BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Cataloging a Collection

Coins, cards, records and books: apps, spreadsheets, photos and insurance records — explained in plain English

A plain-English guide for collectors and their families

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For phone apps, Google Sheets & Excel · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to cataloging a collection: writing down what you own, photographing it, keeping the paperwork, and storing it all where it's safe and easy to find. It covers coins, trading cards, records and books in detail, and the same ideas work for stamps, dolls, tools or anything else you love. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Apps and prices change often, so this guide teaches the habits that last, and names the apps that are popular as of November 2026.

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PART 1

Getting Started

Why a catalog is worth the effort, how to choose between an app and a spreadsheet, and the handful of details worth writing down for every item. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe you have coffee cans of coins from your father, a closet full of vinyl records, shoeboxes of baseball cards, or shelves of books you've gathered over a lifetime. Maybe you've thought, "I really ought to write all this down someday." This guide is for **you**. And if you're helping a parent or grandparent get their collection organized, this guide is for you too.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County, Ohio, feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything. When I use a word like "spreadsheet" or "barcode," I'll stop and explain it right then.

What this guide will do for you

- Help you decide what to record about each item, so your list is useful and not just long.
- Show you how to take clear photos with the phone you already own.
- Walk you through a simple collection spreadsheet in Google Sheets or Excel, step by step.
- Introduce the popular apps for records, books, coins and trading cards, with honest notes on cost.
- Explain what an app's "value" really means, and when a professional appraiser is worth it.
- Help you keep records your insurance agent can use, and back them up so one bad day can't erase them.
- Warn you about the scams that target collectors, especially when you sell.

The big promise: you can't break it by learning

Cataloging is one of the gentlest tech projects there is. You type a few words, take a photo, and save. If you make a mistake, you fix the line. Nothing in this guide touches your bank account or changes your computer in a way you can't undo. You can do ten items tonight and ten more next week. There's no deadline and no wrong way to start.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

A good catalog turns a pile of things into a record your family can understand. It helps if you ever file an insurance claim, it helps when you want to sell or give something away, and it keeps the stories behind your favorite pieces from being lost.

GOOD TO KNOW

What I am and what I'm not

I'm a technology helper. I'm not an appraiser, an insurance agent or a lawyer. I'll show you how to keep great records and how to find the right professional, and I'll always tell you honestly which questions belong to them.

I'm only a phone call away

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

Let's begin with the simplest question: why bother?

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Why Catalog a Collection?

A **catalog** is simply a list of what you own, with enough detail that someone else could tell one item from another. It can live in a notebook, a spreadsheet on your computer, or an app on your phone. The tool matters far less than the habit.

Five good reasons to start

Reason	What it does
Insurance	If there's a fire, a flood or a break-in, a list with photos makes it far easier to show what you had. Chapter 19 and Chapter 20 cover this.
Family	Your children or grandchildren may not know a rare coin from pocket change. A catalog tells them what matters, and why (Chapter 25).
Selling	When you decide to sell, you'll already have photos, descriptions and condition notes ready (Chapter 22).
Shopping	No more buying a second copy of the same record or book because you forgot you had it.
Enjoyment	Many collectors find that cataloging is a pleasant way to revisit their collection and remember where each piece came from.

What a catalog is not

- **It isn't an appraisal.** An app's estimated value is a starting point, not a professional opinion. Chapter 17 explains the difference.
- **It isn't insurance.** A list helps you file a claim, but only your policy decides what's covered. Your agent is the person to ask.
- **It doesn't have to be perfect.** A short list of your 20 most important pieces, with photos, is worth more than a perfect plan you never start.

TIP

Start with what matters most

If your collection is large, begin with the items that are most valuable, most meaningful, or hardest to replace. The everyday pieces can wait, or can be grouped ("about 300 paperback mysteries").

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing why you're cataloging tells you how much detail you need. Cataloging for insurance needs photos and receipts; cataloging for family needs stories; cataloging for selling needs condition notes.

CHAPTER 3

App, Spreadsheet, or Both?

There are two main ways to catalog with technology: a **collection app** made for one kind of item, or a **spreadsheet** you design yourself. Each has real strengths. Many people end up using both.

The two routes side by side

	Collection app	Spreadsheet
Best for	Records, books, coins or cards with barcodes or a big online database	Anything at all, including mixed or unusual collections
Speed	Fast: scan a barcode or snap a photo and the details fill in	Slower: you type each line
Value estimates	Often built in	Only what you type in yourself
Cost	Often free to start; some features need a subscription	Free with Google Sheets; Excel comes with Microsoft 365
Who controls it	The app company keeps the data on its servers	You do; the file is yours
If the company closes	You may lose access unless you exported a copy	Nothing changes

A simple way to decide

1. If your collection is mostly **records, CDs or books** with barcodes, try the matching app first (Chapter 11 and Chapter 12). Scanning saves hours.
2. If it's **coins or cards**, an app can identify many items from a photo, but always check its answer (Chapter 13 and Chapter 14).
3. If it's **mixed** — a little of everything — or something unusual, start with a spreadsheet (Chapter 8).
4. Whatever you choose, plan to keep an **exported copy** in a file you control (Chapter 16 and Chapter 21).

GOOD TO KNOW

Paper still counts

A notebook with numbered pages works fine, especially to start. You can always type it up later, or have a grandchild do it. The best system is the one you'll actually use.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Picking the right tool at the start saves you from typing hundreds of entries into something you'll later abandon.

CHAPTER 4

What to Write Down for Each Item

The secret to a useful catalog is recording the same few things for every item. Here's a list that works for almost any collection. You don't need every field on day one.

The core fields

Field	What to put in it
Item number	Your own number: 1, 2, 3 or C-001 for coins, R-001 for records. Write it on the sleeve, holder or a slip of paper with the item, so the list and the object match.
What it is	"1921 Morgan silver dollar," "Beatles, Abbey Road LP," "1952 Topps Mickey Mantle."
Identifying details	Year, mint mark, edition, label, catalog number, card number, ISBN, printing.
Condition	Your honest words ("light scratches, no warp") or a grade if it's been professionally graded.
Certification number	For graded coins and cards, the number printed on the plastic holder's label.
Where it's kept	"Blue album, sleeve 4," "Basement shelf B," "Safe deposit box."
How you got it	Bought, gift, inherited — and from whom, if you know.
Date and price paid	Even rough is helpful: "about 1985, around $20."
Estimated value	With the source and date: "App estimate $150, March 2026."
Photos	File names or a note that photos are saved (Chapter 5).
Notes and story	Why it matters to you. Families treasure this column.

