BILL'S HOME TECH
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BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Chromebook

The simple, worry-free computer —
explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for every Chromebook owner

Take your time — you can't break it

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(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Chromebooks running ChromeOS · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your Chromebook manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Every feature comes with what it actually does *for you* and slow, step-by-step directions anyone can follow. It's written for Chromebooks running ChromeOS; if a screen looks a little different on yours, the idea is still the same — which is why we describe what to do, not just where every button sits today.

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PART 1

Meet Your Chromebook

What this little computer is, why it's refreshingly simple, and the one big promise that lets you relax and explore. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you're holding this book, there's a good chance a Chromebook has just landed on your kitchen table — maybe a gift from the family, maybe a bargain you spotted and were brave enough to try. Either way, I'm glad you're here, and I promise you've picked one of the friendliest computers ever made.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, right here in Portage County, and I wrote this the way I'd sit down beside you at your own table: patiently, in plain English, with no rushing and no fancy words. Any time I use a term you don't know, I'll stop and explain it right then — you'll never have to look anything up.

Why a Chromebook is a lovely place to start

A Chromebook is built around one idea: keep it simple. There's very little to install, very little to break, and almost nothing to maintain. It starts up in seconds, it updates itself quietly in the background, and it shrugs off most of the viruses and gremlins that plague other computers. For someone who just wants to check email, see the grandkids' photos, browse the web, and write the occasional letter, it's close to ideal.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A Chromebook takes away the parts of computing that cause the most worry — the updates you're afraid to skip, the viruses, the mysterious slowdowns. What's left is the good part: staying in touch, looking things up, and doing your daily bits and pieces without a knot in your stomach.

You truly cannot break it

Here's the most important promise in this whole book, so I'll say it plainly: **you cannot break your Chromebook by tapping, clicking, and exploring.** You can't wear it out. You can't delete something important just by looking around. And because your Chromebook keeps your things safely online (we'll get to what that means), even if the machine itself were lost or damaged tomorrow, your email, photos, and files would all still be there, waiting for you on any other device you sign in to.

So relax your shoulders. Curiosity is rewarded here, and almost everything can be undone. We'll go one small step at a time, and I'll be right here on the page with you.

How to read this book

You do not have to read these pages in order, and there's no test at the end. Start on page one, or flip straight to the chapter that answers today's question. Fold the corners, underline things, keep it in the drawer by your chair. It's a reference, not a race — you cannot fall behind.

FROM BILL

And I'm only a phone call away

This book will carry you a long way on your own. But if you ever get truly stuck, you're never stuck alone — that's not how I do things. Call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll work it out together, with no judgment and no eye-rolling. There's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What a Chromebook Actually Is

Before we press a single key, let's answer the simplest question: what *is* this thing?

A computer built around the internet

A Chromebook is a laptop — a computer with a screen and a keyboard that folds shut like a book. What makes it special is that it's built around **the web** (the internet). Instead of loading up heavy programs the way older computers do, a Chromebook mostly does its work through the **Chrome web browser** — the same window you'd use to visit a website. That one idea is why it stays so fast and so simple.

Made by many companies, running Google's software

"Chromebook" isn't a single brand. Many companies make them — Acer, HP, Lenovo, Samsung, ASUS, and others — but they all run the same Google software, called **ChromeOS** (the "OS" stands for operating system, which is just the master program that runs the whole machine). So no matter whose name is on the lid, the steps in this book apply to your Chromebook.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your Google Account is the key to everything

A Chromebook works hand-in-hand with a free **Google Account** — the same kind of account used for Gmail and YouTube. Signing in with it is what brings your email, photos, and files onto the machine. If you've ever used Gmail, you already have one. If not, we'll make one together in a few chapters — it's free and takes minutes.

What it's great at — and what it isn't

Being honest about a tool's strengths saves a lot of frustration. Here's the plain truth.

Wonderful for	Email, web browsing, YouTube and streaming, video calls, photos, writing letters and documents, online banking and shopping, looking things up — the everyday things most people do most of the time.
Possible but less common	Heavy photo or video editing, and specialized programs like certain tax software or high-end games. There are often web-based or app alternatives, but a Chromebook isn't built to be a powerhouse.

Not how it works	Installing old Windows or Mac programs from a CD or download. Chromebooks use web apps and Android apps instead — more on that later.

TIP

If in doubt, it probably can

For the ordinary things folks actually want — staying in touch, entertainment, and errands online — the answer to "can my Chromebook do this?" is almost always yes. The exceptions are specialized programs, and if you ever hit one, a quick call to me will sort out whether there's an easy alternative.

CHAPTER 3

How a Chromebook Differs From Windows and Mac

If you've used a Windows PC or an Apple Mac before, a Chromebook will feel familiar in some ways and different in others. Knowing the differences up front spares you the "where did everything go?" moment.

The big differences, plainly

Programs vs. the web	Windows and Mac run installed programs. A Chromebook mostly uses websites and apps through the Chrome browser, plus apps from the Google Play Store.
Saving your work	On older computers you saved files onto the machine. On a Chromebook, your work usually saves automatically to Google Drive — your free storage space online — so it's safe and available anywhere.
Updates	No more nagging "update now" boxes. ChromeOS updates itself quietly and quickly in the background.
Viruses	Chromebooks are built to resist viruses and generally don't need the anti-virus programs other computers do.
Starting up	A Chromebook wakes up in a second or two, not the long wait some computers make you sit through.

What carries over

Plenty feels familiar. There's still a **desktop** (the main screen), a row of app icons along the bottom, a clock in the corner, and a **touchpad** (the smooth rectangle below the keyboard you slide your finger on to move the arrow). You still click, type, and scroll just as you always have. The ideas you already know mostly carry straight over.

> **FROM BILL**
>
> **Don't worry about the jargon**
>
> ChromeOS, Google Drive, web apps — it's a few new words, that's all, and I'll define each one the moment it comes up. You don't need to memorize anything. By the end of this book these terms will feel as ordinary as "channel" and "remote."

CHAPTER 4

What You Need to Get Going

Good news: it's a short list, and you likely have most of it already.

- **The Chromebook itself** and its **charger** (the cable and plug it came with).
- **Home internet (Wi-Fi).** Since a Chromebook lives on the web, a working internet connection at home is what makes it sing. If you can use the internet on a phone or another computer at home, you're set.
- **A Google Account** — free, and we'll make one together if you don't have one.
- **A little patience and curiosity.** That's genuinely all. We'll supply the rest.

GOOD TO KNOW

A Chromebook without internet

A Chromebook can do some things offline (write a document, read already-saved files), but it's happiest online, where your email, photos, and the whole web live. If you don't have home internet yet, that's the first thing worth sorting out — and a good thing to call me about.

A gentle plan for your first week

There's no rush, but if you'd like a path: this week, just get signed in and comfortable opening and closing the lid (Chapters 5–9). Next week, connect to the internet and send an email. The week after, explore photos and the web. Small steps, each one a small win. Before long it's second nature.

PART 2

Getting Started

Turning it on, signing in, and a gentle tour of everything on the screen and under your fingers. By the end of this part, you'll know your way around.

CHAPTER 5

Turning On, Charging, and Closing the Lid

Let's begin at the very beginning — with the power.

Turning it on

Open the lid like a book, and the Chromebook usually wakes up on its own. If it doesn't, press the **power button** — a single tap, not a long hold. It's usually at the top-right corner of the keyboard or along the side edge. Within a couple of seconds you'll see the screen come to life.

Charging the battery

Your Chromebook runs on a rechargeable battery, like a phone. When it runs low, plug the charger into the wall and the other end into the small slot on the side of the Chromebook. A little light usually glows to show it's charging. You can keep using it while it charges — no need to wait.

- A full charge typically lasts most of a day of ordinary use, often longer.
- You can't overcharge it by leaving it plugged in — the Chromebook is smart about that.
- If it won't turn on at all, plug it in, wait a few minutes, and try again. A completely empty battery needs a moment before it'll start.

Closing the lid — your Chromebook naps, it doesn't shut off

When you close the lid, the Chromebook goes to **sleep** — a gentle nap that saves battery while keeping everything exactly where you left it. Open the lid again and you're right back where you were, in an instant. You rarely need to fully turn it off; closing the lid is the everyday way to "put it away."

> **TIP**
>
> **When to actually turn it off**
>
> Most days, just close the lid. A full shut-down (hold the power button, then choose Shut down) is only worth doing now and then — say, once a week, or if it's ever acting peculiar. Turning it off and back on cures a surprising number of small mysteries.

CHAPTER 6

Signing In the First Time

The very first time a Chromebook starts, it walks you through a short setup. Take it slowly; there's no wrong turn you can't back out of.

