BILL'S HOME TECH
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BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Connected Car Apps

Remote start, free trials, subscriptions and privacy — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for drivers 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 the Ford app, OnStar & GM apps, Toyota, HondaLink & Hyundai Bluelink · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to the phone apps that talk to your car: the Ford app, OnStar and the Chevrolet, GMC, Buick and Cadillac apps, the Toyota app, HondaLink and Hyundai Bluelink. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Plans and prices change often, so this guide shows you where to look and what to ask, and it gives prices as "about" figures, as of November 2026.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What a connected car is, what its phone app can and can't do, and how the free, trial and paid parts fit together. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If your newer car came with a card that says "download our app," or the salesperson set something up on your phone in a hurry while you were signing papers, this guide is for **you**. And if you've just found a charge on your credit card statement from a car company and wondered what it was for, 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 feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting in your driveway: slowly, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything. When I use a word like "modem" or "telematics," I'll stop and explain it right then.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain what a "connected car" is and what its phone app actually does.
- Help you find the right app for your car, since several of them have changed names lately.
- Walk you through setting it up, and using remote start, lock and unlock, and find-my-car safely.
- Show you when your free trial ends, what you'll pay after, and how to cancel before you're charged.
- Explain the crash-response button, and how your driving data can be shared, and how to turn sharing off.
- Cover selling a car, and the fake "your car's subscription expired" texts to ignore.

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

Nothing in a car app can damage your car. Pressing "lock" twice just locks it twice. If remote start doesn't work, the car simply stays off. The only things worth slowing down for are **money** (signing up for a plan you don't want) and **privacy** (who gets to see where you drive). This guide spends real time on both.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Used well, a car app can warm the car up on a January morning in Ohio, tell you if you left a door unlocked, find the car in a big parking lot, and, in a crash, send help even if you can't reach your phone. Used carelessly, it can quietly cost a monthly fee for years. A little understanding gets you the first list without the second.

GOOD TO KNOW

Pairs with your key fob guide

Our **Key Fobs, Remote Start & Digital Keys** guide covers the key fob itself, fob batteries, using your phone as a key, and protecting against fob theft. This guide is about the car company's phone app and the subscriptions behind it.

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 about a car that seems to have a mind of its own.

Let's start with the simplest question: what does "connected" really mean?

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Connected Services Are

Most cars built in the last several years have a small cell-phone-like device hidden inside. Car companies call it the **modem**, the **telematics unit** or the **TCU** (telematics control unit). It has its own cellular connection, separate from your phone, so the car can send and receive information even when your phone is at home on the kitchen counter.

Connected services are the things the car company offers over that connection. Some work from the car itself, like a crash-response call. Others work from an app on your phone, like remote start.

The three pieces, in plain words

Piece	What it does
The car's modem	The built-in cellular device. It's what lets the app reach the car from miles away. It has to be **activated** before most app features work.
Your account	An account with the car company, made with your email and a password. Your car is "added" to it, usually using the car's VIN (vehicle identification number).
The app	The car company's free app on your phone. It sends commands to the car (start, lock, unlock) and shows information from it (fuel, tire pressure, location).

Connected services are not the same as CarPlay

This gets mixed up all the time. **Apple CarPlay** and **Android Auto** put your *phone's* maps, music and messages on the car's screen while you drive. They use your phone and work only when the phone is in the car. The car company's app is the other way around: it lets your phone control the car from *outside* it. You can use both, either or neither.

GOOD TO KNOW

Other guides for the car's screen

Our **Car Touchscreens & Bluetooth** and **CarPlay for Older Cars** guides cover pairing your phone, calls and music on the car's screen. This guide sticks to the car company's app and plans.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you know there's a little phone built into the car, the rest makes sense: it needs to be turned on (activated), it may need a plan, and, like any phone, it can share information. Everything else in this guide follows from that.

CHAPTER 3

What the App Can and Can't Do

Every brand's app is a little different, and features depend on your model, year and trim. But most of them offer a similar menu. Here's what to expect, and what not to expect.

Things most car apps can do

- **Remote start** — start the engine (or warm or cool an electric car) from your phone (Chapter 9).
- **Lock and unlock** the doors from anywhere you have a signal (Chapter 10).
- **Find my car** — show where the car is parked on a map (Chapter 10).
- **Vehicle health** — fuel level or range, oil life, tire pressure and warning lights (Chapter 11).
- **Service** — schedule an appointment with your dealer and get reminders.
- **Alerts** — a notice if the alarm goes off, and on some plans if the car leaves an area or goes over a speed you set.

Things the app can't do

- Work with **no signal**. Both your phone and the car need a cellular connection. In a parking garage basement or a rural dip in the road, commands may fail.
- Start a car that is **unlocked, in gear, or has a door or hood open**. Most cars refuse remote start unless they're locked and safely parked.
- Replace your key. You still need the key or fob to drive away after a remote start on most cars.
- Work on a car whose modem was built for the old **3G** cell network, which shut down in 2022 (Chapter 21).

TIP

Look at your own car's list

Inside each app, the features your car supports appear on its main screen or under a "features" or "plans" area. If remote start isn't there, your car may not have it, or it may need a plan or a dealer setting. Chapter 13 through Chapter 17 go brand by brand.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the usual menu ahead of time keeps you from paying for a feature you'll never use, and from missing one that's already included at no cost.

CHAPTER 4

Free, Trial or Paid: How the Money Works

This is the part most people find confusing, and it's the part that costs money. Car companies split their services into groups, and each group may be free, free for a while, or paid every month.

The three kinds of services

Kind	What it means
Included	Free for a set time or for as long as the company offers it. On many Ford models, for example, remote start, lock and unlock and vehicle location in the Ford app don't need the paid Connectivity Package. GM's 2025 and newer cars include a basic OnStar plan for up to eight years.
Trial	Free for a set time from the day the car was first sold — often a few months, a year or three years — then a monthly or yearly charge if you keep it.
Paid	Extras like a Wi-Fi hotspot in the car, connected navigation, or a live advisor. Usually a monthly or yearly fee.

