BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Cordless Phones & Answering Machines

Handsets, messages, call blocking, link-to-cell and louder phones — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide to the phone on the kitchen counter

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Panasonic, VTech, AT&T and Clarity home phones · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to the cordless phone set and answering machine at home: setting it up, adding handsets, recording a greeting, checking messages from away, blocking unwanted callers, linking your cell phone, and choosing louder, bigger-button or captioned phones. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Menus differ a little from model to model, so if your screen looks different, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What a cordless phone set is made of, who makes them today, and how to get a new one plugged in, charged and showing the right time.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. I'm Bill, and for more than 30 years I've helped people make technology behave. Here in Portage County, the cordless phone on the kitchen counter is still one of the most-used gadgets in the house. It's the phone the doctor's office calls, the one the grandkids know by heart, and the one with the blinking message light that never seems to stop blinking.

Cordless phones look simple, and mostly they are. But they hide a surprising number of useful features behind the **Menu** button: a built-in answering machine you can check from anywhere, call blocking that stops robocalls before they ring, a way to answer your cell phone calls on the home handsets, and louder, clearer models made for people with hearing loss.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

It walks you through your cordless phone and answering machine one slow step at a time: setting it up, setting the clock, adding handsets, recording a greeting, checking messages from away, blocking unwanted callers, linking your cell phone, and choosing a louder or bigger-button model if you need one. It also covers the one thing every cordless owner should know: what happens when the power goes out (Chapter 32, *When the Power Goes Out*).

Who this guide is for

- Anyone with a Panasonic, VTech, AT&T or Clarity cordless phone set at home.
- Anyone whose answering machine is full, silent, or answering at the wrong time.
- Anyone tired of robocalls ringing every handset in the house.
- Families setting up a phone for a parent who finds the cell phone hard to hear or use.

The big promise: you can't break it

Pressing buttons on a cordless phone won't hurt it. If you get lost in a menu, press the **Off** (or End) button and you're back at the start. Two things deserve a little care: **erasing all messages** can't be undone, and **deregistering a handset** means you'll need to register it again. This guide flags both when they come up.

You're never stuck alone

Every phone model words its menus a little differently, so if your screen doesn't match exactly, the idea is still the same. Read in any order and at your own pace. And if you get stuck, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

How a Cordless Phone Works

A cordless phone set has two kinds of pieces. The **base** is the one that plugs into the wall outlet and into your phone line. The **handsets** are the cordless phones you carry around. Each handset talks to the base by radio, and the base passes your call along to the phone line.

Piece	What it does
Base (main unit)	Plugs into power and the phone line. Often holds the answering machine and the Find Handset button.
Handset	The cordless phone you hold. Runs on rechargeable batteries.
Charger cradle	Extra handsets sit in a small charger that only needs a power outlet, not a phone jack.
Phone cord	The thin cord from the base to the wall jack or the phone port on your modem.
Power adapter	The small plug-in power supply for the base and for each charger.

Why only one piece needs a phone jack

Because the handsets talk to the base by radio, you can put a handset and charger in any room with an outlet. That's the big convenience of a cordless set: one phone line, phones all over the house.

What "DECT 6.0" means

Almost every cordless phone sold in the U.S. today says **DECT 6.0** on the box. DECT is the radio standard the handsets and base use to talk to each other. In North America it works in a band near 1.9 GHz, which is separate from the 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands your Wi-Fi uses. That's why modern cordless phones generally get along with Wi-Fi far better than the older 2.4 GHz phones did. The "6.0" is a marketing label, not a version number.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **The base needs power, even if the line doesn't**
>
> A cordless base is a powered electronic box. When the electricity goes out, the base usually goes dark and the handsets can't make calls. Chapter 32, *When the Power Goes Out* explains how to be ready.

CHAPTER 3

Who Makes Cordless Phones in 2026

Far fewer companies make home phones than twenty years ago, but you still have good choices. Here are the names you'll see on store shelves and in homes in November 2026.

Brand	What to know
Panasonic	Still sells cordless sets in the U.S., including Link2Cell models that connect to your cell phone, and the KX-TGM amplified line.
VTech	A large cordless phone maker with its own brand, including Smart Call Blocker and big-button amplified models.
AT&T	AT&T-branded home phones are designed and made by a VTech company (Advanced American Telephones) under a license. They are not made by the AT&T phone company.
Clarity	Amplified phones built for hearing loss, such as the XLC3.4+ cordless phone.
Gigaset	A European DECT phone brand. Its phone business was bought by a VTech company in 2024.

Has anyone left the U.S. market?

As of November 2026, Panasonic still lists cordless phones for U.S. buyers, even though it left the business phone-system market some years ago. Individual models come and go, so a specific model number you remember may be discontinued even though the brand is still around. Gigaset went through insolvency in Germany and its phone business now belongs to a VTech company.