The setup steps

1. **Choose your language and connect to Wi-Fi.** It shows a list of nearby Wi-Fi networks — tap your home network's name and type its password. (Chapter 14 covers Wi-Fi in full if you need it.)
2. **Agree to the terms.** A screen of legal text appears; tap **Accept and continue**.
3. **Sign in with your Google Account.** Type your Google email address (the one ending in @gmail.com), tap Next, then type your password. If you don't have an account yet, tap **Create account** — see the next chapter.
4. **Follow the few friendly prompts** about syncing and preferences — the standard choices are fine; just tap **Accept** or **Next**.

And that's it — you land on the desktop, signed in and ready. Your email, photos, and anything tied to your Google Account quietly flow onto the machine.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why it asks for a Google Account

Signing in is what makes a Chromebook *yours*. It connects the machine to your free online space, so your things appear automatically and stay backed up. It's the single step that turns a blank computer into your personal one.

FROM BILL

This is a perfect thing to do together

First-time setup is the one moment where having a patient person beside you is lovely — especially for the Google Account part. If you'd like company for it, that's exactly the sort of visit I enjoy. Call (330) 200-8042 and we'll get you set up in no time.

CHAPTER 7

Creating a Google Account (If You Need One)

If you've never used Gmail or YouTube, you may not have a Google Account yet. No matter — it's free and quick, and you can make one right from the Chromebook's sign-in screen.

Making the account

1. On the sign-in screen, tap **Create account** (then "For myself" if asked).
2. Type your **first and last name**.
3. Choose a **username** — this becomes your email address (yourname@gmail.com). If your first choice is taken, it'll suggest alternatives; pick one you'll remember.
4. Create a **password**. Make it something you'll recall but others won't guess, and **write it down** somewhere safe (see the tip below).
5. Add a **phone number** if asked — it helps you get back in if you ever forget your password, and it's worth doing.
6. Follow the last couple of prompts, and you're done — the account is created and you're signed in.

STAY SAFE

Write your password down — on paper, kept safe

The single most common way people get locked out is forgetting a password. Write your Google email and password on a slip of paper and tuck it somewhere safe at home — a drawer, a little notebook. This isn't careless; it's sensible. Just don't tape it to the Chromebook itself or carry it in your wallet.

One account, many doors

That one Google Account now unlocks Gmail (email), Google Drive (your files), Google Photos, YouTube, and more — all with the same email and password. You don't make a separate account for each; they all share the one. Simpler to remember, and all tied together for you.

CHAPTER 8

The Grand Tour — Your Screen

Now that you're signed in, let's take a slow look around the screen. Three areas do most of the work, and once you know them, the whole Chromebook opens up.

The desktop

The big main screen is the **desktop**. It shows your chosen background picture (the "wallpaper"), and it's the home base you return to when you close things. Unlike some computers, a Chromebook keeps the desktop tidy — your things live in apps and online, not scattered across it.

The shelf — your row of apps

Along the bottom of the screen sits the **shelf** (other computers call it a taskbar). It holds the icons for your favorite apps, so they're one click away. Chrome (the blue-green-red-yellow circle) lives here, along with a few others. You can add your favorites to it, as we'll see.

The launcher — everything you have

At the far-left end of the shelf is a **circle or dot** — the **launcher** button (think of it like the Start button on a Windows PC). Click it and a window opens showing *all* your apps, plus a search box at the top. Can't find something? Click the launcher, start typing its name, and it appears. The launcher is your "where is everything" button.

The status area — the corner that runs the machine

In the **bottom-right corner** you'll see the clock, the Wi-Fi symbol, and the battery. Click that corner and a handy panel pops up with the controls you reach for most: Wi-Fi, volume, screen brightness, and the **Settings** gear. It also holds the **power options** and the **Sign out** button. We'll call this the **status area** throughout the book.

> **TIP**
>
> **Remember just three spots**
>
> Launcher (bottom-left circle) = find and open apps. Shelf (bottom row) = your favorites. Status area (bottom-right corner) = Wi-Fi, volume, brightness, settings, and sign out. Learn those three corners and you can get anywhere on a Chromebook.

CHAPTER 9

The Keyboard and Touchpad

A Chromebook keyboard looks much like any other, with a few friendly twists worth knowing. And the **touchpad** — the smooth rectangle below the keys — is how you move and click without a mouse.

Using the touchpad

To do this	Do this on the touchpad
Move the arrow	Slide one finger across the touchpad. The on-screen arrow (the "pointer") follows.
Click	Press down anywhere on the touchpad until it clicks — or tap it lightly with one finger.
Right-click (the "more options" menu)	Tap with TWO fingers at once. This opens a little menu of extra choices — very handy.
Scroll up and down	Slide TWO fingers up or down together, like rolling a page.
Go back a page	Swipe two fingers to the left.

GOOD TO KNOW

Prefer a mouse? Plug one in

If the touchpad feels fiddly, you can plug an ordinary USB mouse into the Chromebook (or use a wireless one) and it just works — no setup. Many folks find a mouse far easier on the hand and wrist. There's no shame in it; use whatever's comfortable.

The special keys along the top

Instead of the "function keys" on other computers, a Chromebook's top row has helpful picture-keys:

- **Back and forward arrows** — move between web pages, like the buttons in a browser.
- **Refresh** (a circular arrow) — reloads the current page if it's being stubborn.
- **Brightness** keys (a small and large sun) — dim or brighten the screen.
- **Volume** keys and a **mute** key — for sound.
- **The round power/lock** key — usually top-right.

The Search / Launcher key

Where other keyboards have a "Caps Lock" key, a Chromebook has a special **Search** (or Launcher) key — often marked with a magnifying glass or a circle. Press it and the launcher opens, ready for you to type the name of anything you want. It's one of the handiest keys on the machine.

TIP

Making the pointer and text easier to see

If the arrow is hard to spot or the text is small, don't squint — we'll make everything bigger and bolder in Part 8 (Making It Yours). For now, just know it's easily adjusted to suit your eyes.

PART 3

Your Google Account

The free account at the heart of your Chromebook — what it is, how to keep it safe, and how more than one person can share a single machine.

CHAPTER 10

Understanding Your Google Account

We've mentioned the Google Account a few times. Let's slow down and really understand it, because it's the heart of how a Chromebook works — and once it clicks, a lot of other things make sense.

One account, your whole digital life

Your **Google Account** is a free membership with Google, identified by your email address (ending in @gmail.com) and protected by a password. That single account is the key to Gmail (email), Google Drive (your files and documents), Google Photos (your pictures), YouTube (videos), and your Chromebook itself. Sign in with it on any Chromebook — or any computer — and your world appears.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Because your things live with your account and not on the machine, they're safe. Spill coffee on the Chromebook tomorrow, and your email, photos, and documents are untouched — sign in on a new device and there they all are. That's a genuine weight off your mind.

Signed in means personalized

When you're signed in, the Chromebook is tailored to you: your bookmarks, your email, your background. If someone else signs in with their account, they get *their* things, and yours stay private. One machine can comfortably serve a whole household this way, each person tidily separate.

CHAPTER 11

Passwords and Staying Signed In

A password is the lock on your account. A few simple habits keep that lock strong without making your life harder.

What makes a good password

- **Long is strong.** A short phrase you'll remember — like three unrelated words strung together — beats a short jumble. Length matters more than strange symbols.
- **Don't reuse your email password** for other important sites, especially your bank.
- **Write it down on paper** and keep it somewhere safe at home. This is sensible, not careless.

Unlocking your Chromebook each day

After the first setup, you don't retype your whole password constantly. When you open the lid, the Chromebook may ask for your password or a shorter **PIN** (a short number code you can set up) to unlock. This keeps your things private if the machine is lost or someone else picks it up.

> TIP
>
> **Set up a PIN for easy unlocking**
>
> Typing a long password every time is a chore. In Settings you can set a short **PIN** — just a few digits, like a bank card — to unlock the screen instead. Much quicker, still safe. We'll note where to find it in the Settings tour.

If you forget your password

It happens to everyone. Because you added a phone number or backup email when you created the account, Google can send you a code to prove it's really you and let you set a new password. On the sign-in screen, tap **Forgot password?** and follow the prompts. If you get stuck, this is a perfect moment to call me rather than guess repeatedly.

CHAPTER 12

Two-Step Verification — Extra Safety

This one's optional but worth understanding, because it's the best single thing you can do to keep your account safe from strangers.

What it is

Two-step verification (sometimes "2-step" or "two-factor") means that when you — or anyone — tries to sign in to your account on a new device, Google asks for *two* things: your password, **and** a one-time code sent to your phone. So even if a stranger somehow learned your password, they still couldn't get in without your phone in their hand.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

It's like adding a deadbolt to the door. Your password is the regular lock; the code on your phone is the deadbolt only you can open. For an account that holds your email and photos, that extra lock is well worth the small bother.