TIP

Keep each fact in its own column

Put the year in one column and the name in another, rather than one long sentence. Later you'll be able to sort by year or search by name with one click (Chapter 10).

HEADS UP

Don't write it on the item

Never write a number on a coin, a card, a record label or a book's pages. Put the number on the holder, sleeve, envelope or a removable slip instead. Marks on the item itself can lower its value.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With these fields filled in, anyone — you, your family, an insurance adjuster or a buyer — can understand your collection without you standing beside them.

PART 2

Photos & Paperwork

Taking clear photos with your phone, tips for each kind of collection, and turning receipts and certificates into tidy digital copies.

CHAPTER 5

Taking Good Photos with Your Phone

You don't need a fancy camera. The phone in your pocket takes photos that are more than good enough for a catalog, an insurance file or a sale listing. A few simple habits make the difference between a blurry snapshot and a photo that really shows what you own.

Set up a little photo corner

1. Pick a table near a window with soft daylight, but out of direct, harsh sun.
2. Lay down a plain background: a sheet of white or light gray poster board, or a solid-colored towel. Plain backgrounds make the item stand out.
3. Keep a soft cloth handy to wipe dust off your phone's camera lens. A smudged lens is the most common reason for fuzzy photos.
4. If the room is dim, add a desk lamp to each side rather than using the phone's flash. Flash causes glare on shiny coins, plastic holders and record covers.

Taking the photo

1. Hold the phone directly above or straight in front of the item, not at an angle.
2. Tap the screen on the item so the camera focuses on it.
3. Fill most of the frame with the item, but leave a little space around the edges.
4. Hold still, or rest your elbows on the table, and take the photo.
5. Look at the photo right away, and zoom in with two fingers. If you can't read the date or the text, take it again.

Which shots to take

- **Front and back** of everything.
- **Close-ups** of anything that identifies it: dates, mint marks, labels, signatures, serial numbers.
- **Any damage**: chips, creases, scratches, stains. Honest photos protect you when you sell or file a claim.
- **Certificates and labels**: the label on a graded coin or card, the certificate of authenticity.
- **A group shot** of each shelf, album or box, so you can show the collection as a whole.

TIP

Name your photos with the item number

If you take photos of item C-014, you can rename them "C-014 front" and "C-014 back" on your computer, or simply put them in an album named "Coins" in the order of your list. Either way, the photo and the line in your catalog stay matched.

GOOD TO KNOW

A video walk-through helps too

Many insurance and consumer guides suggest a slow video of each room as part of a home inventory. Narrate as you go: "This is the record shelf; about 400 albums, mostly jazz." It takes ten minutes and covers a lot of ground.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Clear photos answer questions before anyone has to ask them. An adjuster, an appraiser or a buyer can see exactly what you have, and your family can recognize the important pieces.

CHAPTER 6

Photo Tips for Coins, Cards, Records and Books

Each kind of collection has its own little tricks. Here are the ones that matter most.

Coins

- Handle coins by the edges only, ideally with soft cotton gloves. Skin oils can leave marks.
- Never clean a coin to make it look better in a photo. Cleaning can sharply reduce its value.
- Photograph coins in their holders if they're graded — the label is part of the record.
- Use two side lamps at a low angle to bring out the design, and avoid the flash.
- Take the obverse (front, usually the portrait) and reverse (back), plus a close-up of the date and mint mark.

Trading cards

- Leave cards in their sleeves or top loaders; tilt the phone slightly if the plastic causes glare.
- Photograph front and back, square-on, so the corners and edges are visible. Condition is everything with cards.
- For graded cards in slabs, make sure the label with the grade and certification number is readable.

Records

- Photograph the front and back of the jacket, and the label on each side of the record.
- The numbers stamped or etched in the smooth area near the label (collectors call it the "run-out" or "matrix") can identify the exact pressing. A close-up of them is useful.
- Note any inserts, posters or lyric sheets that came with the record, and photograph them too.

Books

- Photograph the cover, the spine and the dust jacket if there is one.
- Photograph the title page and the copyright page — that's where edition and printing details live.

- Photograph any signatures, inscriptions, bookplates or damage.

HEADS UP

Handle with care, always

If something is fragile or valuable, it's better to photograph it where it sits than to move it. A dropped coin or a bent card loses value in a second; a slightly less perfect photo costs nothing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The right close-ups are what separate an ordinary copy from a valuable one. Capture them once and you'll never have to dig the item out again to answer a question.

CHAPTER 7

Receipts, Certificates and Paperwork

Paper proof matters: receipts, appraisals, certificates of authenticity, auction records and letters describing where something came from (collectors call this **provenance**). Your phone can turn each one into a clean digital copy in seconds.

On an iPhone: the Notes app

1. Open **Notes** and start a new note. Name it, for example, "Collection paperwork."
2. Tap the **Attachment** button (the paper clip), then tap **Scan Documents**.
3. Hold the phone over the page. The camera finds the edges and captures it; you can also tap the shutter button yourself.
4. Tap **Keep Scan**, scan more pages if needed, then tap **Done**.

On Android: the Google Drive app

1. Open the **Google Drive** app and tap **Add** (the plus sign, at the bottom right).
2. Tap **Scan**.
3. Take a photo of the page. Tap **Crop** to adjust the edges, or **Add** to scan another page.
4. Tap **Done** (or **Save**), give the file a clear name and choose a folder. Drive saves it as a PDF.

Name and file it sensibly

Use the item number and what the paper is: "C-014 receipt 1998," "R-102 appraisal 2024." Keep all of them in one folder named "Collection paperwork." Chapter 21 shows how to keep a second copy somewhere safe.

> **TIP**
>
> **Keep the originals too**
>
> A scan is a backup, not a replacement. Keep original appraisals and certificates in a folder or envelope in a safe, dry place, and tell a family member where it is.

