samsung Galaxy	**Settings > Software update > Download and install**.

Recalls and the screen

Now and then, a problem with a car's screen or backup camera becomes an official safety recall. Recall repairs are free at the dealer. You can check your car for open recalls at **nhtsa.gov/recalls** by typing in its 17-character vehicle identification number (VIN), which is on your registration, your insurance card and the driver's side of the dashboard where it meets the windshield.

SCAM ALERT

Real car updates don't arrive by text

A text, email or phone call saying your car needs an urgent "software update" and asking you to tap a link, pay a fee or give your VIN and card number is a scam. Real updates come through the car's own screen, the car maker's official app or website, or your dealer. If in doubt, call the dealer at the number on your paperwork, not a number in the message.

PART 7

Privacy, Scams & Your Data

Your car remembers more about you than you might think. Here's how to clear it out before the car leaves your hands, and how to spot the scams that target drivers.

CHAPTER 23

Selling, Trading In or Returning a Rental

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) puts it simply: your car is a computer that stores a lot of information about you, just like your smartphone. When you sell or donate it, that personal data might be accessible to the next owner if you don't take steps to remove it.

What your car may be holding

According to the FTC, the kinds of information a car may have stored include:

- **Phone contacts and an address book**, copied when you synced your phone with the car.
- **App sign-in information**, or data gathered by apps, stored in the car.
- **Music or other digital content** on a built-in drive.
- **Location data**, such as addresses and the routes you take to home, work and favorite places, in the navigation system.
- **Garage door codes** for your home or office.

Before you sell, trade in or donate

1. **Delete your phone from the car.** Open the car's list of paired phones and delete yours, and anyone else's in the family. Most cars have a list of connected devices in their settings.
2. **Delete saved addresses** in the car's navigation, including Home and Work, if your car has built-in navigation.
3. **Clear the garage door opener buttons** (often called HomeLink) if your car has them. The steps differ from car to car, so follow the owner's manual.
4. **Do a factory reset** of the car's screen (Chapter 21). The FTC notes that some cars have a factory reset that returns settings and data to their original state.
5. **Cancel or transfer subscriptions** such as satellite radio, a Wi-Fi hotspot or connected services. The FTC points out that even after a reset, the car may still be connected to these.
6. **Disconnect the car maker's app** from the car, if you use one to lock, start or locate the car, so the next owner's car isn't still linked to your account.
7. **On your phone, forget the car** in Bluetooth settings, so it doesn't keep trying to connect.

TIP

Ask the dealer, but check yourself

Some dealers clear the screen when you trade in. Still, it only takes a few minutes to do it yourself before you hand over the keys, and then you know it's done. The FTC also suggests your owner's manual, your dealer and the car maker's website for exact reset steps.

Rental cars, loaners and borrowed cars

The same idea applies to any car that isn't yours. A rental car's screen may be full of other renters' phones, and when you return it, yours will be on the list too, often along with your contacts and the addresses you looked up.

- **Think twice before pairing.** For a short rental, a phone mount and your phone's own speaker, or a USB cable for charging only, may be all you need.
- **If you do pair, say no to contacts and messages** when your phone asks (Chapter 9). Calls will still work.
- **Before you return it,** delete your phone from the car's list of devices and delete any addresses you entered. Then forget the car on your phone.
- **Don't leave a cable plugged in** with your phone attached when you walk away, and take any charging cable you brought.

STAY SAFE

Your own car, your own info

In your own car, I generally recommend allowing contacts, because seeing names keeps your eyes off the phone. The privacy step that matters is the one at the end: clearing it out before the car belongs to someone else.

CHAPTER 24

Car Scams to Watch For

Scammers love drivers, because almost everyone has a car payment, a warranty, a toll pass or a parking meter to worry about. These four show up again and again. The good news is that each has an easy tell.

1. Fake toll texts

SCAM ALERT

"You owe an unpaid toll. Pay now to avoid fees."

The FTC has warned that scammers are pretending to be tolling agencies across the country and sending texts demanding money, usually with a link and a threat of late fees. Don't tap the link. If you're worried you really owe a toll, contact the toll agency using a phone number or website you know is real, not the information in the text. You can report the text to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

2. "Your car warranty is about to expire" calls

SCAM ALERT

The auto warranty robocall

Auto warranty calls were the top robocall complaint to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2020 and 2021, and in 2022 the FCC ordered phone companies to block that robocall traffic. Callers often pretend to be from your dealer, the car maker or your insurer. Don't press any numbers and don't give any personal information. Just hang up. Your real dealer and car maker write to you or call from numbers you can check.

3. Fake QR codes on parking meters

SCAM ALERT

A sticker on the meter that says "Scan to pay"

The FTC has warned that scammers stick their own QR codes over the real ones on parking meters, so scanning takes you to a fake payment site. Pay with the meter itself, or with the parking app named on the city's official signs, downloaded from your phone's app store. If a QR code looks like a sticker stuck on top of something else, don't scan it.

4. Fake "car software update" messages

SCAM ALERT

"Your vehicle needs a critical update. Tap here."

As Chapter 22 explains, real car updates arrive on the car's own screen, through the car maker's official app or at the dealer. A text or email with a link, a fee, or a request for your card number or VIN is not how car makers update cars. Delete it.