The small trade-off

The only downside is that you'll occasionally need your phone handy to punch in a code — usually just when signing in on a brand-new device. On your own Chromebook day to day, you won't be asked. Most people decide the extra safety is well worth that rare moment.

FROM BILL

Happy to set this up with you

Two-step verification is a wonderful protection but a slightly fiddly thing to turn on the first time. If you'd like it done right — and explained so you understand it — give me a call and we'll set it up together. (330) 200-8042.

CHAPTER 13

Sharing One Chromebook — Users and Guests

A single Chromebook can serve several people, each kept neatly separate. Handy for couples, or when a visiting grandchild wants a turn.

Adding another person

Each person can sign in with their own Google Account, getting their own email, bookmarks, and files — none of it mixed with yours. On the sign-in screen, look for **Add Person** at the bottom, and that person signs in (or creates an account). From then on, the sign-in screen lists everyone, and each taps their own name to get their own world.

Guest mode — a clean slate for visitors

If someone just needs to borrow the Chromebook for a minute — look something up, check their email on the web — **Guest mode** is perfect. It opens a plain, temporary session with no access to your things, and when the guest signs out, everything they did vanishes. Nothing of theirs is saved, and nothing of yours is touched.

1. On the sign-in screen, look for **Browse as Guest** (usually along the bottom).
2. The guest gets a clean browser to use.
3. When finished, they sign out, and the slate is wiped clean.

GOOD TO KNOW

Guest mode is great for safety, too

Because guest mode saves nothing and touches nothing of yours, it's a tidy way to let someone borrow the machine without worrying about your email or files. It's also handy on a public or shared computer — anything you do in guest mode leaves no trace behind.

PART 4

Getting Online — Wi-Fi and the Chrome Browser

Connecting to the internet, and making friends with Chrome — the window through which a Chromebook does most of its work. This is the heart of using your machine.

CHAPTER 14

Connecting to Wi-Fi

A Chromebook without internet is like a television with the cable unplugged — it works, but it's missing the good part. **Wi-Fi** is the wireless internet in your home, and connecting to it is quick.

Connecting at home

1. Click the **status area** (bottom-right corner, where the clock is).
2. Click the **Wi-Fi** symbol (it may say "Not connected" until you do).
3. A list of nearby networks appears. Find **your home network's name** and click it. (Your network name and password are often printed on a sticker on your internet box, the router.)
4. Type the **Wi-Fi password** exactly — it's case-sensitive — and click **Connect**.
5. A checkmark or a filled Wi-Fi symbol means you're on. You usually only do this once; the Chromebook remembers and reconnects automatically from then on.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Wi-Fi away from home**
>
> At a library, café, or a relative's house, the same steps connect you to their Wi-Fi (you'll need their password). Public Wi-Fi is fine for browsing, but avoid online banking or shopping on a public network you don't trust — save those for home. More on that in the safety part.

If the internet isn't working

Before assuming the Chromebook is at fault, try these calm checks:

- Make sure you clicked the **right network name** and typed the password correctly.
- Check whether other devices (a phone, the TV) have internet. If they don't either, it's your internet service, not the Chromebook — restarting the router (unplug 30 seconds, plug back in) often revives it.
- Move closer to the router. Thick walls and distance weaken the signal.

CHAPTER 15

Meet Chrome — Your Window to the Web

The **Chrome browser** is the most important app on your Chromebook. It's the window you use to visit any website — your bank, the news, a recipe, your email. The whole machine is named after it for good reason.

Opening Chrome and visiting a website

1. Click the **Chrome** icon on the shelf — the colorful circle (red, yellow, green, with a blue center).
2. At the top you'll see a long bar — the **address bar**. This is where you type where you want to go.
3. To visit a site, click the bar, type its address (like **billshometech.com**) and press **Enter**.
4. To look something up instead, just type your question (like **weather in Portage County**) and press Enter — Chrome searches the web for you.

> **TIP**
>
> **The address bar does double duty**
>
> That bar at the top is both a place to type a web address *and* a place to search. If you know the exact site, type its address. If you don't, just type what you're looking for in plain words and press Enter. Either way, Chrome sorts it out. You can't type the "wrong" thing.

The buttons around the edge

Button	What it does
Back arrow (top-left)	Returns to the previous page. The most-used button on the web — if you ever feel lost, click Back.
Forward arrow	Goes forward again after you've gone back.
Refresh (circular arrow)	Reloads the page if it looks stuck or half-loaded.
Home	Returns to your starting page (if shown).
The three dots (top-right)	Chrome's main menu — settings, history, printing, and more live here.

CHAPTER 16

Tabs — Many Pages at Once

Tabs let you keep several web pages open at the same time, side by side along the top of Chrome — like keeping several magazines open on the table, each to a different page. It's one of the most useful things to learn.

How tabs work

- Each open page is a **tab** — a little labeled strip across the top of the Chrome window.
- Click the **+** at the end of the row to open a new, blank tab for something else, without losing the page you're on.
- Click any tab to switch to it. Your other pages wait patiently behind it.
- Click the small **×** on a tab to close just that page.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Tabs mean you can read a recipe in one tab, check your email in another, and look up a word in a third — all at once, hopping between them with a click. No need to lose your place or start over. It's the difference between one page and a whole reading table.

Don't fret about too many tabs

Many folks end up with a dozen tabs open and feel they've made a mess. You haven't — it's harmless. If the row gets crowded and confusing, just close the ones you're done with by clicking their little ×. A tidy row of two or three is easiest on the eye.

CHAPTER 17

Bookmarks — Saving Your Favorite Places

A **bookmark** saves a website so you can return with one click instead of retyping its address. Think of it as a ribbon marking your favorite pages — your bank, the news, this or that hobby site.

Saving a bookmark

1. Visit the website you want to save.
2. Click the **star** symbol at the right end of the address bar.
3. A little box appears — click **Done**. The site is now bookmarked.

Finding your bookmarks again

Your saved sites appear on the **bookmarks bar** — a strip just under the address bar. If you don't see it, click the three dots (top-right) > **Bookmarks** > **Show bookmarks bar**. Then your favorites sit there always, a single click away.

TIP

Bookmark the handful of sites you visit most

Your bank, your email, your favorite news or weather, the grandkids' photo-sharing site — bookmark each one once, and you'll never fumble to find them again. It's five minutes that saves you fuss every single day.

CHAPTER 18

Searching the Web With Google

One of the web's quiet joys is that almost any question has an answer, and finding it takes seconds. **Google Search** — built right into Chrome — is how.

How to search

Click the address bar, type your question in plain, ordinary words, and press **Enter**. You don't need special phrasing — ask the way you'd ask a knowledgeable friend:

- *how to get red wine out of carpet*
- *what time does the pharmacy on Main Street close*
- *how many ounces in a cup*
- *Cleveland Indians score last night*

A list of results appears. Click any blue link that looks helpful to read more, and use the **Back arrow** to return to the list and try another.

> HEADS UP
>
> **Mind the "Sponsored" results and look-alikes**
>
> The first result or two are sometimes labeled **Sponsored** or **Ad** — these are paid advertisements, not necessarily the best answer. And when searching for a company (especially a bank), be sure you click their *real* website, not a copycat. When in doubt about a banking or money site, type the address you know is correct rather than searching — or call me to be sure.

Downloads — saving things from the web

Sometimes you'll save a file from a website — a document, a boarding pass, a photo. When you do, it goes into your **Downloads** folder, and a little bar may show it at the bottom. Don't worry about where it went; the Files app (Part 7) can always find it again. We'll cover files properly in Part 7.

PART 5

Email and the Google Apps

The everyday tools that come with your account — email, documents, your files, calendar, and photos — each in plain English, each one genuinely useful.

CHAPTER 19

Gmail — Your Email

Gmail is Google's email, and it comes free with your account. Email is how you'll trade notes with family, receive receipts and appointment reminders, and keep in touch on your own schedule.

Opening Gmail

Click the **launcher** (bottom-left circle), type **Gmail**, and click it — or visit **gmail.com** in Chrome. Because you're already signed in to your Google Account, your mail opens right up. Pin it to the shelf (right-click the icon > Pin) so it's always one click away.

Reading and replying

1. Your incoming mail is the **Inbox** — the list down the middle. Unread messages are shown in bold.
2. Click a message to open and read it.
3. To write back, click **Reply** at the bottom, type your message, and click the blue **Send**.
4. To return to your list, click the **back arrow** or **Inbox** on the left.

Writing a new email

1. Click **Compose** (top-left).
2. In **To**, type the email address of the person you're writing.
3. Add a short **Subject** (what it's about), then your message in the big box.
4. Click **Send**.