GOOD TO KNOW

Certificates can be faked

A piece of paper saying "certified authentic" proves very little on its own. For graded coins and cards, the free verification apps in Chapter 13 and Chapter 14 check the certification number against the grading company's own records.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Paperwork that's scanned, named and in one folder can be emailed to an agent, an appraiser or a family member in a minute — even if the originals are in a safe deposit box across town.

PART 3

The Spreadsheet Route

Building your own collection list in Google Sheets or Excel: setting it up, adding photos, and sorting, searching and totaling.

CHAPTER 8

Setting Up a Collection Spreadsheet

A **spreadsheet** is a grid of boxes, called **cells**, arranged in rows and columns, like a ledger book. Each **row** is one item in your collection, and each **column** is one kind of detail: name, year, condition and so on. Two programs are the most common: **Google Sheets**, which is free with a Google account and works in a web browser, and **Microsoft Excel**, which comes with Microsoft 365.

Which one to use

Program	In plain words
Google Sheets	Free. Saves automatically to your Google account, so it's backed up as you type. Easy to share with a family member. Works on a computer at sheets.google.com and in the Google Sheets phone app.
Microsoft Excel	Included with a Microsoft 365 subscription, and often already on Windows computers that came with Office. Saves to your computer or to OneDrive. Familiar to many people from work.
Apple Numbers	Free on Mac, iPhone and iPad. Works the same way, if that's what you already use.

Make your first sheet (Google Sheets)

1. On your computer, go to **sheets.google.com** and sign in with your Google account.
2. Click **Blank spreadsheet** (the big plus sign).
3. Click the words **Untitled spreadsheet** at the top left and type a name, such as "Coin collection."
4. In row 1, type one heading per cell across the top: **Item #**, **What it is**, **Year**, **Details**, **Condition**, **Cert #**, **Where kept**, **Got it from**, **Date bought**, **Price paid**, **Est. value**, **Value source & date**, **Photo**, **Notes**.
5. Make the headings stand out: click the **1** at the left of the row to select it, then click the **B** (bold) button.
6. Keep the headings in view as you scroll: click **View** > **Freeze** > **1 row**.
7. Starting in row 2, type your first item. Press **Tab** to move right, **Enter** to start the next row.

Excel works almost the same way

In Excel, choose **Blank workbook**, type the same headings in row 1, and use **View** > **Freeze Panes** > **Freeze Top Row**. Remember to save with **File** > **Save As** and a clear name. Excel's **AutoSave** only works when the file is stored in OneDrive.

TIP

One sheet per collection, or one with tabs

You can keep a separate spreadsheet for each collection, or one spreadsheet with a **tab** for each (the little labels along the bottom). Click the **+** at the bottom left to add a tab, and double-click a tab to rename it "Coins," "Records" or "Books."

GOOD TO KNOW

Most apps can hand you a spreadsheet

Many collection apps can **export** your list as a **CSV** file — a plain spreadsheet file that opens in Google Sheets or Excel. That's an easy way to keep your own copy (Chapter 16).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A spreadsheet is yours, it's free or nearly free, and it will still open in twenty years. It can hold any kind of collection, however unusual.

CHAPTER 9

Adding Photos to Your Spreadsheet

Both Google Sheets and newer versions of Excel can place a small picture right inside a cell, so each row shows a thumbnail of the item. It makes a list much friendlier to browse.

In Google Sheets

1. Click the cell in the **Photo** column for the item.
2. Click **Insert** > **Image** > **Insert image in cell**.
3. Choose the photo: upload it from your computer, or pick one from Google Drive, Google Photos or your camera.
4. The picture shrinks to fit the cell. To see it larger, make the row taller by dragging the line under the row number down.

A cell holds one picture. If you want front and back, add a second photo column, or keep the full-size photos in a folder and use the picture in the sheet as a reminder.

In Excel (Microsoft 365)

1. Click the cell in the **Photo** column.
2. Click **Insert** > **Pictures** > **Place in Cell**, then choose where the photo is: **This Device** for your computer.
3. Pick the photo and click **Insert**.
4. Already have a floating picture on the sheet? Right-click it and choose **Place in Cell** to tuck it into the cell under it.

HEADS UP

Older versions of Excel may not have this

Placing pictures inside cells is a newer Excel feature. If you don't see **Place in Cell**, your version may be older. You can still insert a picture that floats over the cells, or simply type the photo's file name in the Photo column.

TIP

Keep the photos small

Hundreds of full-size phone photos can make a spreadsheet slow. The thumbnails are for recognizing items; keep the full-size originals in a photo folder or album, and back that up too (Chapter 21).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With a picture in each row, a family member scrolling through the list can see at a glance which item is which — no expert knowledge needed.

CHAPTER 10

Sorting, Searching and Totals

Once you have a few dozen rows, the spreadsheet starts to pay you back. You can put items in order, find one in a second, and add up what you've spent or what things might be worth.

Find something fast

Press **Ctrl** and **F** together (on a Mac, **Command** and **F**) and type a word: "Mantle," "1964," "Blue Note." The spreadsheet jumps to each match.

Put the list in order with a filter

1. Click any cell in your heading row.
2. In Google Sheets, click **Data** > **Create a filter**. In Excel, click **Data** > **Filter**.
3. Small buttons appear beside each heading. Click the one beside **Year**.
4. Choose to sort from smallest to largest (A to Z), or tick only the values you want to see.
5. To show everything again, turn the filter off the same way you turned it on.

> **TIP**
>
> **Sort with the filter, not by hand**
>
> Sorting through the filter buttons keeps every row together. If you sort only one column on its own, the years could end up next to the wrong items.

Add up a column

1. Click an empty cell below the last item in the **Est. value** column.
2. Type **=SUM(** and then drag your mouse down over the values in that column.
3. Type **)** and press **Enter**. The total appears, and updates whenever you change a value.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **Type numbers as plain numbers**
>
> Put just **150** in a value cell, not "about $150" or "150?". Words in a number cell stop the total from working. If you're unsure of a value, say so in the Notes column instead.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

In a few clicks you can answer questions like "What have I spent on coins?" or "Which records are from the 1960s?" — the kind of thing your insurance agent or a family member may ask one day.