HEADS UP

The trial clock may already be running

Trials usually start on the date the car was **first sold or leased new**, not the day you open the app. On a used car, some or all of the trial may already be gone. Chapter 18 shows how to find your end date.

Why the details keep changing

Car companies rename plans and change prices every year or two, and they often treat newer and older model years differently. That's why this guide gives prices as **about** figures **as of November 2026**, and always tells you where to check the real number for your car: the plans or subscriptions screen in the app, or the company's website.

TIP

One habit that saves money

When you add a credit card to any car account, write down on the same day what the card is for and when the first charge will come. The Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 27 has a spot for it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you can tell "included" from "trial" from "paid," you can keep what helps you and let the rest lapse on purpose, instead of finding out from your credit card statement.

PART 2

Setting Up the App

What to gather first, which app to download for your brand, how to add and activate your car, and how to share it with family.

CHAPTER 5

Before You Start: What to Have Ready

Setting up a car app takes about twenty minutes when you have everything at hand, and much longer when you don't. Gather these first, then sit down somewhere comfortable — ideally in or near the car, since some steps happen on the car's screen.

Your setup checklist

- **Your phone**, charged, with the latest system update and enough free space for one more app.
- **Your email address** and its password, since the app will send you a code to confirm it.
- **The car's VIN** — the 17-character vehicle identification number. It's on your registration, your insurance card, and on the driver's side of the dashboard where you can read it through the windshield.
- **The car and its key**, nearby. Many brands ask you to confirm on the car's screen or to have the car on during activation.
- **A credit card**, only if the brand asks for one to start a trial (Ford's Connectivity Package does). You don't need one for the basic remote features on most brands.
- **A new password** for the car account, written down. Don't reuse your email or bank password.

> TIP
> **Write the VIN down once**
> Copy the VIN into the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 27. You'll need it again for the app, for the dealer, for recalls, and when you sell the car.

If the dealer already set it up

Many dealers install the app on your phone when you buy the car. That's helpful, but ask one question: **whose email is the account in?** It should be yours. If a salesperson used a dealership email or a family member's, the account, the trial reminders and the car's data go to them. Chapter 7 shows how to check.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Ten minutes of gathering saves an hour of hunting for a VIN in the rain, and it means the account is in your name from day one.

CHAPTER 6

Download the Right App for Your Car

Several car apps have new names, and old names still float around in ads and owner's manuals. Download only from the **App Store** on an iPhone or **Google Play** on an Android phone, and check that the publisher is the car company itself.

Which app, as of November 2026

Brand	App to download	Older names you may see
Ford	**Ford** app	FordPass (Ford now calls it the Ford app)
Chevrolet, GMC, Buick, Cadillac	**myChevrolet**, **myGMC**, **myBuick** or **myCadillac**, with OnStar inside	A new single **OnStar** app is coming in 2027
Toyota	**Toyota** app	Toyota Entune (older cars)
Honda	**HondaLink**	
Hyundai	**MyHyundai** app, for Bluelink	Blue Link

GOOD TO KNOW

GM's apps are changing in 2027

At an October 2026 event, GM said a single new **OnStar** app will replace the Chevrolet, GMC, Buick and Cadillac apps, and the OnStar Guardian app, with the rollout starting in 2027. Until then, keep using your current app; it keeps working. GM hadn't said, as of November 2026, exactly how accounts will move over, so watch for an email or a notice inside your current app rather than acting on an ad.

SCAM ALERT

Only the real app

Search the app store for the brand name, then check the developer line. The Ford app comes from Ford, the Chevrolet app from General Motors, and so on. Look-alike apps, or websites offering to "activate" your car for a fee, are not the car company. Activation is done through the official app or the dealer.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Picking the right app the first time means the features, trial dates and alerts in this guide line up with what you see on your screen.

CHAPTER 7

Adding Your Car and Activating the Modem

Every brand does this a little differently, but the pattern is the same. The app walks you through it; this chapter tells you what's happening at each step so nothing catches you off guard.

The usual steps

1. Open the app and choose **Create account** (or **Sign up**). Use your own email address.
2. Type the code the company emails or texts you, to prove the address is yours.
3. Choose **Add vehicle**. Type the VIN, or let the app scan the barcode on the door frame or windshield.
4. If the app asks, sit in the car with it on and accept the request on the car's screen. Some cars show a message such as "allow connection" or ask you to confirm a code.
5. Wait for activation. It can take a few minutes, and sometimes up to a day. The app says when it's ready.
6. Try one simple command, like **Lock**, while standing near the car. Listen for the horn or watch the lights.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Gray buttons usually mean "not finished yet"**
>
> If the app shows your car but the start and lock buttons are gray, the car's modem usually hasn't finished activating. Give it a few hours. Ford, for example, says to allow 24 to 48 hours for its Connectivity Package to fully activate. If it's still gray the next day, call the brand's customer line.

Check whose account the car is in

Open the app's **Account** or **Profile** screen. Make sure the name and email are yours. If the car shows up in someone else's account — a previous owner's, or a dealership's — you'll usually need to call the car company's customer line to have it moved. Chapter 24 covers this for used cars.

TIP

Turn on the app's notifications

When your phone asks whether the app can send notifications, say **Allow**. That's how you'll hear about a trial ending, a door left unlocked or a tire low on air.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A car that's properly added and activated in your own name is the foundation for everything else: remote start, alerts, and a clean handover when you someday sell it.

CHAPTER 8

Sharing the Car with Family

If a spouse, an adult child or a caregiver drives the car too, you don't need to share your password. Most car apps let the account owner invite other drivers, who then use the app on their own phones with their own sign-in.

How sharing usually works

1. In the app, look for **Share vehicle**, **Drivers**, **Users** or **Invite**, often under the car's settings or your account.
2. Type the other person's email address and send the invite.
3. They download the same app, create their own account, and accept the invite.
4. Check what they can do. Some brands let you choose whether a shared driver can start or unlock the car, or see its location.