SCAM ALERT

Email is a favorite tool for scammers

Be cautious of emails that create urgency — "your account will be closed," "payment failed," "you've won." Real companies don't rush you or ask for passwords by email. Never click a link or open an attachment in an email you weren't expecting, and never give out passwords or card numbers by email. When an email makes you uneasy, don't act — call me first at (330) 200-8042.

Tidying up

Archive (the box icon) tucks a message out of the inbox without deleting it. **Delete** (the trash can) throws it away. **Spam** (the stop sign) reports junk. You don't have to tidy constantly — Gmail holds a great deal and sorts much of the junk for you automatically.

CHAPTER 20

Google Docs — Writing Letters and Documents

Google Docs is a free word processor — the tool for writing a letter, a list, a note, or anything else. It works right in Chrome, and it saves your work automatically as you type, so you can never lose it.

Starting a document

1. In Chrome, go to **docs.google.com** (or open Docs from the launcher).
2. Click the big **+** ("Blank document") to start a fresh page.
3. Click onto the page and simply start typing, as you would on a typewriter.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

It saves itself — there's no "save" to forget

This is the part people love once they trust it: Google Docs saves every word the instant you type it, quietly, to your Google Drive. There's no Save button to remember and no chance of losing an afternoon's writing to a crash. Close the lid mid-sentence and it's all there when you come back.

The basics of formatting

A toolbar across the top lets you make text **bold**, change the size, pick a font, and line things up. Select the words you want to change first (click and drag across them), then click the button. It's the same idea as any writing program you may have used.

Printing or sharing your document

To print, click **File > Print** (Part 7 covers printing). To email it to someone, click the blue **Share** button, or use File > Email. Your document can also be turned into the kind of file others use (a "Word" file or a PDF) via File > Download — handy if someone asks for it in a particular form.

CHAPTER 21

Google Drive — Where Your Files Live

Google Drive is your free storage space online — think of it as a filing cabinet in the sky. Your documents, and anything you choose to save, live here, safe and reachable from any device you sign in to.

Why Drive matters on a Chromebook

Because a Chromebook keeps little on the machine itself, Drive is where your things actually live. The great advantage: your files aren't trapped on one computer. Sign in to your account on a phone, a library computer, anywhere — and your Drive, with all your files, is right there.

GOOD TO KNOW

Free space, and how much

Your Google Account comes with a generous amount of free Drive space, shared across Drive, Gmail, and Google Photos. For ordinary letters and documents, you're unlikely to come close to filling it. If you ever store lots of photos and videos and do run low, Google sells more space for a small monthly fee — but most folks never need to.

Finding your files in Drive

Go to **drive.google.com** in Chrome, or open the **Files** app (Part 7) and click **Google Drive** on the left. Your documents and folders are listed; double-click any to open it. You can make folders to organize things — but there's no need to fuss; the search box at the top finds anything by name.

CHAPTER 22

Google Calendar and Keep

Two more free, simple tools that many folks find quietly indispensable: a calendar and a notepad.

Google Calendar — appointments and reminders

Google Calendar (calendar.google.com) keeps your appointments and can nudge you before they arrive. To add something, click a day and time, type what it is ("Dr. Patel, 2pm"), and save. It can remind you ahead of time, and because it's tied to your account, the same calendar shows up on your phone too.

Google Keep — quick notes and lists

Google Keep (keep.google.com) is a simple notepad for jotting things down — a grocery list, a phone number, a reminder to yourself. Notes save instantly and sync to your other devices. It's the digital version of the sticky-notes on the fridge, minus the clutter.

> **TIP**
>
> **Let the Chromebook remember for you**
>
> A calendar that reminds you of appointments and a notepad always in your pocket (on your phone, synced from your Chromebook) take a real load off the memory. Many people tell me this is the feature that surprised them most with how useful it turned out to be.

CHAPTER 23

Google Photos and YouTube

Two of the most-loved apps of all — your pictures, and a world of video.

Google Photos — your pictures, safe and sorted

Google Photos (photos.google.com) holds your pictures, backs them up safely online, and sorts them by date on its own. If you take photos on a phone that's signed in to the same Google Account, they appear here automatically — so the snapshots from your phone show up on the Chromebook's bigger, easier-to-see screen.

- Click any photo to see it large.
- Use the **search** box to find pictures — it's clever enough to find "beach" or "dog" or a year.
- **Share** an album with family in a couple of clicks, or order prints.

YouTube — videos on every subject under the sun

YouTube (youtube.com) is a vast, free library of videos: how-to guides, old music and TV clips, church services, cooking, gardening, travel, you name it. Type what you'd like to watch in its search box and press Enter. It's a wonderful companion — and, handily, a great place to find video tutorials for anything that stumps you on the Chromebook itself.

HEADS UP

A gentle word on YouTube

YouTube is free and marvelous, but it shows ads, and it loves to suggest "just one more" video. Enjoy it — just be aware the suggestions are designed to keep you watching. And as always, ignore any video or comment urging you to call a number, download something, or pay to "fix" your computer. That's never genuine.

PART 6

Apps — Adding More to Your Chromebook

Web apps, Android apps, and the Google Play Store: the two kinds of apps a Chromebook uses, and how to add the ones you want without any clutter or worry.

CHAPTER 24

The Two Kinds of Apps

On a Chromebook, an "app" can mean one of two things. Knowing the difference saves confusion, but the good news is you use both exactly the same way — click and go.

Web apps — the website is the app

Most of what you do on a Chromebook happens through **websites** that behave like apps: Gmail, Google Docs, your bank, the news. There's nothing to install — you just visit the site. These are called **web apps**, and they're the heart of the Chromebook way of doing things. You can make any of them feel like a proper app by pinning it to the shelf.

Android apps — from the Google Play Store

Many Chromebooks can also install **Android apps** — the same apps you'd get on an Android phone or tablet — from the **Google Play Store**. This is handy for things like a particular game, a streaming service, or a banking app you prefer over the website.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not every Chromebook has the Play Store

The Google Play Store is available on most, but not all, Chromebooks — and school- or work-issued machines often have it switched off by whoever manages them. If you don't see it, your Chromebook may not offer it, and that's alright: the web apps cover nearly everything most folks need. Not sure? Give me a call and I'll check for you.

CHAPTER 25

Installing Apps From the Play Store

If your Chromebook has the Google Play Store, adding an app is simple and safe.

Getting an app

1. Open the **launcher** and look for **Play Store** (a colorful triangle), or type "Play Store" to find it. If it's not there, see the note below about turning it on.
2. In the Play Store, use the **search** box at the top to type the name of the app you want.
3. Click the app in the results, then click the green **Install** button.
4. It downloads and installs on its own. When it's done, click **Open** — and from then on it lives in your launcher.

Turning the Play Store on

If your Chromebook supports it but the Play Store isn't showing, you can usually switch it on in **Settings** > **Apps** > **Google Play Store**, then **Turn on** and accept the terms. Once on, the Play Store icon appears in your launcher.

STAY SAFE

Stick to the Play Store, and watch the permissions

The Play Store is Google's own, checked shop — getting apps there is the safe way. Avoid installing apps from random websites or pop-ups. When an app asks for permission to use your camera, microphone, or location, only allow what makes sense (a camera app needs the camera; a flashlight app does not). If unsure, it's always fine to say no — or to ask me.

Removing an app you don't want

Tidying up is just as easy. Open the **launcher**, find the app, **right-click** it (tap with two fingers), and choose **Uninstall** or **Remove from Chrome**. Gone — and you can always reinstall it later if you change your mind. You can't hurt anything by removing an app you don't use.

CHAPTER 26

Organizing the Shelf and Launcher

A little tidying makes your favorites easy to reach and the whole machine feel like yours.

Pinning favorites to the shelf

The **shelf** (bottom row) should hold the handful of apps you use most, ready in one click. To add one:

1. Open the **launcher** and find the app.
2. **Right-click** it (tap with two fingers).
3. Choose **Pin to shelf**.

To remove one from the shelf (without uninstalling it), right-click its shelf icon and choose **Unpin**. The app still exists in the launcher; it's just not cluttering your shelf.

> TIP
> **A good starter shelf**
> For most folks, a tidy shelf holds Chrome, Gmail, Google Photos, and maybe YouTube and Docs — the things you reach for daily. Pin those five, and your Chromebook suddenly feels custom-made for you.

Rearranging and finding things

You can drag shelf icons left or right to reorder them — press, hold, and slide. And remember the golden rule: if you ever can't find an app, click the launcher and start typing its name. It'll surface instantly. You never have to hunt.

PART 7

Files, Printing, and Plugging Things In

Where your files live, how to print a letter or a photo, and how to use USB sticks, SD cards, and a printer. The practical bits that make the Chromebook a proper workhorse.