PART 4

Apps for Each Kind of Collection

The popular apps for records, books, coins and trading cards as of November 2026 — what they do, what they cost, and how to choose one wisely.

CHAPTER 11

Records and CDs: Discogs

Discogs is a huge online database of recorded music on vinyl, CD, cassette and more, built by collectors, along with a marketplace where people buy and sell. Its official app for iPhone and Android lets you build a list of what you own (your **Collection**) and a list of what you're hunting for (your **Wantlist**).

Why record collectors like it

- Records are often released in many versions — different countries, labels, years and pressings. Discogs lists them separately, so you can record exactly which one you own.
- You can find a release by scanning its **barcode** with your phone's camera, instead of typing.
- Discogs shows an estimated value range for your collection, based on recent sales in its marketplace. Records that have never sold there are left out of the estimate.
- You can export your whole collection as a spreadsheet (CSV) file from the Discogs website.

Adding a record by scanning (iPhone)

1. Install the free **Discogs** app from the App Store and sign in, or create a free account.
2. Tap the **magnifying glass** to open the **Explore** page, then tap the small **camera** icon next to the search bar.
3. Point the camera at the barcode on the back of the jacket or CD case.
4. Look through the matching releases and compare the details — label, catalog number, country, year — with your copy. Pick the one that matches.
5. Open that release and add it to your **Collection**.

The Android app is similar: tap the magnifying glass at the top right, then the small **barcode** icon. If there's no barcode — most records made before the 1980s don't have one — search by artist and title, or by the catalog number printed on the spine or label.

HEADS UP

A barcode match isn't always the exact pressing

The same barcode can be shared by several versions of a record, and condition isn't something a scan can see. Always compare the label and run-out numbers with the listing before you trust the value.

GOOD TO KNOW

Other record apps

Several independent apps work alongside Discogs and sync with your Discogs account. They aren't made by Discogs, and many charge for extra features. If you try one, read its App Store or Google Play listing carefully for subscription costs.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Scanning turns an evening of typing into a few minutes, and the collection value gives you a reasonable starting point for insurance conversations.

CHAPTER 12

Books: Libib, Goodreads, StoryGraph and CLZ Books

Books are one of the easiest things to catalog, because most books printed in recent decades carry an **ISBN** barcode — a unique book number — on the back of the book. Scan it, and the app fills in the title, author and cover.

The main choices

App	In plain words
Libib	Made for cataloging a home library (it also handles movies, music and games). Its **Basic** plan for personal collections is free, and lets you export your list any time. **Libib Pro**, aimed at schools and organizations, costs $9.00 a month or $99.00 a year.
Goodreads	Free. Best known as a place to track what you've read and see reviews. Its app can scan a book's barcode or cover and add it to a shelf, such as **Want to Read**.
The StoryGraph	A reading tracker with a free version and a paid **StoryGraph Plus** ($4.99 a month as of November 2026, with a free trial). It can import a list exported from Goodreads.
CLZ Books	A dedicated book-collection app. US $1.99 a month or $19.99 a year, with a free 7-day trial, according to CLZ.

Scanning books with Libib

1. Install **Libib** from the App Store or Google Play and create a free account.
2. Create a library and give it a name, such as "Home books."
3. Tap the **+** sign and choose to scan a barcode.
4. Point the camera at the barcode on the back of the book. Check that the right title appears, then save.

Older books may have no barcode at all, and a scan can occasionally bring up the wrong edition. For those, type the ISBN printed on the copyright page if there is one, or enter the title and author by hand.

TIP

Goodreads is for reading; a catalog app is for owning

Goodreads and StoryGraph are wonderful for tracking what you've read, but they're designed around reading, not insuring. For a home library you might want to sell or insure someday, a catalog app or a spreadsheet with condition and edition notes is a better fit.

GOOD TO KNOW

Valuable books need more than a scan

For older or rare books, what matters is the edition, printing, condition and dust jacket — details a barcode scan doesn't capture. Photograph the title and copyright pages (Chapter 6) and note them yourself.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Scanning a shelf of books takes minutes, and you'll never again stand in a bookstore wondering whether that title is already at home.

CHAPTER 13

Coins: PCGS and NGC Apps

Two of the best-known coin grading companies in the United States are **PCGS** (Professional Coin Grading Service) and **NGC** (Numismatic Guaranty Company). A graded coin is sealed in a hard plastic holder, often called a **slab**, with a label showing its grade and a **certification number**. Both companies offer free phone apps.

The apps

App	What it does
PCGS Cert Verification	Free. Scan the barcode or QR code on the label, or type the certification number, to confirm the coin and grade match PCGS's records. It also shows a Price Guide value.
PCGS CoinFacts	PCGS's reference app with coin information, its Price Guide and Photograde (photos that show what each grade looks like). PCGS describes it as 100 percent free; check the store listing in case that changes.
NGC App	Free. Scan the barcode on an NGC label to verify the coin, and see population data and NGC Price Guide values for U.S. coins.

Verifying a graded coin

1. Look at the label on the holder and find the company name: PCGS or NGC.
2. Open that company's app and choose to scan or enter a certification number.
3. Scan the barcode or type the number from the label.
4. Compare what the app shows — the coin, date, grade, and often a photo — with the coin in your hand.
5. Write the certification number in your catalog's **Cert #** column.

SCAM ALERT

Fake holders are real

Counterfeiters make fake slabs with fake labels, sometimes copying a real certification number. If the coin in the holder doesn't match the photo or description in the grading company's app, or the number doesn't come up at all, don't buy it, and don't rely on it for insurance.

Ungraded coins

Most coins in a family collection have never been graded, and that's fine. Record the country, denomination, year and mint mark, photograph both sides, and describe the condition in your own words. Many photo-identification apps exist for coins; treat their answers and values as a guess to double-check, not a fact.

GOOD TO KNOW

Grading costs money

Sending a coin to PCGS or NGC costs a fee per coin, plus shipping and insurance. It's usually only worth it for coins that are already valuable. An experienced local dealer or appraiser can help you decide.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A verified certification number is the single most useful fact you can record about a graded coin. It proves what it is to an agent, an appraiser or a buyer in seconds.