TIP

AT&T phones and the AT&T phone company are different things

Owning an AT&T-brand cordless phone doesn't mean your phone service comes from AT&T. The phone works with any regular phone service: a traditional landline, Spectrum Voice, or another internet phone service. Help for the handset comes from the phone maker's website, not your phone company.

Finding your model number

1. Turn the base over. Look for a white label with the model number, such as **KX-TG**... for Panasonic or a letters-and-numbers code for VTech and AT&T.
2. Write it in the "Keep this handy" table in Chapter 38, *Your Cordless Phone Cheat-Sheet*.

3. To find the manual, search the web for the brand name plus the model number and "manual". Prefer the maker's own site (help.na.panasonic.com, vtechphones.com, telephones.att.com).

HEADS UP

Look-alike support numbers

When you search for phone help, ads for "support" companies sometimes appear above the real maker. Use the website printed in your manual or on the box, and never let a stranger who answers a support number take control of your computer.

CHAPTER 4

A Tour of the Buttons

Cordless handsets from different makers share the same handful of buttons, even if the little pictures differ. Once you know these, any phone will feel familiar.

Button	What it does
Talk (green phone)	Answer a call or get a dial tone.
Off / End (red phone)	Hang up. Also backs you out of any menu.
Speaker	Talk hands-free through the handset's loudspeaker.
Menu	Opens settings: date and time, ringer, answering machine, call block and more.
Arrow keys / navigator	Scroll up and down through lists. Some phones use a round key.
Caller ID / CID	Shows the list of recent incoming calls.
Phonebook	Your saved names and numbers.
Redial	Calls back a number you recently dialed.
Mute	The other person can't hear you while it's on.
Intercom	Calls another handset in the house.
Play / Message	Plays answering machine messages (often on the base too).
Call Block	On many newer phones, blocks the caller with one press.

The base buttons

- **Find Handset** (also called Locator or Page): makes every handset ring so you can find a lost one.
- **Play** and **Erase**: play and delete answering machine messages.
- **Answer On/Off**: turns the answering machine on or off.
- A **message light** that blinks when you have new messages.

TIP

"Soft keys" change with the screen

Many handsets have two or three plain buttons right under the screen. Their job changes depending on what's shown just above them, such as **Select**, **Back** or **Save**. Read the word on the screen, then press the button underneath it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menus differ by model

This guide uses the most common names. If your phone says "Initial setting" where this guide says "Settings", or "Call Block" where it says "Block", it's the same idea.

CHAPTER 5

Setting Up a New Phone

A new cordless set usually comes with the handsets already registered (paired) to the base, so setup is mostly plugging things in and charging. Plan on doing it the day before you need it, because the handsets should charge fully first.

Pick a good spot for the base

- Near a phone jack (traditional landline) or near your modem (cable or internet phone service).
- Near a power outlet, ideally not one controlled by a light switch.
- Central in the house and up off the floor, if you can, for the best range.
- A little away from the Wi-Fi router and microwave, just to be safe.

Plug it in

1. Put the batteries in each handset if they aren't already. Match the + and – marks.
2. Plug the base's power adapter into the base, then into the outlet.
3. Plug one end of the phone cord into the base's **Line** jack and the other end into the wall jack, or into the phone port on your modem (often labeled **Voice 1** or **Tel 1**).
4. Plug in each extra charger and set a handset in each one.
5. Let every handset charge fully before relying on it. The manual lists the charge time for your model.
6. Pick up a handset, press **Talk** and listen for a dial tone. Make a short test call to your cell phone.

HEADS UP

Cable or internet phone: one connection only

If your phone service comes through your cable or internet modem, plug the base into the modem's phone port. Don't also connect the modem to a wall phone jack unless your provider tells you to, because it can cause problems on the house wiring.

TIP

Setup voice guides

Some newer VTech and AT&T phones talk you through setup the first time you plug them in, including the date, time and call blocking. You can follow along, or skip it and set things up later from the menu.

CHAPTER 6

Setting the Date and Time

The date and time matter more than you'd think. Your answering machine stamps every message with them, and your caller list shows when each call came in. If the clock is wrong, you can't tell whether the doctor's office called this morning or last Tuesday.

Set it once by hand

1. With the handset idle (no call), press **Menu**.
2. Scroll to **Set date & time** (it may be under **Initial setting** or **Settings**).
3. Enter the month, day and year with the number keys, then the time.
4. Choose **AM** or **PM** if asked, then press **Save** or **OK**.
5. Press **Off** to leave the menu.

Then let Caller ID keep it right

On many phones, if you have Caller ID from your phone company, the phone quietly corrects its clock each time a call comes in, including daylight saving time changes. There's a catch: on Panasonic phones the clock must have been set by hand at least once before Caller ID will adjust it.

GOOD TO KNOW

After a power outage

If the power goes out, the clock may be lost. Some Panasonic bases show a blinking letter or the clock flashes to tell you. Set the date and time again, or wait for the next call with Caller ID.

TIP

Time drifting?