CHAPTER 27

The Files App

The **Files** app is your Chromebook's filing cabinet — it shows everything you've saved, whether it's on the machine or up in Google Drive. You won't need it constantly, but when you want to find a document or a photo you saved, this is where you look.

Opening Files and finding your way

Open the **launcher**, type **Files**, and click it. Down the left side you'll see the main places your files can be:

Where	What's there
My files / Downloads	Files saved onto the Chromebook itself — including anything you download from the web.
Google Drive	Your files stored safely online, available from any device. Most of your documents live here.
USB / SD card	Appears here when you plug one in (see the next chapter).
Recent	A quick list of what you've opened lately — often the fastest way back to something.

GOOD TO KNOW

Drive vs. Downloads — the key difference

Files in **Google Drive** are safe online and reachable anywhere. Files in **Downloads** live only on this Chromebook — if it were lost, they'd be gone. So for anything you'd hate to lose, keep it in Drive. You can drag a file from Downloads into Google Drive in the Files app to keep it safe.

Opening and finding files

Double-click any file to open it. Can't remember where you put something? Use the **search** box at the top of the Files app and type part of its name. No need to remember folders — let the search do the remembering.

CHAPTER 28

USB Sticks, SD Cards, and Phones

Sometimes you'll want to move photos or files on or off your Chromebook using a little storage device. It's about as hard as plugging in a lamp.

USB sticks (thumb drives) and SD cards

1. Plug the **USB stick** into one of the Chromebook's USB slots (the small rectangular ports on the side), or slide an **SD card** into the card slot if your machine has one.
2. It appears automatically in the **Files** app, listed on the left.
3. Click it to see what's on it. You can drag files between it and your Chromebook to copy them.
4. When you're done, click the little **eject** symbol beside its name in Files before pulling it out — this makes sure nothing is mid-copy.

Getting photos off a camera or phone

If you take photos on a camera, you can pop its SD card into the Chromebook to copy them. From a phone, the easiest route is usually **Google Photos** — sign the phone in to the same Google Account and photos appear on the Chromebook on their own, no cables needed.

> **TIP**
>
> **The ports take a little learning — that's fine**
>
> Different Chromebooks have different slots (older rectangular USB, newer oval USB-C). If a plug doesn't fit one way, try the other slot or flip it over — never force it. Bring the gadget and I'll happily show you which port is which on your particular machine.

CHAPTER 29

Printing

Printing from a Chromebook is straightforward once your printer is connected. Most modern printers connect over Wi-Fi, so there's often no cable involved at all.

Printing a document or web page

1. With the thing you want to print open, press **Ctrl + P** (hold the Ctrl key and tap P) — or click **File** > **Print**, or the three-dots menu > Print.
2. A print window opens. At the top, make sure the right **printer** is chosen in the "Destination" box.
3. Choose how many **copies** and which **pages** if you like.
4. Click the blue **Print** button.

Setting up a printer the first time

If your printer doesn't appear in that destination box, it needs connecting first. Generally: make sure the printer is turned on and connected to the same Wi-Fi as your Chromebook, then go to **Settings** > look for **Printing** or **Printers** > **Add printer**, and pick yours from the list. Once added, it's remembered for good.

> **FROM BILL**
>
> **Printers are the one thing worth a hand**
>
> I'll be honest — printers are the single most common thing folks ask me to help with, on any kind of computer. They can be finicky to set up the first time. If yours won't cooperate, don't wrestle with it and don't feel it's you. Call me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll get it printing — it's usually a five-minute fix once you know the trick.

CHAPTER 30

Screenshots and Handy Tricks

A few small skills that come in surprisingly handy — especially the first one, which lets you "show me what you're seeing" when you call for help.

Taking a screenshot (a picture of your screen)

A **screenshot** captures exactly what's on your screen as an image — perfect for saving a confirmation, or showing someone a puzzling message. Press the **Screenshot** key if your keyboard has one, or press **Ctrl** + the **Show windows** key (the one that looks like a rectangle with lines beside it). The picture saves to your Downloads, and you can then email it to me when you need a hand.

A few time-savers

Shortcut	What it does
Ctrl + C / Ctrl + V	Copy and paste — select text, press Ctrl+C to copy it, click where you want it and press Ctrl+V to paste.
Ctrl + and Ctrl –	Make the text on a web page bigger or smaller (hold Ctrl and tap the + or – key).
Ctrl + P	Print whatever you're looking at.
Search/Launcher key	Press it to instantly search for any app or setting by name.

TIP

You don't need to memorize these

Shortcuts are a convenience, not a requirement — you can do everything with clicks and menus instead. Learn one or two that sound useful (Ctrl+P for printing is a good start) and let the rest wait. There's no test.

PART 8

Making It Yours — Comfort and Accessibility

Settings worth changing, and the many ways to make a Chromebook easier to see, hear, and use. Comfort isn't a luxury — a machine set up for your eyes and hands is one you'll actually enjoy.

CHAPTER 31

The Settings Tour

Settings is where you adjust how the Chromebook looks and behaves. You won't visit it often, but knowing your way around means you can make the machine comfortable and fix small things yourself.

Opening Settings

Click the **status area** (bottom-right corner), then the **gear** symbol. Settings opens with a list of topics down the left side. Click any topic to see its options on the right. You can also just type what you're after in the search box at the top of Settings — "text size," "wallpaper," "Bluetooth."

The settings most worth knowing

Setting	What's inside
Network	Your Wi-Fi connections.
Bluetooth	Connect wireless gadgets — a mouse, headphones, a speaker.
Device	Touchpad speed, keyboard, and display (screen) settings.
Personalization	Your wallpaper (background picture) and screen look.
Accessibility	The tools that make things easier to see, hear, and use — a whole chapter of its own coming up.
Security and sign-in	Your PIN, lock screen, and sign-in options.
About ChromeOS	Check for updates and see your Chromebook's information.

TIP

The search box is your shortcut

Don't bother memorizing where everything lives in Settings. Open Settings, click the search box at the top, and type what you want to change. It jumps you straight there. This works for nearly every setting on the machine.

CHAPTER 32

Making the Screen Easy on Your Eyes

If anything on screen is hard to read, that's not something to put up with — it's a two-minute fix. Let's make everything as clear and comfortable as you'd like.

Make everything bigger

In **Settings** > **Device** > **Displays**, look for **Display size** and drag it toward "Larger." Everything — text, icons, buttons — grows together, instantly. There's no prize for a cramped screen; set it to whatever your eyes prefer.

Make just the web text bigger

On any web page, hold **Ctrl** and tap the **+** key to enlarge the text, again and again until it's comfortable. Ctrl and – shrinks it back. Ctrl and **0** (zero) returns to normal. This is the quickest trick of all for reading an article or a recipe.

Brightness and night comfort

- Use the **brightness keys** (the sun symbols on the top row) to make the screen brighter or dimmer.
- **Night Light** (in Settings > Device > Displays) warms the screen's color in the evening, which many find easier on the eyes and kinder before bed.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A screen set to *your* comfort — big enough text, the right brightness — turns using the Chromebook from a squint into a pleasure. Eye strain and headaches often melt away once things are sized properly. It's the first thing I adjust for nearly everyone I help.

CHAPTER 33

The Accessibility Tools

ChromeOS has a generous set of **accessibility** tools — features that make the machine easier to use for anyone whose eyes, ears, or hands could use a hand. You'll find them all in **Settings** > **Accessibility**. There's no label on your account that says you "need" these; they're for anyone who finds them helpful, full stop.

For seeing

Tool	What it does
Larger text & display	Make all text and everything on screen bigger (also in Displays).
Full-screen magnifier	Zooms into part of the screen, like a magnifying glass, following where you look.
High contrast	Sharpens colors (often white-on-black) so text stands out more clearly.
Large mouse pointer	Makes the on-screen arrow bigger and easier to spot, and it can highlight the arrow so you never lose it.
Select-to-speak	Reads selected text aloud — highlight a paragraph and hear it read to you.
ChromeVox	A full screen reader that speaks everything, for those who can't see the screen.

For hearing

- **Live Caption** turns spoken words in videos and calls into on-screen text you can read.
- **Mono audio** sends the same sound to both sides, which helps if you hear better in one ear.
- You can connect **Bluetooth hearing aids or headphones** for clearer, personalized sound.

For typing and clicking

- **Dictation** lets you *speak* instead of type — click the microphone and talk, and your words appear. A real boon if typing is slow or tiring.
- **On-screen keyboard** puts a keyboard on the screen you tap with the pointer or a touchscreen.
- **Automatic clicks** and touchpad adjustments help if clicking is difficult.

FROM BILL

Let's find the ones that help you

There are enough accessibility tools here that it's worth sitting down and trying a few to see which make your Chromebook genuinely more comfortable. If you'd like, we can go through them together and set up just the ones that suit you — no more, no less. (330) 200-8042.