HEADS UP

Shared means they can see it too

A shared driver may see where the car is parked, and on some plans where it's been. That's often the point — an adult child keeping an eye out for a parent — but talk about it openly so nobody feels watched.

TIP

Remove people who no longer drive it

Look at the shared-drivers list once a year. Remove a grandchild who's moved away or a caregiver who's finished. It takes a minute and keeps your car's location private.

GOOD TO KNOW

Phone as a key

Some cars can let a phone act as the key, and a shared driver can get a digital key too. Our **Key Fobs, Remote Start & Digital Keys** guide covers digital keys in detail.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Everyone who drives the car gets the useful parts — remote start, find my car, alerts — without passwords being passed around on sticky notes.

PART 3

Everyday Use

Remote start, lock and unlock, finding the car, checking its health, and what to do when the app and the car stop talking.

CHAPTER 9

Remote Start, Safely

Remote start is the feature most people want, especially in a northeast Ohio winter. From your kitchen, you tap a button and the car starts, so the heater has a head start before you walk out.

How to remote start

1. Make sure the car is **locked**, in **Park**, with doors, hood and trunk closed. Most cars won't remote start otherwise.
2. Open the car app. On the main screen, find **Start** (often a round button with a circle-arrow, or "Remote start").
3. Press and, on some apps, hold or slide to confirm. Wait for the message that says the car has started. It can take 15 seconds to a minute.
4. If the app offers it, choose a climate setting such as heat, defrost or heated seats before starting.
5. When you get in, use your key or fob as you normally would to drive away. On many cars, the engine shuts off if you open the door without the key.

STAY SAFE

Never in a closed garage

Don't remote start a gas or hybrid car inside a closed or attached garage. Exhaust contains carbon monoxide, which you can't see or smell, and it can seep into the house. Open the garage door fully first, or pull the car out. Make sure your home has working carbon monoxide alarms.

How long it runs

Cars shut off on their own after a set time if nobody gets in — often 10 to 15 minutes, and some apps let you extend it once. The exact time is in your owner's manual or the app's remote start settings.

Remote start without the app

Many cars can also remote start from the key fob, with no app or plan needed — often by pressing lock, then holding a start button. That's covered in our **Key Fobs, Remote Start & Digital Keys** guide. The app's advantage is range: it works from anywhere with a signal, not just within sight of the car.

HEADS UP

Remote start may be the paid part

On some brands, remote start from the **app** is included; on others it's part of a trial or paid plan. Honda, Hyundai and Toyota put it in a remote package or plan with a trial on many models, while many Fords include it in the Ford app without the paid package. Chapter 13 through Chapter 17 have each brand's details.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A warm, defrosted car on a cold morning — without standing in the driveway scraping ice — is one of the nicest small comforts a car app gives, and it's safer to drive with a clear windshield.

CHAPTER 10

Lock, Unlock and Find My Car

These are the quiet workhorses of a car app. They answer two of life's most common questions: "Did I lock it?" and "Where did I park?"

Lock or unlock from anywhere

1. Open the car app. The main screen usually shows whether the doors are locked.
2. Tap **Lock** or **Unlock**. Wait for the confirmation message.
3. If you unlocked it for someone (a family member picking something up), lock it again from the app when they're done. Many cars also re-lock on their own after a short time if no door is opened.

TIP

Unlock for a helper, safely

Only unlock the car remotely when you know the person is standing next to it. An unlocked car sitting in a driveway for an hour invites trouble.

Find my car

The app's map shows where the car last reported its position. Tap the car on the map, and most apps offer **Directions** to walk you back to it. Some also let you flash the lights or honk the horn, which is a blessing in a mall or stadium lot.

HEADS UP

Location is personal information

The same feature that finds your car can show anyone with access to the account where you are. Keep your car-app password private, remove old shared drivers (Chapter 8), and read Chapter 22 about who else may receive location data.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the car is stolen

Call **911** or the police first. Don't go after the car yourself. Some plans include a stolen vehicle service that works with police to locate the car; your app or the company's customer line will tell you if yours does.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No more walking back to the parking lot to double-check the doors, and no more wandering rows of cars pressing the fob and listening for a chirp.

CHAPTER 11

Vehicle Health, Alerts and Service

Your car already watches dozens of things: fuel, oil life, tire pressure, battery voltage, warning lights. A connected car sends some of that to your phone, so you can see it without going outside.

What you'll usually find

Screen	What it tells you
Fuel or range	How full the tank is, or for an electric car, how many miles it can go and its charge level.
Tire pressure	Each tire's pressure, often with a warning if one is low.
Oil life	The percent of oil life left, so you know when an oil change is coming.
Warning lights	A list of active warnings, with a plain description of each.
Odometer	Total miles, handy for service records and insurance.
Recalls	Some apps show open safety recalls for your VIN.

Schedule service from the app

1. In the app, look for **Service**, **Schedule service** or **Dealer**.
2. Pick your preferred dealer, if it isn't already set.
3. Choose the service (oil change, tire rotation, a warning light) and a time.
4. Watch for a confirmation email or text from the dealer, and add the date to your calendar.

TIP

A warning in the app is still a warning

If the app shows a red warning — brakes, oil pressure, overheating — treat it the same as the light on the dashboard. Check your owner's manual or call your dealer before driving far.

GOOD TO KNOW

Recalls, any car

You can look up open safety recalls for any car, connected or not, by typing the VIN at **nhtsa.gov/recalls**, the U.S. government's recall site. It's free.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You know about a low tire before you're on the highway, and the oil change gets booked before it's overdue — small things that keep a car reliable for years.

CHAPTER 12

When the App Won't Talk to the Car

Sooner or later, you'll press **Start** and get a message like "Unable to reach vehicle" or "Command failed." It's almost never your fault, and it rarely means something is broken. Go down this list in order.