CHAPTER 14

Trading Cards: Collectr, CollX, Ludex and PSA

Card-scanning apps identify a sports or trading card from a photo and show an estimated market value. They're quick and fun, and most are free to download, with paid subscriptions for unlimited scanning and extra features.

The popular apps

App	In plain words
Collectr	Aimed at trading card games such as Pokémon, plus other cards. Free download; **Collectr PRO** has been listed in the App Store at $7.99 a month or $59.99 a year in 2026.
CollX	Aimed at sports cards. Free download; identifies a card from a photo and shows an average market value. Paid **Pro** and **Gold** tiers are offered; CollX lists Gold at $24.99 a month.
Ludex	Sports and trading cards. Free download. The App Store lists paid **Lite**, **Ludex** and **Pro** plans, from $4.99 to $24.99 a month.
PSA Cert Verification	Free on iPhone and Android, from PSA, a major card-grading company. Scan the barcode or QR code on a PSA label, or type the cert number, to confirm a graded card is genuine.

Scanning cards, step by step

1. Install the app you've chosen and create an account.
2. Lay the card on a plain, dark background in good light.
3. Tap the scan button and hold the phone square over the card.
4. Check the result carefully: the player or character, year, set, card number and any special version ("parallel," "refractor," "first edition").
5. Save it to your collection. If the app lets you, add the condition or grade.

HEADS UP

Look before you subscribe

Subscription prices for card apps vary and change often, and the store pages list several tiers. Before you tap Subscribe, open the app's listing in the App Store or Google Play, scroll to **In-App Purchases**, and read what you'll be charged. Chapter 16 shows how to cancel.

GOOD TO KNOW

App values assume the best

A card app's value usually reflects recent sales of that card in typical condition, or for graded copies, at a particular grade. A card with soft corners or a crease may sell for far less. See Chapter 17.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Scanning a box of cards gives you a list, and a rough idea which few cards deserve a closer look — and perhaps a professional grade.

CHAPTER 15

Stamps, Dolls, Tools and Everything Else

Not every collection has a barcode or a dedicated app. Stamps, dolls, quilts, die-cast cars, pocket knives, antique tools, figurines, comic books — they can all be cataloged beautifully with a spreadsheet and good photos.

Adapting the spreadsheet

1. Start with the core fields from Chapter 4.
2. Add the two or three details collectors of that item care about most. For stamps: country, catalog number, used or unused. For dolls: maker, marks on the back of the neck, original box. For tools: maker, model, any patent date stamped on it.
3. If you're not sure what matters, a collectors' club, a specialty dealer or a published price guide for that hobby can tell you what details they ask about.
4. Photograph any maker's marks, labels or signatures (Chapter 5).

TIP

Ask a club

Many hobbies have local or national clubs whose members are glad to help a newcomer — or a family member who has inherited a collection — figure out what's what. Your public library can often help you find one.

GOOD TO KNOW

General home-inventory apps

If your collection is one part of a bigger project to list everything in your home, a home-inventory app like the free NAIC Home Inventory app can hold it too. Chapter 19 explains.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Whatever you collect, a clear list with photos and maker's marks means your family and your agent can understand it — no special app required.

CHAPTER 16

Choosing an App Wisely

A collection app can hold years of your work. Before you put hundreds of items in one, a few questions protect you from surprises.

Five questions to ask first

1. **What does it cost, really?** Free to download often means some features are paid. Check the **In-App Purchases** section of the store listing.
2. **Can I export my list?** Look for an option to export to a **CSV** or spreadsheet file. If you can't get your data out, think twice.
3. **Does it keep my photos?** Some apps use their own stock images; some keep the photos you take. For insurance, your own photos matter.
4. **Who can see my collection?** Some apps make collections public or sell to other users by default. Look in the app's settings or profile for privacy options.
5. **What if the company closes or changes?** Apps come and go. Your exported copy (Chapter 21) is your insurance against that.

How to export, in general

Every app is a little different, but the export option usually lives in the app's **Settings** or **Account** area, or on the company's website rather than in the phone app. Look for words like **Export**, **Download** or **Backup**. The file it gives you can be opened in Google Sheets or Excel.

HEADS UP

Canceling a subscription

Deleting an app doesn't cancel its subscription. On an iPhone, open **Settings**, tap your name, then **Subscriptions**. On Android, open the **Google Play Store**, tap your profile picture, then **Payments & subscriptions** > **Subscriptions**. Cancel there.

SCAM ALERT

Watch for look-alike apps

Search the store for a popular app's name and you'll often find others with nearly the same name. For example, "Collectr - TCG Collector App" and a separate "CollectR: Sports Card Scanner" are listed by different companies. Some look-alikes charge costly subscriptions. Check the developer's name under the app title, and read the In-App Purchases before installing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few minutes of checking up front means your catalog stays yours, and you only pay for what you actually use.

PART 5

Values & Appraisals

What the numbers in a collection app really mean, and when it's worth paying a professional appraiser for a written opinion.

CHAPTER 17

What an App's Value Really Means

Almost every collection app shows a dollar figure next to your items. It's exciting to see, and it's useful, but it helps to understand where that number comes from before you rely on it for insurance, a sale or a family conversation.

Where app values come from

- **Recent sales.** Discogs, for example, bases its collection estimate on recent sales in its own marketplace, and leaves out releases that haven't sold there. Card apps generally look at recent sales of the same card.
- **Price guides.** The PCGS and NGC apps show their own price guide values for many U.S. coins.
- **Typical condition.** Most estimates assume an average copy, or a particular grade. Your copy may be better or worse.

Four reasons your item may be worth less, or more

Factor	Why it matters
Condition	A crease, a scratch, a warp or a cleaned coin can cut the price sharply. A pristine copy can be worth far more than average.
Exact version	A first pressing, a first edition, a mint mark or a rare card variation can change everything. A scan may pick a more common version.
Demand changes	Prices for cards and records rise and fall with popularity. Today's estimate is a snapshot, not a promise.
Selling costs	What a buyer pays isn't what you keep. Marketplace fees, shipping and a dealer's margin all come out of it.