CHAPTER 34

Sound, Wallpaper, and Little Touches

A few finishing touches to make the machine feel like yours.

Volume and sound

Use the **volume keys** on the top row, or click the **status area** and drag the volume slider. To connect a Bluetooth speaker or headphones, go to **Settings** > **Bluetooth**, turn it on, and pick your device from the list once it appears.

Change your wallpaper

The background picture is yours to choose. **Right-click** the desktop (two-finger tap) and choose **Set wallpaper**, or go to Settings > Personalization. Pick from Google's lovely photos, or use one of your own. A favorite picture of the grandkids makes the whole machine more cheerful to open.

TIP

Small comforts add up

A warm wallpaper, text sized for your eyes, the volume where you like it — none of these is essential, but together they turn a generic gadget into *your* Chromebook, one you're glad to sit down with. Spend a pleasant ten minutes making it yours.

PART 9

Keeping Safe and Running Well

Why a Chromebook is so low-maintenance, the handful of habits that keep you safe, and the scams to recognize — so you can use your machine with real peace of mind.

CHAPTER 35

Updates and Upkeep (There's Barely Any)

Here's some of the best news about a Chromebook: it mostly looks after itself. The maintenance that wears people down on other computers simply isn't here.

Updates happen on their own

ChromeOS updates itself quietly in the background — downloading improvements and safety fixes without nagging you. Now and then you'll see a small **"Restart to update"** note in the status area; when it's convenient, click it and the Chromebook restarts in seconds, freshly updated. That's the whole of it.

GOOD TO KNOW

A word about a Chromebook's lifespan

Every Chromebook is promised updates for a long span of years from when its model came out (Google calls this its update expiry). After that, it keeps working but stops getting new updates. If you ever see a note that updates are ending, it's not broken — but it may be worth thinking about a newer one before too long. I'm glad to check how much life yours has left; just ask.

Your monthly "maintenance"

It really comes down to two gentle habits, neither urgent:

- **Restart now and then.** Once a week or so, fully turn it off and on (hold power > Shut down, then start again). It clears up small glitches.
- **Install updates when offered.** When you see "Restart to update," do it at a convenient moment.

If it's misbehaving

The oldest trick still works best: **restart it**. The large majority of "it's acting strange" problems vanish after turning the Chromebook off and back on. Try that before anything else — it can't hurt a thing, and it fixes a remarkable amount.

CHAPTER 36

Staying Safe Online

A Chromebook is one of the safer computers to own — it resists viruses and keeps your things backed up. But no machine can protect you from a convincing trickster. These habits are your real armor, and they're simple.

The habits that keep you safe

- **Never give out your password** — not by email, not over the phone, not to a pop-up. No real company ever needs it.
- **Never let a stranger take control of your Chromebook** or install anything for you over the phone. That's a scam, every time.
- **Don't click links in unexpected emails or texts.** If "your bank" emails, don't click — open your bank by typing its address or using your bookmark.
- **Do banking and shopping on your own home Wi-Fi**, not on public Wi-Fi you don't control.
- **When something feels urgent or frightening, slow down.** Urgency is the scammer's favorite tool. Pause, and ask someone you trust.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why a Chromebook is hard to infect

Chromebooks keep each website and app walled off from the rest of the machine (the clever folks call it "sandboxing"), and they check themselves for tampering every time they start. That's why you don't need the anti-virus programs other computers require — and why you should be suspicious of anything urging you to "install a cleaner" or "remove a virus." Your Chromebook doesn't need it.

CHAPTER 37

Recognizing Scams

The technology is safe; the thing to watch for is the occasional person trying to trick you. Learn these few patterns and you can browse with a light heart.

SCAM ALERT

The fake virus pop-up

A page suddenly fills with flashing warnings — "VIRUS DETECTED! Call this number now!" — maybe with an alarming beep. It is **always** fake. Google and Chromebook don't warn you this way, and no real support line lives in a pop-up. Don't call the number and don't click anything in it. Close the tab (click its ×), or if it won't close, just restart the Chromebook. Nothing is actually wrong.

SCAM ALERT

"Tech support" who calls or emails

Someone claims to be from Google, Microsoft, or "the computer company," says your machine has a problem, and offers to fix it — if you'll let them connect to it or buy something. Real companies don't call you out of the blue like this. Hang up. Never let a stranger connect to your Chromebook.

SCAM ALERT

Urgent money and "account" messages

An email or text says your account will close, a payment failed, a prize awaits, or a grandchild is in trouble and needs money quietly and fast. Urgency plus secrecy plus a request for money or passwords equals a scam. Don't act. Verify by calling the company or person on a number you already know — never the number in the message.

Your simple rule

If any message, pop-up, call, or email wants you to **act fast**, **keep it secret**, **send money or gift cards**, or **hand over a password** — stop. That combination is the signature of nearly every scam. Real businesses give you time and never ask for those things out of the blue.

FROM BILL

The "is this a scam?" call is my favorite kind

If anything ever makes you uneasy — a pop-up, an email, a call, a message — stop and ring me *before* you do anything: **(330) 200-8042**. Those calls are never a bother; they're exactly what I'm here for, and there's never a charge for asking. A two-minute call has saved many a person a great deal of money and worry.

PART 10

Everyday Things You'll Love

The real reasons to own a Chromebook — seeing family, shopping and banking from your chair, finding your way, and filling your days with news, music, and more. Here's how to do each one.

CHAPTER 38

Video Calling on Your Chromebook

One of the loveliest things a Chromebook does is let you **see** the people you love, not just hear them. The screen is bigger than a phone's, which makes faces easier to see — a real treat for a long family chat.

What you need

Your Chromebook has a small **camera** built into the top of the screen and a **microphone**, so it's ready to go. You just need the other person to be reachable on the same service you're using. The common choices all work right in Chrome:

Service	How to use it on a Chromebook
Google Meet	Google's own video calling, free with your account. Go to meet.google.com, or tap a Meet link someone sends you. Natural choice on a Chromebook.
Zoom	For clubs, church, classes, and doctor visits. Tap the link they send and join right in Chrome, or install the Zoom app.
Facebook Messenger	Visit messenger.com and sign in with your Facebook details to video call your Facebook friends.
WhatsApp	Visit web.whatsapp.com and link it to your phone to make calls from the Chromebook.

Making a Google Meet call

1. In Chrome, go to **meet.google.com**.
2. Click **New meeting** > **Start an instant meeting** (or use a link someone sent you).
3. When Chrome asks to use your camera and microphone, click **Allow** — this is the step people miss.
4. Click **Add others** and type a name or email to invite someone, or send them the meeting link.
5. To hang up, click the red phone button. To mute your microphone, click the microphone button.

TIP

Let the light fall on your face

Sit facing a window or lamp, not with your back to it, so the camera lights your face instead of turning it into a shadow. Prop the Chromebook at a comfortable height, and you'll look clear and natural. (Our Video Calling manual goes into all of this, if you'd like the full guide.)

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A video call on that roomy screen turns "I talked to them" into "I saw them" — the new haircut, the baby's giggle, the garden they're proud of. For folks with family far away, it's the single most rewarding thing the Chromebook does, and it costs nothing beyond the internet you already have.

CHAPTER 39

Shopping Online

A Chromebook makes a comfortable shopping companion — browse from your chair, compare prices without circling a parking lot, and have it delivered to the door. A little care keeps it safe and pleasant.

How online shopping works

You visit a store's website (Amazon, Walmart, a favorite shop), find what you want, add it to a **cart** (a digital shopping basket), and "check out" — meaning you give a delivery address and pay. The goods arrive at your home in a few days, sometimes sooner.

1. Go to the store's website by typing its address in Chrome, or use a bookmark.
2. Search for what you want, or browse the categories.
3. Click an item to read about it; click **Add to Cart** if you want it.
4. When ready, click the **Cart** (usually a basket symbol, top-right) and **Check out**.
5. Enter your delivery address and payment, review the order, and confirm.

STAY SAFE

Shop smart and safe

Stick to well-known stores or ones you've bought from before. Look for a small **padlock** in the address bar, which means the connection is secure. Shop on your home Wi-Fi, never public Wi-Fi. And be wary of "too good to be true" deals in ads or emails — if a brand-new tablet is ninety percent off, it's bait. When unsure whether a store is real, ask me before you enter a card number.

Paying without retyping your card every time

Many stores let you save your card for next time, and Chrome can offer to remember it too. That's a convenience, and reasonably safe on your own machine — but only save cards on sites you trust and on a Chromebook only you use. If you share the machine, it's better to type the card each time.