Try these, in order

1. **Check the signal.** The car needs cellular coverage too. A car in an underground garage or a metal pole barn may not get commands.
2. **Check the car.** Remote start usually needs the car locked, in Park, with doors, hood and trunk closed, and enough fuel or charge.
3. **Wait a minute and try once more.** Sending the same command over and over can make it worse.
4. **Close the app and reopen it.** If that doesn't help, sign out and back in.
5. **Update the app** in the App Store or Google Play.
6. **Check the plan.** If a trial ended, remote features may have stopped. Look at the app's subscriptions or plans screen (Chapter 18).
7. **Check for a car software update.** Many cars update over the air; the app or the car's screen will say if one is waiting.
8. **Call the brand's customer line** or your dealer. They can see whether the car's modem is reporting in.

HEADS UP

A weak car battery stops remote features

Cars that sit for a week or more can drain their regular 12-volt battery, and many cars stop answering the app to save power. If the car hasn't moved in a while and the app can't reach it, a drive or a battery check is the fix.

TIP

Turned off connectivity by accident?

If someone switched off the car's connectivity or location setting on the car's screen, the app's remote buttons stop working. Chapter 23 shows where those switches are, so you can turn them back on.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most "it stopped working" moments are fixed in a few minutes by going down this list, without a trip to the dealer.

PART 4

Brand by Brand

The Ford app, OnStar and GM's brand apps, the Toyota app, HondaLink, and Hyundai Bluelink: what's included, what the trials are, and what they cost after, as of November 2026.

CHAPTER 13

Ford: The Ford App (Formerly FordPass)

If you've owned a Ford for a while, you may know the app as **FordPass**. Ford's U.S. help pages now call it the **Ford app**, and some older materials and other countries still say FordPass. If FordPass is already on your phone, keep it updated in the App Store or Google Play.

What's included at no extra cost

On many Fords with a built-in modem, the everyday remote features in the Ford app — **remote start**, **lock and unlock**, **vehicle location**, and fuel and oil information — work without the paid package described below. Exactly which features you get, and whether they have an end date, depends on your model and year. In the Ford app, open your car's **Connected Services** screen to see what's included and until when.

The Ford Connectivity Package: a trial, then a fee

Ford Connectivity Package	
What it is	A bundle of in-car extras: connected navigation (or Google built-in maps), the car's Wi-Fi hotspot, and audio and video streaming. What's in it varies by model.
Trial	A **one-year** complimentary trial on eligible vehicles.
Card on file	Ford requires a credit card to activate the trial, and plans are set to renew automatically.
After the trial	**$14.99 a month** or **$149.95 a year**, plus taxes, as of November 2026. Ford also offers a one-time payment for seven years. Prices and what's included vary by model.

HEADS UP

The card on file is how the charge arrives

Because Ford keeps a card on file for the Connectivity Package, the first payment can arrive automatically after the trial. If you don't want it, cancel before the end date. Chapter 20 shows how.

TIP

Remote start and the package are separate

On most Fords, canceling the Connectivity Package doesn't take away the Ford app's remote start, lock and unlock. You'd lose the hotspot, connected maps and streaming extras. Check the Connected Services screen first to be sure how your car is set up.

GOOD TO KNOW

BlueCruise is its own plan

Ford's hands-free highway driving feature, **BlueCruise**, has its own trial and plan. Our **Driver Assist Features** guide covers it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Ford owners can keep the everyday remote features without paying, and decide on the extras with a clear head when the reminder comes.

CHAPTER 14

GM: OnStar and the myChevrolet, myGMC, myBuick and myCadillac Apps

General Motors' connected services are called **OnStar**. You use them through your brand's app — **myChevrolet**, **myGMC**, **myBuick** or **myCadillac** — and through the blue **OnStar** button in the car, which connects you to a live advisor.

2025 and newer GM vehicles: OnStar Basics

OnStar says 2025 and newer Chevrolet, GMC, Buick and Cadillac vehicles come with **OnStar Basics** for **up to eight years** at no extra cost. Basics includes core features such as **Automatic Crash Response**, **select remote commands** through the myChevrolet, myGMC, myBuick or myCadillac app, and navigation connectivity. OnStar says any remaining Basics time transfers to the next owner if you sell the car (a SiriusXM radio plan does not).

Paid OnStar plans

Extras such as the in-car Wi-Fi hotspot and stolen vehicle help are in paid plans, and the names differ by model year. As reported by GM Authority in November 2026, and matching OnStar's own pricing page, these monthly prices applied:

	Plan names (as reported)	About per month
2025 and newer	Connect Plus; Protect; OnStar One; Super Cruise	$19.99; $19.99; $34.99; $39.99
2024 and older	From an entry plan (Connect / Remote Access) up to OnStar One	About $14.99 up to $49.99

TIP

Check your own price

OnStar's plans change often. Before you sign up or cancel, check the plans screen in your brand's app or **onstar.com**, or press the blue OnStar button and ask the advisor. Prices above are news-reported figures, not a quote.

A new OnStar app is coming

GM said at an event in October 2026 that a new **OnStar** app will replace the myChevrolet, myGMC, myBuick and myCadillac apps, plus OnStar Guardian, starting in 2027. Keep using your current app until GM tells you it's time to switch. It's a good moment to make sure you know your account email and password.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If you bought a 2025 or newer GM vehicle, crash response and remote start may already be covered for years. Knowing that keeps you from paying for a plan you don't need.

CHAPTER 15

Toyota: The Toyota App

Toyota's phone app is simply called the **Toyota** app. Its features come in several services that Toyota names separately; the one most people care about is **Remote Connect**, which includes remote start and lock and unlock from the app.

The services you'll see

Toyota service	What it does
Remote Connect	Remote start, lock and unlock, find my car and similar features in the app.
Safety Connect	Emergency help: automatic collision notification and an SOS button in the car (Chapter 21).
Service Connect	Vehicle health reports and maintenance reminders.
Other plans	Extras such as a Wi-Fi hotspot and connected navigation, on some models.

Trials and price

Toyota's trial lengths **vary by model, year and audio system** — about one year on some 2026 models, and several years on others. The trial starts on the date the car was first sold or leased new. After the trial, Remote Connect has been listed at about **$8.00 a month** or **$80 a year** on many models. On newer models, Toyota often sells it in a bundle with other services, which costs more. Check the app for your car's price.