If the time is off by a few minutes or an hour, check whether your phone service sends time with Caller ID. Some internet phone services send the wrong time zone. You can usually turn off automatic time adjustment in the same menu and set it by hand.

PART 2

Everyday Calling

Making and answering calls, Caller ID, the phonebook, extra handsets, the intercom, and getting a clear signal in every room.

CHAPTER 7

Making, Answering and Ending Calls

This is the heart of it, and it only takes a minute to get comfortable. Cordless phones offer two ways to dial, and you can use whichever feels natural.

To make a call

1. Press **Talk** (green phone) and wait for the dial tone.
2. Dial the number, including the area code.
3. When you're done, press **Off** (red phone) or set the handset in its charger.

Or dial first, then press Talk

Most handsets let you type the number first, check it on the screen, fix a mistake with the **Clear** or **Back** key, and then press **Talk**. This is called pre-dialing, and it's a handy way to avoid wrong numbers.

To answer

- Press **Talk** or **Speaker**.
- Many phones also have an "any key answer" setting, so pressing any number key answers.
- Some phones answer automatically when you lift the handset from the charger. Look for **Auto talk** in the menu.

During a call

Do this	How
Volume up/down	Use the side buttons or the up/down arrows while you're talking.
Speaker	Switch between the earpiece and the loudspeaker.
Mute	So you can talk to someone in the room without the caller hearing.
Flash / Call Wait	Answer a second caller if you have call waiting from your phone company.

TIP

Did you hang up?

If a handset is left off the charger and not hung up, the line can stay busy and callers hear a busy signal. When in doubt, press **Off** on every handset.

CHAPTER 8

Caller ID and the Caller List

Caller ID shows who is calling before you answer. Your phone also keeps a **caller list** of recent incoming calls, including ones you missed, so you can call people back without writing numbers down.

GOOD TO KNOW

Caller ID comes from your phone service

The phone only displays what your phone company sends. Caller ID is often included with phone service, but on some plans it's an add-on. If no names or numbers ever appear, call your phone company and ask whether Caller ID is on your line. Call blocking and talking Caller ID need it too.

To see who called

1. Press the **Caller ID** or **CID** button (or the left arrow on some models).
2. Scroll with the arrows. Newest calls appear first.
3. To call someone back, highlight their entry and press **Talk**.
4. To save them to the phonebook, highlight the entry, press **Menu** or **Options**, and choose **Save** or **Add to phonebook**.

On many Panasonic models, the caller list holds the last 50 calls. When it's full, the oldest calls drop off automatically, so there's no need to clean it out.

SCAM ALERT

Caller ID can be faked

Scammers can make any name or number appear, even your bank, the sheriff or Social Security. A name on the screen is not proof. If a call asks for money or personal information, hang up and call back on a number you look up yourself. See Chapter 22, *Phone Scams That Reach the Kitchen Phone*.

TIP

"Out of area" or "Private"

These mean the caller's number wasn't sent. Real friends and family rarely call that way. It's fine to let those calls go to the answering machine.

CHAPTER 9

Talking Caller ID

Talking Caller ID reads the caller's name out loud after the ring, so you can hear who's calling without getting up or finding your glasses. It's one of the most useful features for anyone with low vision, and many Panasonic phones have it turned on from the factory.

To turn it on or off

1. Press **Menu** on the handset.
2. Scroll to **Talking Caller ID** (sometimes **Talk CID**).
3. Choose **On** or **Off**, then press **Save** or **OK**.
4. On some models you can set the handsets and the base separately.

When it stays quiet

- You need Caller ID service from your phone company.
- The name is announced after the second ring. If the answering machine is set to pick up on the second ring, the name won't be announced.
- If Toll Saver is on and you have new messages, the machine may answer too soon for the announcement.
- Very long names (more than 15 letters) may be cut off or not announced correctly.

TIP

Saved names sound friendlier

When a caller is saved in your phonebook, many phones announce the name exactly as you saved it, such as "Dr. Patel's office" instead of a company name in capital letters.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it helps

You can decide whether to hurry to the phone. If it announces a number or "Out of area", let the machine take it.

CHAPTER 10

The Phonebook and Speed Dial

The phonebook stores names and numbers right on the phone, so calling family is a matter of a few presses instead of hunting for a paper list. On many sets, an entry you save on one handset is shared with all the others.

To add a name

1. Press the **Phonebook** button (or **Menu** > **Phonebook**).
2. Choose **Add new** or **New entry**.
3. Type the name with the number keys. Press a key once for the first letter, twice for the second, and so on. Wait a moment before typing the next letter on the same key.
4. Press **OK**, then type the phone number with the area code.
5. Press **Save**.

To call someone in the phonebook

1. Press **Phonebook**.
2. Press the number key for the first letter of the name to jump close to it, then scroll.
3. Press **Talk**.

Speed dial

Speed dial lets you hold down one number key to call someone. Look in the phonebook options for **Speed dial** and assign your most important numbers to keys 1 through 9. Big-button phones go further with photo buttons (Chapter 28, *Big Buttons, Photo Dialing and Easy Screens*).