CHAPTER 40

Online Banking — From Your Chair

You can check balances, pay bills, and keep an eye on your accounts from your Chromebook — no trip to the branch. Banks build their websites to be safe, and a few habits on your end keep it that way.

Getting to your bank safely

The golden rule: **reach your bank by typing its address yourself or using a bookmark you made** — never by clicking a link in an email or a search ad. Scammers build convincing fake bank pages, and the safest defense is to always arrive by your own door.

1. Type your bank's web address in Chrome (or click your saved bookmark).
2. Check for the **padlock** in the address bar and that the address is spelled exactly right.
3. Sign in with your bank username and password.
4. You may be asked for a one-time code texted to your phone — this is good; it's the bank protecting you.

SCAM ALERT

No real bank calls you to "move money to keep it safe"

The most common and costly scam today: someone calls claiming to be your bank's fraud department, says your account is under attack, and urges you to move your money or read them a code. **Your real bank will never ask you to do this.** Hang up and call the bank back on the number printed on your card. Never move money or share a code because of a call. When in doubt, call me first.

What you can do

Once signed in, you can check balances and recent transactions, pay bills, transfer between your accounts, and view statements. Take your time; nothing happens until you confirm it. When you're finished, **sign out** (usually top-right) rather than just closing the tab — a tidy habit, especially on a shared machine. Our Online Banking manual covers all of this in depth if you'd like it.

CHAPTER 41

Maps, Directions, and Looking Up Places

Google Maps (maps.google.com) is like having an atlas, a phone book, and a travel guide rolled into one — and it's free. Look up any place, see it on a map, get directions, and check what time a shop closes.

Finding a place

1. Go to **maps.google.com** in Chrome.
2. Type a place or address in the search box — "pharmacy near Ravenna" or a street address.
3. It shows the spot on the map, with the phone number, hours, and reviews.

Getting directions

Click **Directions**, type where you're starting from and where you're going, and Maps lays out the route with distance and driving time. You can choose driving, walking, or public transit. It's a wonderful way to plan a trip before you set out — print it or jot it down, or send it to your phone for the road.

> TIP
>
> **A quiet everyday helper**
>
> Maps is one of those tools folks don't expect to love and then use constantly: checking whether the hardware store is still open, seeing how far a new restaurant is, remembering which exit to take. Pop it in your bookmarks and you'll be surprised how often it earns its place.

CHAPTER 42

News, Weather, and Reading

The whole world's newsstand and library is a click away — most of it free. Here's how to fill your mornings with what interests you.

Weather

The simplest trick: click the Chrome address bar, type **weather** and press Enter — your local forecast appears right at the top. Type "weather" plus a town name for anywhere else, handy before visiting family or planning a trip.

News

Visit the websites of papers and stations you trust by typing their address, and bookmark your favorites. **Google News** (news.google.com) gathers headlines from many sources in one place, which some folks enjoy. A gentle reminder: anyone can publish anything online, so lean on sources you know, and be skeptical of dramatic headlines designed mainly to get a click.

Reading books and magazines

- Your local **library** very likely offers free e-books and audiobooks you can read on the Chromebook — ask them about apps like Libby. Free, and no late fees.
- Many magazines and papers have websites; some are free, some ask for a subscription.
- Long articles are easier on the eyes with the Ctrl-and-+ trick to enlarge the text.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

News from home and afar, the forecast before you dress, a library's worth of books without a trip out — a Chromebook quietly becomes the most useful corner of the house for keeping informed and entertained, all from your favorite chair.

CHAPTER 43

Music, Radio, and Podcasts

Your Chromebook is also a radio, a record collection, and a concert hall. Fill the kitchen with music or catch up on a favorite show while you potter about.

Listening to the radio

Most radio stations stream live online — search for a station's name plus "listen live," or visit its website. Services like **TuneIn** (tunein.com) gather thousands of stations from around the world in one place: your hometown station, or a jazz channel from Paris, whatever suits the mood.

Music on demand

YouTube has nearly every song and performance ever recorded — search for a singer or tune and play it free. Services like **YouTube Music**, **Spotify**, and **Pandora** let you build a collection and have a free listening option (with occasional ads) alongside paid plans that remove them. You don't need to pay to enjoy music.

Podcasts — radio shows on demand

A **podcast** is a free audio show on a subject — history, gardening, comedy, faith, true crime, you name it — that you can listen to whenever you like. Search for a topic plus "podcast," or browse a podcast app or website. It's like a radio program that waits for you.

> **TIP**
>
> **Connect a speaker for better sound**
>
> The Chromebook's own speakers are fine, but for filling a room, connect a **Bluetooth speaker** (Settings > Bluetooth) or plug headphones into the headphone jack. Suddenly your little computer is the best stereo in the house.

CHAPTER 44

Email Beyond the Basics

Once you're comfortable sending a plain email (Chapter 19), a few more skills make Gmail genuinely powerful — sending photos and documents, handling what arrives, and keeping your inbox from overwhelming you.

Attaching a photo or document

An **attachment** is a file — a photo, a document, a scan — that rides along with your email. To send one:

1. Click **Compose** and write your email as usual.
2. Click the **paperclip** symbol at the bottom of the message.
3. Find and click the file you want (your photos are in Google Photos or the Files app), then **Open**.
4. Wait for it to finish attaching (a moment for photos), then click **Send**.

Opening something someone sent you

When an email arrives with an attachment, you'll see it at the bottom of the message — a little tile with the file's name. Click it to view it. You can download it to keep (it goes to your Downloads), or, for a photo, save it to Google Photos.

HEADS UP

Attachments are also how trouble arrives

Only open an attachment when you know the sender and were expecting it. A surprise attachment — especially one urging you to "open the invoice" or "see the photo" from someone you don't recognize — is a classic way scammers spread trouble. When in doubt, don't open it; ask the sender (or me) first.

Taming the inbox

- **Search** finds any old email — click the search box at the top and type a name or word.
- **Unsubscribe** from newsletters you no longer want: open one and look for a small "Unsubscribe" link, usually at the very bottom. It stems the tide without deleting one by one.
- Don't feel you must empty your inbox — Gmail holds a great deal and sorts much of the junk into Spam for you.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Sending a grandchild a photo, emailing a document to your accountant, keeping the forms you need — these turn email from a simple note-passer into a genuine helper for the paperwork of life, all without a printer or a stamp.

CHAPTER 45

Government and Health Services Online

Some of the most useful things you can do online are also the most practical — dealing with Social Security, Medicare, your doctor, and other official business from home, without a wait on hold or a drive across town. A little extra care keeps these safe, since they involve your personal details.

The official sites worth knowing

The key with government and health sites is to reach the **real** one. Official U.S. government sites end in **.gov** — a reassuring sign. Type the address yourself or use a bookmark; never reach these through an ad or an email link.

Service	Where and what
Social Security	ssa.gov — check benefits, get statements, manage your account ("my Social Security").
Medicare	medicare.gov — review coverage, find providers, and manage your Medicare.
Your doctor	A "patient portal" (often MyChart) lets you see test results, message your doctor, and book visits. Your clinic gives you the web address.
Your state's motor vehicles	Renew a license plate or ID without a trip to the counter (your state's official .gov site).

Patient portals in brief

A **patient portal** is a private website from your doctor's office where you sign in to see your own health information — test results, your medication list, upcoming appointments — and send messages to the staff. Your clinic sets you up with a username the first time. It's a wonderful way to avoid phone tag and keep your care in one place. (Our Patient Portals & Telehealth guide covers this in full.)

STAY SAFE

These sites hold your most personal details — guard them

Because government and health accounts hold sensitive information, protect them well: a strong, unique password for each; turn on two-step verification where offered; and be especially alert to scams. No government agency will ever call, email, or text demanding payment in gift cards, threatening arrest, or asking for your password or Social Security number out of the blue. That is always a scam — hang up and, if unsure, call me or the agency's real number.

FROM BILL

Happy to help you get signed up

Setting up a Social Security, Medicare, or patient-portal account the first time involves proving who you are, which can feel fiddly. If you'd like a steady hand through it — done safely and explained plainly — that's exactly the kind of thing I help with. Call (330) 200-8042.

PART 11

Getting More Comfortable

A few skills that take you from "I can use it" to "I'm at home with it" — juggling windows, the touchscreen, asking out loud, and calmly sorting out the occasional hiccup.

CHAPTER 46

Windows and Doing Two Things at Once

Every app or website opens in a **window** — a framed rectangle on your screen. Learning to arrange windows lets you do two things at once, like reading a recipe on one side while writing a shopping list on the other. It's easier than it sounds.

The three buttons on every window

At the top-right corner of any window sit three small buttons:

Button	What it does
The dash (–)	Minimize — tucks the window down out of the way, onto the shelf, without closing it. Click its shelf icon to bring it back.
The square	Maximize — fills the whole screen with the window. Click again to shrink it back.
The ×	Close — shuts the window (and the app or page in it).