How to record a value honestly

1. Type the number in your **Est. value** column as a plain number, such as **150**.
2. In the **Value source & date** column, write where it came from and when: "Discogs estimate, November 2026" or "CollX, November 2026."
3. If you have a professional appraisal, record that value and date instead, and note the appraiser's name.
4. Once a year, look up your most valuable items again and update the numbers.

GOOD TO KNOW

Retail, resale and insurance values differ

What it would cost to **replace** an item from a dealer is usually more than what you'd get if you **sold** it. Insurance usually cares about replacement; a sale is about resale. An appraisal states which kind of value it gives.

HEADS UP

Don't sell based on an app number alone

If an app says a card or coin is worth a lot, get a second opinion before you sell, and before you turn down an offer. Apps can be wrong in both directions.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing what the number means keeps you from being disappointed, and from being taken advantage of. A value with its source and date is a fact; a value without one is a guess.

CHAPTER 18

When to Get a Professional Appraisal

An **appraisal** is a written opinion of value from a trained professional, usually for a specific purpose such as insurance, an estate or a donation. Most family collections don't need one for every piece. A few situations make one well worth it.

Times an appraisal makes sense

- Your insurance agent asks for one before adding valuable items to your policy (Chapter 20).
- An app or a dealer suggests a single item, or the whole collection, is worth a lot.
- You're settling an estate, dividing a collection among family, or planning a donation. A lawyer or tax professional can tell you what kind of appraisal they need.
- You're about to sell something valuable and want an independent opinion first.

Finding a qualified appraiser

In the United States, appraising personal property such as coins, cards, books and records isn't licensed by the government, so anyone can call themselves an appraiser. Three professional groups are the usual starting points: the **International Society of Appraisers** (ISA), the **American Society of Appraisers** (ASA) and the **Appraisers Association of America**. Each has a way to find members.

1. Go to one of those groups' websites and look for **Find an Appraiser**.
2. Search by your ZIP code and by specialty (coins, sports memorabilia, rare books, music and so on).
3. Choose someone whose specialty matches your items. A fine art appraiser isn't the right person for baseball cards.
4. Call and ask the questions below before you book.

Questions to ask

- Do you specialize in this kind of item, and for how long?
- Do you follow **USPAP**? (The Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. ISA says it's voluntary for personal-property appraisers, though ISA's own members must follow it.)
- How do you charge: by the hour, by the item, or a flat fee?

- Will I get a written report, and what kind of value will it give (replacement for insurance, or fair market value)?
- Do you buy items like these? (If so, consider someone who doesn't.)

SCAM ALERT

Red flags in an appraiser

Be wary of anyone who charges a **percentage of the value** — ISA lists that as a reason not to accept an appraisal — or who offers to buy the item right after telling you it's worth little. A real appraiser has no stake in the answer.

TIP

Keep the report with your catalog

Scan the appraisal (Chapter 7), name it with the item numbers it covers, and note the appraised value and date in your spreadsheet. Keep the original somewhere safe.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A proper appraisal for your few most valuable pieces gives your agent, your family and any buyer a number they can trust, so nobody has to guess.

PART 6

Insurance & Backups

Turning your catalog into a home inventory your insurance agent can use, the questions to ask, and keeping copies of everything so one bad day can't erase it.

CHAPTER 19

A Home Inventory for Insurance

A **home inventory** is a list of your belongings, with photos and receipts, that you'd use to file an insurance claim after a fire, a storm or a theft. Your collection catalog can be one part of it. The goal is simple: if the worst happens, you can show what you had without relying on memory.

What makes an inventory useful for a claim

- **Photos** of each important item, plus wide shots of each shelf, album or room (Chapter 5).
- **Descriptions** with identifying details: year, edition, maker, certification numbers (Chapter 4).
- **Proof** of what you paid or what it's worth: receipts, appraisals, auction records (Chapter 7).
- **A copy stored away from home**, so it survives whatever happens to the house (Chapter 21).

The free NAIC Home Inventory app

The **NAIC** (National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the group of state insurance regulators) offers a free **NAIC Home Inventory** app for iPhone and Android. It lets you list belongings room by room, add photos, scan barcodes, and find tips on filing a claim. It's a handy place to hold your general household items alongside a separate collection catalog.

1. Install **NAIC Home Inventory** from the App Store or Google Play. Check that the developer is the NAIC.
2. Add a room or area, such as "Den" or "Basement shelves."
3. Add an item: give it a name, take a photo, and fill in what you know about it.
4. For a big collection, add one entry such as "Record collection, about 400 LPs" and note where your detailed catalog is kept.

TIP

A video walk-through counts

A slow video of each room, narrated as you go, is a quick way to capture a lot. Keep it with your inventory and your catalog.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is general information

I'm not an insurance agent, and every policy is different. What your policy covers, and what proof it needs, are questions for your agent (Chapter 20).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

After a loss, people are often asked to list everything they owned while they're upset and exhausted. A ready-made inventory spares you that, and can make the conversation with your insurer much simpler.

CHAPTER 20

Talking with Your Insurance Agent

Many people assume their homeowners or renters policy fully covers a collection. Sometimes it does; sometimes it doesn't. The only way to know is to ask. This chapter gives you the questions; your agent gives you the answers.

Things worth knowing before you call

- Many homeowners policies set **lower limits for certain kinds of property**, which can include collectibles, coins, jewelry or firearms. The amounts vary by policy.
- Agents may offer ways to cover valuable items more fully, often called **scheduling** items, a **floater** or a **rider**, where specific items are listed on the policy, sometimes with an appraisal.
- Some companies offer separate policies just for collections.

Questions to ask your agent

1. How does my current policy treat my collection? Is there a special limit for this kind of item?
2. Would it be covered for theft, fire, water damage and accidental breakage?
3. Would you pay to replace it, or what it was worth at the time of the loss?
4. Should I list valuable items separately? What would that cost, and do you need an appraisal?
5. What records would you want to see after a loss? Is my catalog with photos enough?
6. Does coverage change if I keep items in a safe deposit box, take them to a show, or ship them?

TIP

Bring your catalog

Email your agent a copy of your spreadsheet, or a short list of your most valuable pieces with values and photos. It turns a vague conversation into a specific one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ask your agent, not an app or a stranger

This guide can't tell you what your policy covers or what you should buy. Your own agent, or your insurance company's customer service line, can. If something's unclear, ask them to put the answer in writing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A fifteen-minute call can reveal a gap before it matters, instead of after.