TIP

Find your exact trial

In the Toyota app, open your vehicle's subscriptions or services screen. It lists each service, whether it's active, and its end date. That screen beats any chart.

HEADS UP

Older Toyotas and the 3G shutdown

Some older Toyota models built for the 3G cell network — for example, certain Prius Plug-in, RAV4 EV, Mirai, Sienna and Avalon years — lost Safety Connect on November 1, 2022, and Toyota says there is no retrofit option. Chapter 21 explains.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing which Toyota service does what lets you keep the one you use — often Remote Connect — and skip the ones you don't.

CHAPTER 16

Honda: HondaLink

Honda's connected app is **HondaLink**, available free in the App Store and Google Play. Honda splits its services into packages, and not every model or trim can use every package.

Honda's packages, in plain words

Package	What it covers
Basic features	Free features such as vehicle information and maintenance reminders.
Security	Emergency features such as automatic collision notification. Usually a trial of about **one year** from the original purchase or lease date, then a paid subscription.
Remote	Remote lock and unlock, **remote start** and find my car, plus alerts on eligible models. Usually a short trial (about three months), then a fee. You have to enroll to use it.
Concierge	A live assistant for things like directions and reservations, on some trims.

What it costs

Honda's trial lengths and prices vary by model and change from time to time. Dealer and J.D. Power guides in 2026 list the Remote package at about **$110 a year** (or about $10 a month) after the trial, and Security at about $89 a year. Check the subscriptions screen in HondaLink for your car's real figures before you decide.

HEADS UP

Not every Honda has remote start in the app

Some Honda models and trims support only the basic features. If you don't see remote start in HondaLink, ask your dealer whether your trim supports it before paying for a package.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing Honda's packages lets you pay for the one feature you actually want, often remote start, instead of everything at once.

CHAPTER 17

Hyundai: Bluelink and the MyHyundai App

Hyundai's connected services are called **Bluelink** (older materials write it "Blue Link"). You use them through the **MyHyundai** app and the Bluelink buttons in the car.

Bluelink on most 2023 and older Hyundais

Bluelink	
Trial	Often **three years** from the new-car purchase date; some older model years had shorter trials for some packages.
Packages	**Connected Care** (safety features like automatic collision notification), **Remote** (remote start, lock and unlock, car finder) and **Guidance** (navigation features).
After the trial	Each package about **$9.90 a month** or about **$99.00 a year**, as of November 2026. You can choose just one package.

Newer Hyundais: Bluelink+

Most 2024 and newer Hyundais use an updated version called **Bluelink+**, with different plan rules from the older packages: some features are included for as long as you own the car, and the rest come in paid tiers. Check the MyHyundai app or **hyundaiusa.com/bluelink** for what your car includes and for how long.

TIP

Kia is a cousin

Kia, Hyundai's sister company, has its own app and service called **Kia Connect**. The ideas in this guide — trials, plans, data sharing, removing the car when you sell — apply there too.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If your older Hyundai's trial is ending, you can choose just the Remote package if remote start is all you use, instead of paying for all three.

PART 5

Trials, Subscriptions and Canceling

How to find out when a free trial ends, decide whether a plan is worth keeping, and cancel cleanly without losing the parts you want.

CHAPTER 18

Find Out When Your Free Trial Ends

The single most useful thing you can do with a car app is learn your trial end dates. Once you know them, nothing sneaks up on you. It takes about ten minutes, and you only need to do it once per car.

Where to look in the app

1. Open your car's app and make sure the right car is showing, if you have more than one.
2. Look for a screen called **Subscriptions**, **Plans**, **Services**, **Connected Services** or **Manage subscription**. It's often under the car's settings, your account, or a **Shop** or **Store** tab.
3. For each service listed, note three things: its **name**, whether it's **active**, and its **end date** or renewal date.
4. Check whether a **card is on file** and whether it's set to **renew automatically**.
5. Write it all in the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 27, and put a reminder in your phone's calendar about two weeks before each end date.

TIP

If you can't find the screen

Every brand's app is laid out differently, and they're redesigned often. If you can't find it in a few minutes, sign in on the brand's website instead, or call the customer line printed in your owner's materials and ask, "When does each of my trials end, and is a card on file?"

Brand by brand, where the dates usually live

Brand	Where to look
Ford	Ford app, your car's **Connected Services** screen, which shows the Connectivity Package tile and its status (Chapter 13).
Chevrolet, GMC, Buick, Cadillac	Your brand app's plans area, or **onstar.com**. You can also press the blue OnStar button and ask the advisor (Chapter 14).
Toyota	Toyota app, your car's subscriptions or services list (Chapter 15).
Honda	HondaLink, the subscriptions or packages screen (Chapter 16).
Hyundai	MyHyundai app or the Bluelink section of Hyundai's owner website (Chapter 17).

HEADS UP

Used car? The trial may be partly gone

Most trials are counted from the day the car was first sold or leased new. If you bought the car used, ask the seller or the brand what's left. On a 2025 or newer GM car, OnStar says leftover Basics time moves to the next owner.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing your dates turns a surprise charge into a calm decision you make on your own schedule, with a reminder already on your calendar.

CHAPTER 19

Is a Paid Plan Worth It for You?

There's no single right answer. A plan that's a waste of money for one person is a real comfort for another. Here's an honest way to think it through, without anyone selling you anything.

Ask yourself four questions

1. **Which features did I actually use during the trial?** If you never once used remote start or the hotspot, you probably won't start now.
2. **Is the feature I like included anyway?** On some brands remote start or crash response is included for years. Check before paying (Chapter 13 through Chapter 17).
3. **Does it protect me?** Automatic crash response matters more for someone who often drives alone, or drives country roads with little traffic.
4. **Is there a cheaper way?** A key fob may already remote start your car. Your phone's own hotspot or navigation may do the job of the car's.