TIP

Copy from your cell phone

If your phone has Bluetooth (Link2Cell or Connect to Cell), you can copy contacts from your cell phone instead of typing them in. See Chapter 25, *Copying Your Cell Contacts to the Home Phone*.

STAY SAFE

Put the important numbers in first

Doctor, pharmacy, a neighbor, and two family members. Those are the numbers that matter most on a hard day.

CHAPTER 11

Adding and Registering Extra Handsets

One of the best things about a cordless set is adding a handset to the bedroom, the basement or the garage. Extra handsets are sold separately, but they have to be **registered** to your base before they work. Registering is the cordless phone word for pairing.

Before you buy

- Buy the extra handset the manual lists for your base. The base model number is on its bottom label.
- Many Panasonic bases accept up to six handsets. Check the manual for your model's limit.
- A handset from another brand will not work, even if both say DECT 6.0.

Registering on many Panasonic phones

1. Charge the new handset first.
2. On the handset, press **Menu** and find **Registration** or **Register handset**. Some models use a short menu code instead; the manual lists yours.
3. On the base, press and hold the button the manual names (often **Locator** or **Intercom**) for a few seconds, until a light starts flashing.
4. Finish the steps on the handset within about 90 seconds. Wait for a beep.
5. The handset screen shows a handset number when it's done.

Registering on many VTech and AT&T phones

1. On the base, press and hold **Find Handset** (Handset Locator) for about four seconds, until the base lights flash. Then let go.
2. On the handset, press **Menu**, scroll to **Registration**, press **Select**, then choose **Handset**.
3. Follow the prompts on the handset screen and wait for the confirmation beep.

HEADS UP

Deregistering is a bigger step

Deregistering removes a handset from the base. It's how you clear out a lost or broken handset, but if you deregister the wrong one, you'll need to register it again. Some bases can deregister *all* handsets at once; only do that when the manual tells you to.

CHAPTER 12

Intercom, Transfer and Find Handset

With two or more handsets, your phone doubles as a household intercom. You can call from the kitchen to the basement without shouting, hand a call to someone in another room, and find a handset that has disappeared under a cushion.

To call another handset

1. Press **Intercom** (sometimes under **Menu**).
2. Choose the handset number you want, or **All**.
3. The other handset rings. When it's answered, talk normally. Press **Off** to end.

To pass a call to another room

1. While on a call, press **Intercom** or **Transfer**.
2. Choose the other handset. Your caller is placed on hold.
3. When the other person answers, you can tell them who's calling, then press **Off** to hand the call over.

To find a lost handset

Press **Find Handset** (Locator or Page) on the base. Every handset rings for a short while so you can follow the sound. Press it again, or press **Off** on the found handset, to stop.

TIP

Name your handsets

Some phones let you rename handsets, such as "Kitchen" or "Bedroom." It makes intercom and transfer much easier. Look in the menu for **Handset name**.

STAY SAFE

A quiet way to call for help in the house

For an older adult living with family, the intercom is a simple way to call someone from another floor without using a cell phone.

CHAPTER 13

Range, Static and Range Extenders

Every cordless phone has a limited range. In a big house, a basement, a garage or a back porch, the handset may crackle, cut out, or show **Out of range**. Usually a small change fixes it.

Easy fixes first

1. Move closer to the base and see whether the sound clears up.
2. Move the base higher and more central in the house, away from metal shelves and thick walls.
3. Keep the base a few feet from the Wi-Fi router, microwave and big electronics.
4. Make sure the handset is charged. A weak battery can make a handset sound worse.

Range extenders (repeaters)

If one area of the house never gets a good signal, some makers sell a **range extender**, a small plug-in box that relays the signal. Panasonic's KX-TGA405, for example, works with many of its DECT phones. Up to two extenders can be registered to a base, and each extender can support up to two handsets at a time. Check that the extender is listed for your exact base model before buying.

Does a cordless phone mess up Wi-Fi?

Today's DECT 6.0 phones use a different radio band from Wi-Fi, so they normally don't interfere. If your Wi-Fi drops every time the phone rings, try moving the base and router a few feet apart. Older cordless phones labeled 2.4 GHz or 5.8 GHz can interfere with Wi-Fi; replacing them with a DECT 6.0 set usually ends the problem.

TIP

Static only on some calls?

If static is there on every handset, even right next to the base, the problem is probably the phone line or service, not the cordless phone. Plug a simple corded phone into the same jack to compare. See Chapter 34, *Fixing Common Problems*.

PART 3

The Answering Machine

Your built-in answering machine: how it differs from phone company voicemail, recording a greeting, playing messages, setting the rings, and checking messages from anywhere.

CHAPTER 14

Answering Machine or Phone Company Voicemail?

There are two different ways a home phone can take messages, and many homes accidentally have both. Knowing which one you're using clears up most message mysteries.