Two windows side by side (split screen)

To put two things next to each other:

1. Click and hold the very top bar of a window.
2. Drag it to the **far left** edge of the screen and let go — it snaps to fill the left half.
3. Do the same with another window to the **right** edge.
4. Now both sit side by side. Drag the divider in the middle to give one more room.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Side-by-side windows mean you can follow a how-to on the left while doing the steps on the right, or keep an email open while you look something up. It's the difference between flipping back and forth and simply seeing both at once — a small skill that pays off daily.

Seeing everything open at a glance

Press the **Show windows** key (top row, a rectangle with two lines beside it) and the screen zooms out to show every open window as a tidy set of tiles. Click any one to jump to it. It's the quickest way to find a window you've lost track of — no window is ever truly lost.

CHAPTER 47

Touchscreen and Tablet Mode

Some Chromebooks have a **touchscreen** — you can tap the screen directly with your finger, like a phone or tablet — and some even fold all the way back to become a tablet. If yours does, here's how to make the most of it. (If yours doesn't, no matter — everything works just the same with the touchpad.)

Touching the screen

- **Tap** a thing once to click it — a button, a link, an app.
- **Scroll** by sliding your finger up or down the page.
- **Zoom in** on a photo or page by placing two fingers together on the screen and spreading them apart; pinch them together to zoom out.

You can mix and match freely — tap the screen for some things, use the touchpad for others, whatever feels natural in the moment. Many people find tapping easier for simple things and the touchpad better for careful work.

Tablet mode

If your Chromebook folds back on itself so the keyboard is behind the screen, it switches into **tablet mode** — the keyboard turns off automatically (so you don't press keys by accident), and an **on-screen keyboard** pops up whenever you need to type. It's a comfortable way to read in your chair or watch a video. Fold it back to a laptop shape and it returns to normal.

> TIP
>
> **Not sure if yours has a touchscreen?**
>
> Just gently tap an icon on the screen with your finger. If it responds, you've got a touchscreen. If nothing happens, you don't — and that's perfectly fine; the touchpad does everything a touchscreen does.

CHAPTER 48

Asking Out Loud — Google Assistant

Many Chromebooks can listen and answer when you speak, through the **Google Assistant**. Instead of typing, you simply ask — a real help if typing is slow or your hands aren't steady.

What you can ask

If your Chromebook has the Assistant, you can look for a microphone symbol in the launcher or say "Hey Google" (if that's switched on in Settings), then ask things like:

- "What's the weather tomorrow?"
- "Set a timer for ten minutes."
- "How do you spell 'necessary'?"
- "What's 15 percent of 80?"
- "Remind me to call Dorothy at three o'clock."

Turning it on

Look in **Settings** > search for **Google Assistant**, and switch it on if you'd like it. Not every Chromebook offers it, and that's alright — the search box does the same jobs by typing. But for those who find speaking easier than typing, it's a wonderful feature worth trying.

GOOD TO KNOW

Speaking instead of typing, anywhere

Separate from the Assistant, there's also **Dictation** (from the Accessibility tools) that lets you speak your words into any document or email instead of typing them. Between the two, you need hardly touch the keyboard if you'd rather not. Ask me to set up whichever suits you.

CHAPTER 49

A Calm Troubleshooting Playbook

When something isn't working, the trick is not to panic or start changing settings at random. Work down this short list calmly — the answer is almost always near the top, and none of these can hurt anything.

The universal first moves

1. **Wait a moment.** A page or app that seems stuck is often just thinking. Give it a few seconds.
2. **Refresh the page.** On a web page, click the circular refresh arrow at the top of Chrome.
3. **Close and reopen** the app or tab (click its ×, then open it again).
4. **Restart the Chromebook.** Hold the power button, choose Shut down, wait ten seconds, turn it back on. This alone fixes most troubles.

Common situations

If this happens	Try this
A website won't load	Check your Wi-Fi (status area). Try another site — if it works, the first site is just down for now.
The screen looks frozen	Wait a bit, then restart if it stays stuck.
A video won't play	Refresh the page; check the volume isn't muted (top-row mute key).
Everything feels slow	Close tabs and apps you're not using, then restart.
A key or the touchpad acts odd	Restart. If it persists, there may be a stuck key or a setting changed by accident — a good thing to call about.
Forgot your password	On the sign-in screen tap "Forgot password?" and follow the steps, or call me.

FROM BILL

When the playbook runs out, that's what I'm for

If you've waited, refreshed, and restarted and something still won't behave, you've done exactly the right things — and now it's my turn. Call me at **(330) 200-8042**, describe what's happening (a screenshot helps — remember Chapter 30), and we'll sort it out together. You're not expected to fix everything yourself; knowing when to call *is* knowing how to use your Chromebook.

PART 12

Your Cheat-Sheet & When to Call Bill

The one-page reminders to keep by your chair, and an honest word about when a call to me is the right move. You're ready.

CHAPTER 50

The Everyday Cheat-Sheet

Tear this out, fold it, and keep it by the Chromebook. It's the handful of things you'll reach for most.

The three corners to remember

Spot	What it's for
Launcher (bottom-left circle)	Find and open any app — click it and start typing a name.
Shelf (bottom row)	Your pinned favorites, one click away.
Status area (bottom-right corner)	Wi-Fi, volume, brightness, Settings gear, and Sign out.

Everyday how-tos

To do this	Do this
Connect to Wi-Fi	Status area (bottom-right) > Wi-Fi > pick your network > type the password.
Open a website	Click Chrome > type the address (or a question) in the top bar > press Enter.
Go back a page	Click the back arrow (top-left of Chrome), or swipe two fingers left on the touchpad.
Save a favorite site	Click the star in the address bar > Done.
Make text bigger	Hold Ctrl and tap the + key (Ctrl and – to shrink, Ctrl and 0 to reset).
Print	Press Ctrl + P > check the printer > click Print.
Right-click (more options)	Tap the touchpad with TWO fingers.
Find a file	Launcher > type "Files" > use the search box inside it.

The five-second fixes

- **Something's acting strange** → restart it (hold power > Shut down, then turn on).
- **No internet** → check the Wi-Fi in the status area; restart the router if other devices are out too.
- **A page is stuck** → click the refresh (circular arrow) at the top of Chrome.
- **Lost or confused on a web page** → click the back arrow until you're somewhere familiar.
- **Can't find an app** → click the launcher and type its name.

STAY SAFE

The golden safety rule

No real company or person will ever rush you to send money or gift cards, hand over a password, or let a stranger into your computer. A pop-up saying you have a virus is always fake — close the tab or restart. When in doubt, don't act: call Bill first.

CHAPTER 51

When to Call Bill

This book will carry you a long way, and most days you won't need anyone. But you're never stuck alone — that's simply not how I do things. Here's an honest word about when picking up the phone is the right move, so you never feel you're imposing.

Good reasons to call — none of them silly

- You've got a **brand-new Chromebook** and want help setting it up, signing in, or creating a Google Account — the one-time steps that are so much easier with company.
- Your **printer won't cooperate** — the single most common request, and rarely your fault.
- The **internet keeps dropping** or won't connect, and the simple checks haven't fixed it.
- You got a **pop-up, call, email, or message that felt wrong** — always call me *before* you act.
- You'd like to turn on **two-step verification** or set up the **accessibility** tools, and want it done right and explained.
- You simply want someone to **sit with you**, in plain English and no rushing, while you get comfortable. That's the whole job, and I love it.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and I run **Bill's Home Tech** right here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping people feel at ease with their technology, and there's nothing I enjoy more than watching someone go from nervous to confident with a machine they were sure would get the better of them.

Phone	(330) 200-8042 — call or text. If I can't pick up, leave a message and I'll call you back.
Book a visit online	billshometech.com/book
Where I work	Portage County, Ohio, and the nearby communities.
If you visit the website	You may chat with Sophie, my friendly assistant on the site, who can help you book a time to talk.

FROM BILL

My standing offer

If anything in this book — or anything your Chromebook does — ever puzzles you, pick up the phone. No question is too small and no problem too silly. I'll come out, or talk you through it, as plainly and patiently as it takes. That's the whole reason I do this work.

— Bill · Bill's Home Tech · (330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

A few parting words

Here's the truth to carry away from all these pages: **there is no such thing as a dumb question.** The folks I help are smart, capable people who simply weren't handed a manual that spoke plainly. Now you have one.

Don't feel you must learn it all at once — you never will, and you don't need to. Pick one small thing this week: sign in, send an email, bookmark a favorite site. Next week, try another. Before long it's second nature, and that once-intimidating little computer becomes a trusted companion. **You're going to do just fine.**

— Bill