A simple way to weigh it

Feature	Often worth it if…	Often not worth it if…
Remote start from the app	You park far from where you sleep or work, or want to warm the car from indoors	Your fob already remote starts the car from the house
Crash response and SOS	You drive alone often, or a family member worries about you	It's already included at no charge on your car
In-car Wi-Fi hotspot	Grandchildren stream in the back seat on long trips	Your phone's hotspot is enough, or nobody uses it
Connected navigation	You don't use CarPlay or Android Auto	You use your phone's maps through the car's screen

TIP

Keep one, drop the rest

Most brands let you keep a single package. A Hyundai with older Bluelink, for example, lets you buy just the Remote package. HondaLink sells Remote and Security separately.

GOOD TO KNOW

Monthly or yearly?

Yearly plans usually cost less per month, but you pay up front and may not get money back if you sell the car mid-year. If you aren't sure you'll keep the car or the plan, monthly is the more flexible choice.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You pay only for what you use and value, and you can explain your choice to a family member who asks.

CHAPTER 20

Canceling a Plan, Step by Step

Canceling a car plan is allowed, it's normal, and the company can't take away anything you didn't pay for. The trick is to cancel **before** the renewal date and to keep proof that you did.

The general steps, any brand

1. Find the end or renewal date (Chapter 18). Plan to cancel at least a few days before it.
2. Open the app's **Subscriptions** or **Manage subscription** screen and look for **Cancel**, **Turn off auto-renew** or **Manage**.
3. If there's no cancel button, call the brand's customer line (the number in your owner's materials or on the brand's official website, not one from an ad or a text).
4. Ask clearly: "Please cancel this plan and turn off automatic renewal. Will any other features stop working?"
5. Write down the date, the person's name and any confirmation number. Save the confirmation email.
6. Check your next credit card statement to make sure no new charge appeared.

Brand notes

Brand	How to cancel
OnStar (GM)	Press the blue **OnStar** button in the car and ask an advisor, or call **1-888-4ONSTAR** (1-888-466-7827). OnStar warns that the system is deactivated if a plan expires or is canceled, so ask what you'll keep (Chapter 14).
Ford	Manage the Connectivity Package in the Ford app's Connected Services area, or call Ford. Plans are set to renew automatically, so turn renewal off if you don't want it.
Toyota	Use the subscriptions area of the Toyota app, or press the **SOS** button in the car and ask the agent.
Honda and Hyundai	Use the subscriptions screen in HondaLink or MyHyundai, or call the brand's customer line.

HEADS UP

Ask what else turns off

On some cars, canceling the last plan, or letting it lapse, also stops crash response or the app's remote buttons. That may be fine with you, but ask the question out loud so you decide with your eyes open.

TIP

Canceling a charge you already paid

If a renewal went through before you noticed, call the brand promptly and ask for a refund. Many will help, especially if you call soon after the charge. Be polite, and be specific about the date.

SCAM ALERT

Cancel only through the real company

Never cancel by calling a number in a text message, a pop-up or a search ad. Scammers set up fake "cancel your car subscription" lines to get your card number. Use the app or the number on the brand's official website (Chapter 25).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You stop paying for what you don't use, with a confirmation number in hand if anyone ever asks.

PART 6

Safety and Privacy

The crash-response button, what happened to older 3G cars, who gets your driving data, and how to turn sharing off.

CHAPTER 21

Crash Response, the SOS Button and Older 3G Cars

For many families, this is the feature that matters most. If the car's airbags go off, a connected car can call for help on its own and tell responders where you are, even if you can't reach your phone or speak.

What the buttons in the car do

Feature	What it does
Automatic crash response	After a serious crash, the car calls the brand's response center by itself. GM calls it **Automatic Crash Response**; Toyota, Honda and Hyundai use names like automatic collision notification. An agent speaks to you through the car's speakers and can send help.
SOS or emergency button	A button, usually on the ceiling near the mirror, that connects you to an agent who can send police, fire or ambulance to your location.
Assistance or advisor button	A separate button on some cars for non-emergencies, such as roadside help or questions about your plan. GM's is the blue **OnStar** button.

Find your buttons today

1. Sit in the driver's seat and look at the ceiling panel above the mirror. Most cars put the SOS and assistance buttons there.
2. Read the labels. The SOS button is often red, or has a cover.
3. Check your owner's manual for what each button does on your car, and whether it needs an active plan.
4. Show everyone who drives or rides in the car where the SOS button is.

STAY SAFE

Is crash response actually on?

Crash response only works if the car's modem is active and, on many cars, if the safety plan or trial is current. Look in the app's subscriptions screen (Chapter 18). On 2025 and newer GM cars, OnStar says Automatic Crash Response is part of OnStar Basics for up to eight years. If you rely on this feature, check it before you cancel anything.

TIP

Your phone can help too

Recent iPhones, Pixel phones and some other Android phones have their own crash detection that can call 911. It's a good backup, whether or not your car has a plan. Check your phone's emergency or safety settings.

Older cars and the 3G shutdown

Cell networks shut down their old **3G** service in 2022. Cars whose built-in modem only used 3G lost their connection, and with it the app, remote start from the app, and often crash response. Toyota, for example, says Safety Connect stopped working on November 1, 2022 on certain older models, including some Prius Plug-in, RAV4 EV, Mirai, Sienna and Avalon years, and that there's no retrofit to bring it back.

- If an older car's app says "vehicle not supported" or the SOS button gives no answer, the 3G shutdown is a likely reason. Ask your dealer to confirm for your exact model and year.
- Some other brands offered upgrades for some models at the time, and some didn't. A dealer can tell you what applied to yours.
- Keep paying nothing for a service that can no longer reach the car. If you're still being charged, call and ask for it to be stopped.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You know whether help will come on its own after a crash, and if not, you can lean on your phone's crash detection instead of a button that no longer works.

CHAPTER 22

Your Driving Data: Who Sees It

A connected car can record more than where it's parked. Depending on the brand and your settings, it may note how fast you drive, how hard you brake and when you drive. That's called **driving data** or **driving behavior data**. This chapter explains, in plain terms, what has happened with that data and why it matters to you.