CHAPTER 21

Backing Up Your Catalog and Photos

A catalog that exists in only one place can vanish in one moment: a phone dropped in the lake, a computer that won't start, an app that closes, or the same fire that damaged the collection. A **backup** is simply a second copy, kept somewhere else.

The simple rule: three copies, two places, one away from home

Copy	Where it lives
Copy 1	The working copy: your spreadsheet or app, where you add new items.
Copy 2	A copy on something else at home, such as a USB flash drive or your computer.
Copy 3	A copy away from home: in an online storage account such as Google Drive, iCloud Drive or OneDrive, or a flash drive with a trusted family member.

Download a copy of a Google Sheet

1. Open your spreadsheet at **sheets.google.com**.
2. Click **File** > **Download**.
3. Choose **Microsoft Excel (.xlsx)** to keep pictures and formatting, or **Comma-separated values (.csv)** for a plain copy that opens almost anywhere.
4. Find the file in your **Downloads** folder and copy it to a flash drive or another safe place.

Export from a collection app

1. Look in the app's **Settings** or **Account** area, or on the company's website, for **Export**.
2. On Discogs, the export is on the website: it creates a CSV file of your whole collection to download.
3. Save the file with a clear name and the date, such as "Discogs collection 2026-11."
4. Store a copy with your other backups.

Don't forget the photos and paperwork

Your photos and scanned paperwork matter as much as the list. If they're on your phone, make sure the phone's photo backup is turned on (iCloud Photos on iPhone, or Google Photos backup on Android), and copy the "Collection paperwork" folder to your backup too.

TIP

Make it a habit

Pick a date you'll remember — a birthday, the first of the year, or when you change your clocks — and make a fresh backup each time.

HEADS UP

Test that a backup opens

Once in a while, open your backup copy on a different computer. A backup that won't open isn't a backup.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Years of careful work can't be lost to one broken device or one closed company. And a copy with a family member means they have it if they ever need it.

PART 7

Selling, Scams & Family

Selling safely when the time comes, recognizing the scams aimed at collectors, and sharing your catalog with the people who'll one day care for the collection.

CHAPTER 22

Selling Safely

Whether you're thinning out the shelves or selling a collection you inherited, your catalog makes it easier. You already know what you have, what condition it's in, and roughly what it's worth. Here's how to sell without getting hurt.

Your main choices

Option	What to expect
Local dealer or shop	A coin shop, card shop, record store or used bookstore. Quick and in person. Expect an offer below retail, since the dealer has to resell it.
Online marketplace	Discogs for records, eBay and others for almost anything. Often the best price, but you handle photos, listings, fees, packing and shipping.
Auction house	Worth considering for valuable single pieces or whole collections. Ask about the commission and any other fees in writing.
Consignment	A dealer sells for you and keeps a share. Get the agreement, the share and the timeline in writing.

Before you sell anything valuable

1. Look up the item's value in at least two places, and note the dates (Chapter 17).
2. For anything that might be worth a lot, get an opinion from someone who isn't buying it (Chapter 18).
3. Get more than one offer. It's fine to say, "Thank you, I'll think about it."
4. Take fresh photos showing the true condition, including any flaws (Chapter 5).
5. Update your catalog when it's sold: date, price and who bought it.

Staying safe in person

- Meet buyers in a public place. Many police stations offer a lobby or parking area for exchanges.
- Bring someone with you, and don't invite strangers to see the whole collection at your home.
- Don't hand over the item until you're paid in full in a way you trust.

HEADS UP

Don't ship until the money is really yours

Wait until payment has fully arrived in your account through the marketplace's own system. A payment "notice" in an email isn't money.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Selling from a good catalog is calmer and safer. You know what things are worth, you can describe them honestly, and you're far harder to rush.

CHAPTER 23

Scams That Target Collectors

Collectors, and families who have just inherited a collection, attract scammers. The tricks change, but they rely on the same few things: hurry, excitement, and money moving the wrong way. Knowing the patterns is the best protection there is.

The overpayment scam

A "buyer" agrees to your price, then sends a check, a money order or a payment for **more** than you asked. They apologize and ask you to send back the difference, often by wire, gift card or a payment app, or to pay their "shipper." Weeks later the bank discovers the check was fake and takes the full amount back out of your account. The money you sent is gone.

SCAM ALERT

Overpaid? It's a scam.

The FTC is plain about it: if someone sends you more than the selling price and asks you to send money back, it's a scam. Return the payment and don't ship. A check that has "cleared" can still turn out to be fake later.

Fake buyers

- They want to buy without seeing the item, and offer more than it's worth.
- They ask you to ship to a different address or to a "mover" or "agent" who will pick it up.
- They send an email that looks like it's from a marketplace or payment service saying the money is "waiting" until you ship, or pay a fee.
- They want to move the conversation off the marketplace, to text or personal email.
- They ask for a code that was just texted to your phone. That code is the key to your account; never share it.

SCAM ALERT

Never pay to get paid

A real buyer never needs you to pay a fee, buy gift cards or send money to receive their payment. Stop there.

Fake or crooked appraisers and buyers

- An "appraiser" who calls you out of the blue after a death in the family, or offers a free appraisal and then a quick cash offer.
- Someone who says your collection is nearly worthless, then offers to "take it off your hands."
- A fee based on a **percentage of the value**, which the International Society of Appraisers says is a reason not to accept an appraisal.
- Pressure to decide today. Honest buyers and appraisers are glad to let you think.

SCAM ALERT

Phony certificates and slabs

A fancy certificate of authenticity or a graded-looking holder can be counterfeit. For coins and cards, check the certification number in the grading company's free app (Chapter 13 and Chapter 14) before you buy or trust a value.

If you think you've been targeted

1. Stop replying. Don't send anything more, and don't ship the item.
2. If money has already moved, call your bank or card company right away, using the number on your card or statement.
3. Report it to the marketplace you were using, and at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**. You can also contact the Ohio Attorney General's consumer protection office.
4. Change the password on any account you might have given away, and tell a family member.