Kind	How it works
Answering machine	Built into your phone's base. Messages are stored in the base. The message light on the base blinks. You press Play to listen.
Phone company voicemail	Part of your phone service. Messages are stored by the phone company. You hear a stutter dial tone or see a voicemail icon, and you dial an access number to listen.

If you have both

Both are racing to answer the same call. Whichever is set to answer after fewer rings wins. If you want the answering machine to take calls, set its ring count **lower** than the voicemail's. Some phone companies suggest setting voicemail about two rings later than the machine. Chapter 17, *Ring Count and Toll Saver* shows how.

Which should you use?

- **Answering machine:** one button to play messages, no access number to remember, and no monthly fee for the feature.
- **Voicemail:** takes messages even when the power is out or the line is busy, which the machine can't do.
- Pick one and turn the other off, or set the rings so they don't fight.

TIP

Turning one off

To stop using the machine, press **Answer On/Off** on the base (or find **Answering system** in the menu). To stop phone company voicemail, call your phone company and ask them to remove it.

GOOD TO KNOW

The stutter tone

If you hear a broken "beep-beep-beep" dial tone when you pick up, that usually means phone company voicemail has a message, not your answering machine.

CHAPTER 15

Recording Your Greeting

Your greeting is what callers hear before the beep. A short, friendly greeting in your own voice reassures family and doctor's offices that they've reached the right home. If you don't record one, the phone plays a built-in greeting.

To record a greeting

1. Press **Menu** on the handset (or the base).
2. Choose **Answering system** (or **Answering device**), then **Greeting** or **Record greeting**.
3. Wait for the beep, hold the handset normally, and speak clearly.
4. Press **Stop** or **Off** when you're finished.
5. Play it back to check. Record again if you'd like.

A good greeting

Something like: *"You've reached the Smith home. Please leave your name, number and a short message, and we'll call you back."* That's all it needs.

STAY SAFE

Don't announce that you're away

Never say you're on vacation, out of town, or living alone. Don't give your full name or address. A greeting is heard by anyone who dials your number, including strangers.

TIP

To go back to the built-in greeting

Most phones have an **Erase greeting** or **Pre-recorded greeting** choice in the same menu. That's handy if a greeting was recorded by someone who has moved out or passed away and hearing it is hard.

CHAPTER 16

Playing and Erasing Messages

When someone leaves a message, the message light on the base blinks and many handsets show "New message." You can listen from the base or from any handset.

From the base

1. Press **Play** (often a triangle). New messages play first, with the day and time.
2. Press **Skip** to jump ahead, or **Repeat** to hear a message again.
3. To delete the message that's playing, press **Erase**.

From a handset

1. Press **Menu** and choose **Answering system** > **Play messages**, or press the handset's message key.
2. Use the number keys the screen shows for skip, repeat and erase.

When the machine is full

Answering machines have limited recording time. When it fills up, callers can't leave messages, and some phones answer and say the memory is full. Listen to your messages and erase the ones you don't need.

HEADS UP

"Erase all" can't be undone

Most machines can erase all old messages at once by holding **Erase** or choosing **Erase all**. Before you do, make sure there's nothing you want to keep, such as a voice of a loved one. To keep a message forever, see Chapter 36, *Setting Up a Phone for a Parent*.

TIP

Slow it down

Some amplified Panasonic phones have a **Slow Talk** feature that plays messages more slowly so they're easier to understand. See Chapter 27, *Amplified Phones for Hearing Loss*.

CHAPTER 17

Ring Count and Toll Saver

The **ring count** is how many times the phone rings before the answering machine picks up. Getting it right means you have time to reach the phone, but callers don't give up before the beep.

To change the ring count

1. Press **Menu** and choose **Answering system** > **Settings** (or **Number of rings**).
2. Choose a number of rings. Four or five works well for many homes.
3. Press **Save**.

What "Toll Saver" means

Toll Saver is a ring setting that answers sooner when you have new messages, for example on the second ring when there are new messages and the fourth ring when there aren't. It began as a way to save long-distance charges when calling in to check messages: if the phone rings more than a couple of times, you know there's nothing new and can hang up.

HEADS UP

Toll Saver and voicemail can collide

Because Toll Saver changes the ring count, it can let the machine and phone company voicemail trade places, and it can stop Talking Caller ID from announcing the caller. If messages go missing, choose a fixed number of rings instead.

TIP

Too many rings?

If callers say the phone "rings and rings and nobody answers," the ring count may be higher than their patience, or higher than the voicemail's count. Lower it by one or two.

CHAPTER 18

Checking Messages from Away (Remote Access)

Most answering machines let you check messages from any other phone, such as your cell phone at the doctor's office or while visiting family. You call your home number, and while the greeting plays, you enter a short **remote access code**.

Set your code first (Panasonic example)

1. On the handset, press **Menu**, then **#306** on many Panasonic models (two-line models use a slightly different code).
2. Enter a 3-digit code you'll remember but others won't guess.
3. Press **Save**. The code can only be set or changed on the phone itself, not remotely.