What happened with GM and OnStar

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the government agency that protects consumers, said GM and OnStar collected drivers' precise location and driving behavior and passed it to other companies, including **consumer reporting agencies** that supplied information to insurance companies, without giving drivers meaningful notice or a real chance to agree.

- In **January 2026**, the FTC finalized an order with GM and OnStar.
- For **five years**, GM may not share drivers' location and driving behavior data with consumer reporting agencies.
- GM must get drivers' clear permission ("affirmative express consent") before collecting, using or sharing connected-car data. Many of the order's rules last 20 years.
- GM had already stopped its **OnStar Smart Driver** program in April 2024, after news reports about the data sharing.

It wasn't only GM

News reports in 2024 found that driving data from some Honda and Hyundai cars had also gone to a data company, Verisk, which later said it no longer receives this data or supplies those reports to insurers. Another data company, LexisNexis, also received driving data from GM. Laws and company practices are still changing, so it's worth checking your own settings (Chapter 23).

GOOD TO KNOW

Why insurance enters the picture

Some insurers price policies partly on driving habits. When that information comes from an app you chose to join with your insurer, you've agreed to it. The trouble in these cases was that many drivers didn't know their car was the source.

HEADS UP

Free safe-driver programs

If a car app or your insurer invites you to join a "safe driver" or "driving score" program, read what it shares and with whom before tapping Agree. You can usually say no and still use the rest of the app.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You understand the trade-off and can choose what to share on purpose, rather than learning about it from an insurance renewal letter.

CHAPTER 23

Turning Off Data Sharing and Checking Your File

You can usually limit what your car shares without giving up the features you like. Each brand puts the switches in a different place: some on the car's touchscreen, some in the app, some only by phone. Here's where to start.

Ford: on the car's screen

1. With the car parked, on the touchscreen choose **Settings** > **Connectivity** (on some cars, **Privacy**).
2. Look for **Connected Vehicle Features** or **Data sharing with Ford**.
3. Ford shows separate switches for **Share Vehicle Data** and **Share Driving Data**. Slide a switch to the left to turn that sharing off, and confirm.

HEADS UP

Some features need sharing on

Ford says that if you turn off vehicle data sharing, features such as BlueCruise, the car's internet connection and the car's location in the Ford app won't work. Turning off only **Share Driving Data** is a middle path some drivers choose. Menu names differ by SYNC version and year.

Toyota: the app or the SOS button

Toyota's U.S. privacy notice says you can opt out of Connected Services or ask Toyota to turn off data transmission through the **Toyota app** or by pressing the **SOS** button in the car and asking the agent. Toyota is clear that opting out also turns off Connected Services features such as roadside help, vehicle health reports and Wi-Fi.

GM, Honda and Hyundai

- **GM:** look in your brand app's privacy or account settings, or press the blue OnStar button and ask an advisor what's being shared and how to limit it.
- **Honda and Hyundai:** news reports say both apps let you turn off driving-behavior collection. Look under the app's settings for privacy, data or a driving-score feature.

- Any brand: you can call the customer line and ask, "What driving data do you collect from my car, and how do I turn it off?"

Check what the data companies have on you

Under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, consumer reporting agencies must show you the file they keep on you when you ask. That includes driving data, if they have any. Two that have received car driving data take requests at **consumer.risk.lexisnexis.com/request** (LexisNexis) and **fcra.verisk.com** (Verisk).

TIP

Type the address yourself

Type those web addresses into your browser by hand, rather than clicking a link in an email. You'll be asked for identifying details to prove the file is yours; that's normal for these official requests.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few switches and one request let you keep the features you enjoy while keeping your driving habits between you and your car.

PART 7

Selling, Buying Used and Scams

Handing a connected car over cleanly, taking one over safely, and spotting the fake subscription messages that try to cash in on all of this.

CHAPTER 24

Selling, Trading In or Buying a Used Connected Car

A connected car stays linked to its owner's account until someone breaks the link. If you sell or trade in a car without doing that, the next owner's location could keep showing up on your phone, and in some cases they might be able to see things about you. Ten minutes before you hand over the keys prevents it.

Before you sell or trade in

1. **Cancel or transfer paid plans** so you aren't billed for a car you no longer own (Chapter 20).
2. **Remove the car from your app account.** In the Ford app, for example: tap the **Garage** icon at the top left, swipe to the car, tap **Remove Vehicle**, and confirm. Other brands have a similar option in the car's settings, or the customer line can do it.
3. **Remove shared drivers** and any digital keys you set up (Chapter 8).
4. **Then reset the car itself.** Use the factory reset or "erase all personal data" option on the car's screen, as your owner's manual describes. It clears paired phones, contacts, saved addresses and garage door codes.
5. **Check the app once more** the next day. The car should be gone from your account.

TIP

Do it in that order

Remove the car from the app first, then reset the car. Some owners report that resetting first made the car harder to remove from the app. When in doubt, the brand's customer line can unlink it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Leftover OnStar time goes with the car

On a 2025 or newer GM car, OnStar says any remaining OnStar Basics time transfers to the next owner. That's a nice selling point to mention.

Bought a used connected car?

1. Ask the seller to remove the car from their account. A dealer should do this before the sale.
2. Add the car to your own app account (Chapter 7). If the app says it already belongs to someone, call the brand's customer line with your proof of ownership.
3. On the car's screen, check the list of paired phones and saved garage codes, and remove any you don't recognize.
4. Look up the VIN for open safety recalls at **nhtsa.gov/recalls**.
5. Find out what trials or included time is left (Chapter 18) before you pay for anything.

HEADS UP

A stranger shouldn't be able to start your car

If a previous owner's account is still linked, they may still see the car's location or send commands. Getting that link broken is worth a phone call on day one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Key fobs and digital keys

Getting extra fobs programmed, and removing a previous owner's phone key, are covered in our **Key Fobs, Remote Start & Digital Keys** guide.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your personal information leaves with you, not with the car, and the next car you drive answers only to you and the people you choose.