The rules that catch all four

- **Never tap a link in a text you weren't expecting**, however official it looks, even on the big screen in your car.
- **Look up the number yourself.** Use the number on your registration, your toll account statement, your dealer paperwork or the official website.
- **Urgency is the giveaway.** "Pay today," "final notice," and "act now" are scammer phrases.
- **Nobody legitimate needs your full card number by text.**
- **When in doubt, ask someone.** A family member, your dealer, or me.

FROM BILL

If you already tapped or paid

Don't be embarrassed; these are designed to fool careful people. Call your bank or card company right away using the number on the back of your card, change any password you typed in, and report it at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. If you'd like a hand checking your phone afterward, call me.

PART 8

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, a one-page summary for the glove box, and the car-tech words explained in plain English.

CHAPTER 25

When to Call Bill

I've written this manual so you can handle most of your car's screen and Bluetooth on your own. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and frustration, so here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **A new phone or a new car**, and you'd like the pairing, contacts and settings done right the first time, with someone explaining each question as it comes up.
- **A connection that keeps failing** after you've worked through the ladder in Chapter 20.
- **Contacts or text messages that won't show up**, no matter what you allow.
- **Two drivers, two phones**, and the car keeps choosing the wrong one.
- **Getting a car ready to sell or trade in**, so your phone, contacts, addresses and garage codes are properly cleared.
- **Sound that's hard to hear**: call volume, tone settings and hearing aids, tuned to your ears.
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person** sit in the passenger seat and show you. That's always a good enough reason.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace: no rushing, no talking down, and no jargon left unexplained. For car help, an in-person visit usually means working in your driveway or garage, with your car and your phone, here in Portage County. Many phone-side problems can also be sorted out remotely over the phone. I'll always tell you honestly when something is a job for your dealer instead, such as a software recall or a hardware fault, so you don't pay me for something they'll do under warranty.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a visit online at **billshometech.com/book**. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. Help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**, and with 30+ years of professional experience, I'm glad to make your car and phone get along.

Thank you for letting me help. Take your time, do your setting-up parked, and remember I'm only a phone call away.

— Bill

CHAPTER 26

Your Car Tech Cheat-Sheet

Print just this page and keep it in the glove box. The whole manual, boiled down.

Everyday buttons

To do this	Do this
Lost on the screen	Press **Home**.
Answer a call	Green handset button on the steering wheel.
End or decline a call	Red handset button on the steering wheel.
Call someone	Press the voice button and say "Call" and the name.
Play your phone's music	Audio or Media > **Bluetooth Audio**, then press Play on the phone.
Move a call to the phone	Touch Handset or Use Phone on the call screen, once parked.

Pairing in short

1. Car parked, phone unlocked, phone's Bluetooth screen open.
2. Car: Phone or Settings > Bluetooth > **Add Phone**.
3. Phone: tap the car's name. Check the six-digit numbers match, then Pair.
4. Allow contacts if you want names on screen (your own car only).

When it won't connect, in order

1. Phone's Bluetooth off, wait five seconds, back on.
2. Choose your phone on the car's device list and tap Connect.
3. Restart the phone.
4. Turn the car fully off, open and close the driver's door, wait two minutes, restart.
5. Delete old phones from the car and old cars from the phone.
6. Forget on both sides and pair fresh.
7. Update the phone; check for a car update.
8. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

Keep handy

Detail	Mine
My car's Bluetooth name	_____
My phone's name	_____
Dealer service phone	_____
My VIN (for recalls)	_____

Safety and scams

- Ohio: no holding the phone, no typing or dialing by hand while driving. Single touch or swipe only.
- Set up music and directions before you pull out.
- Toll, warranty or "car update" texts and calls with links or urgency: don't tap, don't pay, look up the real number yourself.
- Selling or returning a car: delete your phone, clear addresses and garage codes, factory reset.

CHAPTER 27

A Plain-English Glossary

The car-tech words you're likely to bump into, explained the way I'd say them across the kitchen table.

Word	What it means
A2DP	The part of Bluetooth that carries music and other audio from your phone to the car.
Android Auto	Google's way of showing your Android phone's apps on the car's screen. Covered in my *CarPlay & Android Auto* manual.
Apple CarPlay	Apple's way of showing your iPhone's apps on the car's screen.
AUX	A round headphone-style jack on older cars, for playing music through a cable.
Bluetooth	A short-range wireless link between gadgets that are close together, like your phone and your car.
Connect	What a paired phone and car do automatically each time you start the car.
Discoverable	A gadget that's announcing itself so others can find it for pairing.
Factory reset	Erasing all your settings and data from the car's screen, putting it back the way it left the factory.
Firmware	The built-in software that runs the car's screen. Updating it is a software update.
Forget (unpair)	Removing a pairing so the phone and car no longer recognize each other.
Hands-free	Making and taking calls without holding the phone.
Head unit / infotainment	The car's screen and the radio-and-phone system behind it.
HFP	The part of Bluetooth that carries phone calls.
MAP	The part of Bluetooth that lets the car show or read your text messages.
Over-the-air (OTA) update	A software update the car downloads by itself, without a visit to the dealer.
Pairing	The one-time introduction that lets your phone and car trust each other.
PBAP	The part of Bluetooth that copies your contacts and recent calls to the car.
PIN or passkey	The matching number shown on both screens during pairing, or a code you type.
Primary phone	The phone the car connects to first when several are paired.
Source	Where the sound is coming from: FM, AM, satellite, Bluetooth, USB.

Word	What it means
VIN	Your car's 17-character vehicle identification number, used to look up recalls.