FROM BILL

Not sure? Ask before you act

If a buyer, an email or an "appraiser" doesn't feel right, call me at (330) 200-8042 before you send anything. Talking it through with someone you trust is often all it takes to see the trick.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Recognizing these patterns means you keep both your collection and your money, and the scammer moves on.

CHAPTER 24

Sharing Your Catalog with Family

A catalog does the most good when the right people know it exists. Sharing a copy with a trusted family member means they can help keep it up to date, and they'll have it if they ever need it.

Share a Google Sheet

1. Open the spreadsheet and click the **Share** button at the top right.
2. Type the email address of the family member.
3. Choose what they can do: **Viewer** to look only, or **Editor** to add and change items.
4. Click **Send**. They'll get an email with a link.

TIP

Viewer is usually enough

Most family members only need to look. Give "Editor" only to the one person helping you add items.

Share an Excel file or a PDF

If your catalog is in Excel and stored in OneDrive, the **Share** button works much the same way. You can also email a copy of the file, or save a version as a PDF (**File** > **Save As** or **Export**, then choose PDF) for someone who just wants to read it.

Who should know what

- Where the catalog is, and how to open it.
- Where the most valuable items are kept, and where the keys or combination are.
- Where the paperwork is: appraisals, receipts, certificates.
- The names of any dealer, appraiser or insurance agent you trust.

HEADS UP

Be careful what you share widely

A detailed list of valuables, with photos and where they're kept, is exactly what a burglar would want. Share it with people you trust, not on social media, and don't make an app collection public unless you mean to.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your family won't have to guess, and you'll have a helper who knows the system.

CHAPTER 25

Passing a Collection On

Many collections outlive their collectors. A catalog is one of the kindest things you can leave, because it tells your family what matters, what doesn't, and what you'd like to happen.

Things worth writing down

1. Which pieces are most valuable, and which are most meaningful. They aren't always the same.
2. The stories: where a piece came from, who gave it to you, why you kept it. Use the **Notes** column.
3. Any wishes you have: "The baseball cards go to my grandson," "Offer the records to the local library first."
4. Who you'd trust to help sell or appraise it: a dealer, a club member, an appraiser.
5. A reminder not to clean, sort or sell anything in a hurry.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Wishes in a catalog aren't a will**
> A note in a spreadsheet tells your family what you'd like, but it isn't a legal document. If it matters who receives what, talk with an estate lawyer about how to make it official.

If you've inherited a collection

- Take your time. There's rarely a reason to decide quickly.
- Don't clean coins, flatten cards or repair book jackets. Leave things as they are.
- Start a simple catalog with photos before anything is moved or divided (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).
- Get an independent opinion on anything that might be valuable before accepting an offer (Chapter 18).
- Watch for the scams in Chapter 23. Strangers who hear about an estate sometimes come calling.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A collection with a catalog and a few written wishes is a gift. Without one, it can become a puzzle at a hard time.

PART 8

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep with your collection.

CHAPTER 26

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can catalog your collection on your own, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves time and frustration. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Getting started** — setting up your collection spreadsheet with the right columns, frozen headings and a total (Chapter 8 and Chapter 10).
- **Choosing and installing an app**, checking what it really costs, and making your first export (Chapter 11 through Chapter 16).
- **Setting up a photo corner** and showing you how to get sharp, glare-free photos with your phone (Chapter 5).
- **Setting up backups** to a flash drive and an online account, and checking they open (Chapter 21).
- **Sharing the catalog** with a family member safely (Chapter 24).
- **Checking a buyer, an email or an offer** that doesn't feel right, before you send or ship anything (Chapter 23).
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person beside you.** That's always a good enough reason.

What I don't do

I'm not an appraiser, an insurance agent or a lawyer, and I don't buy or sell collections. I'll help you with the technology and the records, and point you toward the right professional for values, coverage and estates.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace — no rushing, no talking down, no jargon. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I'll always tell you honestly when something isn't worth the money. Home visits are here in Portage County, Ohio; remote help reaches you wherever you are. I've been doing this work for more than 30 years.

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 free to read and share with family and fellow collectors.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may be greeted by Sophie

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might first meet **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. The actual help always comes from me.

Thank you for taking the time to care for your collection, and for the people who'll one day inherit it. Ten items at a time is plenty.

— Bill

CHAPTER 27

Your Collection Cheat-Sheet

Keep a copy of this with your catalog. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Remember	
Every item	Number, what it is, identifying details, condition, where kept, how acquired, price, value with source and date, photo, story.
Photos	Plain background, soft light, no flash, front and back, close-ups of marks and flaws.
Never	Clean a coin, write on an item, or trust an app value without a second look.
Records	Discogs: scan the barcode, then match label, catalog number and run-out.
Books	Libib, Goodreads, StoryGraph or CLZ Books: scan the ISBN barcode.
Coins	PCGS and NGC apps: check the certification number on graded coins.
Cards	Collectr, CollX or Ludex to scan; PSA Cert Verification for graded cards.
Values	A snapshot from recent sales. Appraise the few pieces that really matter.
Insurance	Ask your agent about special limits and listing valuable items separately.
Backups	Three copies, two places, one away from home.
Overpaid?	It's a scam. Return it, don't ship, never send the difference.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Where my catalog is (file or app)	_____
App account email	_____
Where the backups are	_____
Where the paperwork is kept	_____
Most valuable items (numbers)	_____
Insurance agent (name and phone)	_____
Policy number	_____
Appraiser or dealer I trust	_____
Family member who has a copy	_____
Date of last backup	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. A scan finds the wrong item: search by name, catalog number or ISBN instead, and compare details (Chapter 11 and Chapter 12).
2. Photos are blurry or shiny: wipe the lens, tap to focus, turn off the flash, add side light (Chapter 5).
3. The total in your spreadsheet is wrong: make sure value cells hold plain numbers only (Chapter 10).
4. An app is charging you: cancel in your phone's subscriptions, not just by deleting the app (Chapter 16).
5. A graded holder doesn't verify: don't buy it or rely on it (Chapter 13).
6. A buyer overpaid or wants you to pay a fee: stop; it's a scam (Chapter 23).
7. Lost your phone or computer: restore from your backup (Chapter 21).
8. Still stuck: call Bill at **(330) 200-8042**.