CHAPTER 25

Fake Subscription Texts and Other Car Scams

Wherever there's a monthly bill, scammers follow. Fake "renewal" notices for car services, satellite radio and warranties are common, and texts that look official are a favorite trick. The good news: the same simple habit protects you from all of them.

What the fake messages look like

- "Your vehicle's connected services subscription has expired. Renew now to keep remote start."
- "Your remote access will be disabled today. Pay here to avoid interruption."
- "Final notice: your car's warranty is about to expire." (by mail, phone or text)
- "You owe an unpaid toll. Pay now to avoid a fine."
- A link to a website that looks like your car brand's, asking for your sign-in or card number.

SCAM ALERT

The one habit that protects you

Never tap a link or call a number in a message about your car's plan. Instead, open the car's **official app** yourself, or type the brand's website address by hand, and look at the subscriptions screen. If something really expired, it'll say so there. If the app shows nothing wrong, the message was fake.

Signs a message is fake

- It's urgent: "today," "final notice," "avoid interruption."
- It asks for a gift card, a payment app, a wire transfer or cryptocurrency. No car company bills that way.
- It came from a regular phone number or an odd email address, not from inside the car's app.
- The web address is misspelled or has extra words.
- It doesn't name your car, or it names a car you don't own.

GOOD TO KNOW

Auto warranty calls

Calls about your "vehicle warranty expiring" have been among the top robocall complaints to the FCC, the agency that regulates phone calls. The callers pretend to be your dealer or the car maker. Hang up; your real dealer knows how to reach you.

If you already tapped or paid

1. **Call your bank or card company** at the number on the back of your card. Tell them it was a scam and ask them to stop or reverse the charge.
2. **Change your car account password** if you typed it into the fake site, and the password of any other account where you used the same one.
3. **Check your car app** for drivers or phones you don't recognize, and remove them.
4. **Report it** at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**. Forward scam texts to **7726** (SPAM) so your carrier can block them.
5. **Tell someone you trust.** Scammers count on embarrassment. There's nothing to be embarrassed about.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "support" for your car app

If you search online for help with your car app, the top results may be ads for look-alike support lines that charge a fee or ask to control your phone. Use the help section inside the official app, or the number on the brand's own website.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you make checking the app your habit, a scary text becomes a ten-second check instead of a worry, and your money stays where it belongs.

PART 8

Help and Quick Reference

When a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary of everything that matters for your car's app.

CHAPTER 26

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But some jobs go faster, and with less worry, when someone sits beside you and does them with you. Here's an honest list of when a hand is worth it.

Good reasons to call

- The app won't add or activate your car, or it says the car belongs to someone else.
- You'd like someone to find every trial end date and card on file across your cars, and write them down with you.
- You want to cancel plans you don't use, without accidentally turning off crash response.
- You'd like your driving-data sharing turned off, and your settings checked, on the car and in the app.
- You're selling, trading in or buying a used car and want the accounts and the car's memory cleared properly.
- You got a text or call about your car's subscription or warranty and aren't sure it's real.
- A family member wants to share the car or keep an eye on a parent's car, and you'd like it set up kindly and clearly.

What working with me is like

I'm Bill, and I serve folks here in Portage County. I bring more than 30 years of professional experience with technology, and I work at your pace. I explain what I'm doing as I go, and I write down what we set up so you have it afterward. I don't sell car plans, and I'll never push you to keep one you don't need.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

$49 remote · $99 in your home. Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. For car apps, an in-home visit lets us sit in your driveway with the car and your phone together.

GOOD TO KNOW

Meet Sophie

When you call or visit the website, you may be greeted by Sophie, my AI receptionist. She can answer common questions and book a time for you. If you'd rather leave a message for me, just say so.

TIP

Have these handy when you call

Your car's make, model and year, the VIN, which app you use, and your phone. If it's about a charge, have the statement in front of you.

— Bill

CHAPTER 27

Your Connected Car Apps Cheat-Sheet

Here's everything that matters, in one place. Fill in the blanks once and keep them somewhere safe, along with your other car papers.

The essentials

Topic	What to remember
Which app	Ford app · myChevrolet, myGMC, myBuick or myCadillac (a single OnStar app is coming in 2027) · Toyota app · HondaLink · MyHyundai (Bluelink).
Included, trial, paid	Included features cost nothing; trials end on a date counted from the new-car sale; paid plans renew automatically.
Trial end dates	In the app's Subscriptions, Plans or Connected Services screen (Chapter 18).
Cancel	Through the app or the brand's official number, before the renewal date. Get a confirmation number (Chapter 20). OnStar: 1-888-4ONSTAR.
Remote start	Car locked, in Park, doors and hood closed. Never in a closed garage (Chapter 9).
Crash response	Know where the SOS button is and whether your plan covers it (Chapter 21).
Driving data	Check your sharing settings; request your file from LexisNexis or Verisk (Chapter 23).
Selling the car	Cancel plans, remove the car from the app, then reset the car (Chapter 24).
Scam rule	Never tap a link in a text about your car's plan. Open the official app yourself (Chapter 25).

Write it down once

Item	Yours
Car (make, model, year)	_____
VIN (17 characters)	_____
App and account email	_____
Where the password is kept	_____
Brand customer line	_____
Plan 1 and its end date	_____
Plan 2 and its end date	_____
Card on file (last 4 digits)	_____
Shared drivers	_____
Dealer and phone	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. **App can't reach the car?** Check signal, check the car is locked and in Park, wait a minute and try once more (Chapter 12).
2. **Still not working?** Close and reopen the app, update it, and check whether a trial ended (Chapter 18).
3. **Surprise charge?** Look at the app's subscriptions screen, then call the brand's official number (Chapter 20).
4. **Scary text or call about your car?** Don't tap or call back. Check the official app (Chapter 25).
5. **Car in someone else's account?** Call the brand's customer line with your proof of ownership (Chapter 24).
6. **Still stuck?** Call Bill at (330) 200-8042 — $49 remote · $99 in your home.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With these few lines filled in, you, or a family member helping you, can handle almost anything your car's app throws at you.