STAY SAFE

Change the default code

Panasonic's default remote code is **111**. A default code is easy for anyone to guess, so set your own. Other brands have their own setup; look under **Remote access code** or **Remote code** in the answering system menu.

To check messages from another phone

1. Call your home number from a touch-tone phone (any cell phone works).
2. When your greeting starts, enter your remote access code.
3. Follow the voice prompts, or use the number keys listed in your manual to play, skip and erase.
4. Hang up when you're finished.

If it doesn't work

- The answering machine must be turned on.
- The remote code must be set, and entered while the greeting is playing.
- If phone company voicemail answers first, you'll reach voicemail instead. See Chapter 17, *Ring Count and Toll Saver*.

PART 4

Stopping Unwanted Calls

The call-blocking features built into Panasonic, VTech and AT&T phones, and how to keep scam calls from reaching you on the kitchen phone.

CHAPTER 19

Call Block on Panasonic Phones

Many Panasonic cordless phones have a **Call Block** button. Press it while an unwanted call is ringing, or during the call, and that number is added to the block list. Next time, the phone won't ring for it. It's one of the most satisfying buttons in the house.

Ways to block

Block type	What it does
Single number	Blocks one phone number you add to the list.
Range of numbers	Blocks calls that start with certain digits, such as an area code or a toll-free prefix.
Unknown numbers	Blocks calls that arrive with no number at all.

To block from the caller list

1. Press the caller list button (Caller ID / CID).
2. Scroll to the call you want to block.
3. Press **Call Block** (or **Menu** > **Call block**).
4. Choose **Yes** to confirm.

Automated Call Block

Some newer Panasonic sets, such as the KX-TGF97x series, also offer **Automated Call Block**, an extra layer meant to stop more nuisance calls without you blocking each number by hand. How it greets the caller and which options you have depend on the model; the setup steps are in the manual's Call Block section.

GOOD TO KNOW

Limits and requirements

Call Block uses Caller ID, so your phone service must send Caller ID. The number of entries the list holds varies a lot by model, from dozens to around a thousand. Blocked calls still show up in the caller list, so you can see what was stopped.

TIP

Unblocking someone

Open the block list from the menu, highlight the number, and choose **Erase** or **Delete**. Panasonic's help site has a page for this called "How to remove (unblock) a number from the blocked calls list."

CHAPTER 20

VTech and AT&T Smart Call Blocker

Many VTech and AT&T phones have **Smart call blocker**. Instead of only blocking numbers you list, it can screen every call from a number it doesn't know. Calls from people in your phonebook or allow list ring straight through. Strangers and robocalls are asked to do something first.

The main choices

Setting	What happens
Allow unknown	The default on many models. Everything rings except numbers on your block list.
Screen unknown	Callers not on your lists are asked to say their name; you hear it and decide.
Screen robocalls	Callers not on your lists are asked to press the pound key (#). Robocalls usually can't, so they never ring.

To set it up

1. Press **Menu** and choose **Smart call blocker**.
2. Make sure it's turned **On**.
3. Choose **Set profile** and pick a choice from the table above.
4. Add family, friends, doctors and the pharmacy to the **Allow list** or phonebook so they always ring through.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth the setup

Robocalls can't press a key or say a name, so "Screen robocalls" quietly stops most of them while real people get through with one extra press.

HEADS UP

Doctors' offices and pharmacies

Automated reminder calls from a pharmacy or clinic may also be stopped by screening. Add those numbers to your allow list.

GOOD TO KNOW

Caller ID required

Like any call blocker, Smart call blocker depends on Caller ID from your phone service.

CHAPTER 21

Getting Call Blocking Right

Call blocking works best when you set it up once with a little thought. These habits keep the calls you want coming in and the junk out.

Good habits

1. Before turning on screening, save your important numbers in the phonebook or allow list.
2. Block numbers as they come in, from the caller list. It takes seconds.
3. Don't try to block every robocall by hand. Scammers change numbers constantly; screening works better.
4. Look at the caller list now and then to be sure nothing important was blocked.

When blocking isn't enough

Phone blocking is one layer. Your phone company may offer free or paid blocking on the line itself, and the National Do Not Call Registry reduces legitimate sales calls. Bill's separate guide, *Spam Calls & Robocalls*, covers those layers in depth.

Stand-alone call blockers

If your phone has no blocking, a separate box can sit between the wall jack and the phone. Panasonic sells one, the KX-TGA710B, that comes preloaded with thousands of known nuisance numbers and lets you add your own. Replacing an old phone with a newer one that has blocking built in is often simpler.

> **TIP**
>
> **"No caller ID" calls**
>
> Most phones can block calls that arrive with no number. Real callers rarely hide their number, but some doctors' offices do. If you turn this on and miss an important call, add the number once you learn it.

CHAPTER 22

Phone Scams That Reach the Kitchen Phone

The home phone is still a favorite target for scammers, because they know many older adults answer it. The good news is that almost every phone scam follows the same pattern, and one rule beats them all: **if an unexpected caller wants money or personal information, hang up.**

SCAM ALERT

Government impostors

Callers claim to be from Social Security, Medicare, the IRS, the FTC, the sheriff or a court. Real agencies don't call to threaten you, demand payment, or tell you to move money to "protect it." The FTC reported that people lost $3.5 billion to impostor scams in 2025.

SCAM ALERT

The grandchild in trouble

A frantic voice says they're a grandchild in jail or in an accident and begs you not to tell anyone. Hang up and call the grandchild or their parents on a number you know.

SCAM ALERT

"Your phone service will be cut off"

Someone says they're from the phone company and you must pay today or lose service. Call the number on your bill instead.

What to do

1. Hang up. You don't need to be polite to a scammer.
2. Don't press any number they ask you to press.
3. Look up the real number yourself and call back if you're worried.
4. Block the number on your phone (Chapter 19, *Call Block on Panasonic Phones* or Chapter 20, *VTech and AT&T Smart Call Blocker*).
5. Report it at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

STAY SAFE

If you already paid or gave information

Call your bank right away, then call me. Bill's guide *I Think I've Been Scammed* walks through the first hour step by step.

PART 5

Linking Your Cell Phone

Answer cell phone calls on your home handsets and copy your cell phone contacts, using the Bluetooth link built into many Panasonic, VTech and AT&T phones.

CHAPTER 23

Link-to-Cell: What It Does for You

Many cordless sets can connect to your cell phone by Bluetooth. Panasonic calls this **Link2Cell**. VTech and AT&T call it **Connect to Cell**. Once it's set up, when your cell phone rings, your home handsets ring too, and you can answer on whichever phone is closest.

Why people love it

- Your cell phone can stay on its charger while you talk on a comfortable home handset.
- No more running to find the cell phone when it rings in another room.
- Areas of the house with weak cell signal: leave the cell phone by a window where the signal is best, and talk from anywhere.
- On many models you can copy your cell phone contacts into the home phonebook (Chapter 25, *Copying Your Cell Contacts to the Home Phone*).

What you need

- A cordless set with Link2Cell or Connect to Cell (it says so on the box and has a CELL button or light on the base).
- A cell phone with Bluetooth. Nearly every smartphone works.
- The cell phone within Bluetooth range of the base, usually the same floor of the house.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your cell plan still pays for cell calls

Calls you answer or make on the cell line go through your cell phone and its plan. Calls on the home line still use your home phone service.

TIP

Does your phone have it?

Look on the base for a button or light labeled **CELL**, or check the menu for **Bluetooth** or **Link to cell**. If it's not there, your model doesn't have the feature.

CHAPTER 24

Pairing Your Cell Phone (Link2Cell)

Pairing takes a few minutes and you only do it once. These steps follow many Panasonic Link2Cell models. VTech and AT&T phones are similar but start from the base or the **Bluetooth** menu.

Before you start

- Disconnect any other Bluetooth device, such as a headset or car, from your cell phone.
- Put the cell phone right next to the phone base.

To pair (many Panasonic models)

1. On the home handset, press **Menu**, then dial **#6241** for cell line 1 (or **#6242** for cell line 2).
2. The **CELL** light on the base starts flashing.
3. Within 5 minutes, on your cell phone, open **Settings** > **Bluetooth** and make sure it's on.
4. Tap the Panasonic phone's name when it appears in the list.
5. If asked for a PIN, enter **0000**.
6. A long beep sounds and the CELL light stays on. You're paired.

GOOD TO KNOW

Two cell phones, one at a time

Many Link2Cell bases can remember two cell phones, such as yours and a spouse's. Only one Bluetooth connection is active at a time.

If your cell phone asks about contacts or notifications

Your cell phone may ask whether to share contacts with the phone base. Allow it only if you want to copy contacts to the home phone. You can change this later in the cell phone's Bluetooth settings by tapping the device name.

TIP

If it won't pair

Turn Bluetooth off and on on the cell phone, unplug the base for a minute, and try again. If the cell phone was paired before, tap the base's name in the cell phone's Bluetooth list and choose **Forget**, then start over. Bill's guide *Bluetooth: Pairing Anything to Anything* has a full troubleshooting ladder.

CHAPTER 25

Copying Your Cell Contacts to the Home Phone

Typing names on a phone keypad is slow. If your home phone has Bluetooth, you can copy your cell phone's contacts into the home phonebook in one go. Then the home phone can show and announce names for people you already have in your cell phone.

To copy contacts (typical steps)

1. Pair your cell phone first (Chapter 24, *Pairing Your Cell Phone (Link2Cell)*).
2. On the home handset, press **Menu** and open **Bluetooth** (or **Link to cell**).
3. Choose **Download phonebook** or **Copy phonebook**.
4. Pick your cell phone from the list.
5. Watch your cell phone screen. If it asks to allow access to contacts, tap **Allow**.
6. Wait for the home phone to say the download is complete.

If some contacts are missing

- Some cell phones won't share contacts stored only on the SIM card. Move them to the phone's own memory first.
- Home phonebooks have a size limit. If you have thousands of contacts, not all may fit.
- Contacts with several numbers may come across as several entries.

TIP

Spring cleaning first

If your cell phone has old contacts you never call, the home phone will get them too. Some families prefer to add only the dozen numbers that matter by hand (Chapter 10, *The Phonebook and Speed Dial*).

STAY SAFE

Your contacts stay in the house

Copied contacts are stored in the phone base and handsets. If you give the phone away or recycle it, erase the phonebook first (or do a factory reset if your manual lists one).

CHAPTER 26

Using Link-to-Cell Every Day

Once paired, your cell phone reconnects to the base automatically when you come home, as long as Bluetooth is on. Here's what daily use looks like.

Answering a cell call at home

1. Your cell phone and the home handsets ring. The handset screen shows it's a cell call.
2. Press **Talk** on any home handset to answer.
3. Press **Off** to hang up.

Making a call on the cell line

Many Link2Cell and Connect to Cell handsets have a **CELL** button. Dial the number, then press **CELL** instead of **Talk**. The call goes out over your cell phone. This can help if your home line is down or a call is long distance on your home plan.

TIP

Keep the cell phone near the base

Bluetooth range is short. If cell calls drop or sound choppy, bring the cell phone closer to the base, ideally on the same table and plugged in.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the link drops

If you turned Bluetooth off, or the cell phone left the house, the link breaks. It usually reconnects on its own when you return. If not, press the **CELL** button on the base or check that the cell phone's Bluetooth is on.

STAY SAFE

Emergency calls

In an emergency, call 911 from whatever phone is in your hand. Know that a 911 call on the home line and on the cell line may show your location differently. Bill's *Home Phone Service* guide covers 911 addresses.

PART 6

Phones for Hearing and Vision

Amplified and big-button phones, hearing aid compatibility, and free captioned phone service for people with hearing loss.

CHAPTER 27

Amplified Phones for Hearing Loss

An **amplified phone** makes the caller's voice much louder and clearer than a regular phone can, and usually rings far louder too. For many people with hearing loss, it's the difference between dreading phone calls and enjoying them again.

What the numbers mean

Amplified phones list how much they boost the caller's voice in **decibels (dB)**. A higher number means more boost. Regular cordless phones don't get close. Roughly speaking, 30 to 40 dB suits mild to moderate hearing loss, and 50 dB is aimed at more severe loss. An audiologist can tell you what fits your hearing.

Examples sold in 2026

Model	Highlights
Panasonic KX-TGM450	Up to 50 dB voice boost, ringer up to 112 dB, Slow Talk, talking Caller ID and answering machine.
Panasonic KX-TGM420 / 430 / 470	Up to 40 dB boost, in the same family.
Clarity XLC3.4+	Cordless with about 50 dB of amplification, big buttons and talking keypad.
VTech SN5147	Corded base plus cordless handset, up to 50 dB audio boost, 90 dB ringer, big buttons and Smart call blocker.

Slow Talk and other helpers

Panasonic's KX-TGM phones include **Slow Talk**, which slows down the caller's speech in real time and when playing answering machine messages. They also offer tone control, which lets you emphasize high or low sounds to suit your hearing.

HEADS UP

Lower the volume for others

Amplified phones can be very loud. If someone with normal hearing uses the phone, they should turn the boost down first. Get in the habit of setting the boost back to normal after each call.

TIP

Prices

Amplified cordless phones usually cost more than ordinary sets, and the price depends on the model and the number of handsets. Retailers listed the Clarity XLC3.4+ at about $100 in November 2026. Many states also run telephone equipment distribution programs for residents with hearing loss; ask your audiologist.

CHAPTER 28

Big Buttons, Photo Dialing and Easy Screens

For people with low vision, arthritis or memory challenges, an ordinary handset's tiny keys and dim screen can make every call a struggle. Big-button phones fix that.

Features to look for

Feature	What it does
Big buttons	Large, high-contrast keys that are easy to see and press.
Photo speed dial	Buttons with a photo of each person. Press the picture to call them.
Talking keypad	Says each number aloud as you press it.
Talking Caller ID	Announces who is calling (Chapter 9, *Talking Caller ID*).
Large backlit screen	Bigger letters and numbers, lit so they're readable.
Visual ringer	A bright flashing light when the phone rings.

Photo dialing example

VTech's SN5147 has photo speed dial keys. You slide in small photos of the people you call most and program each key with their number. After that, calling a daughter or the doctor is one press on their picture.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it matters

Photo dialing helps people living with memory loss keep calling family on their own, without remembering numbers or navigating menus.

TIP

Simplify the ordinary phone too

Even without a big-button model, you can turn up the screen contrast, set speed dials for the top five numbers, and put a large-print list of them next to the phone.

CHAPTER 29

Hearing Aids and the Telephone

If you wear hearing aids, the right phone can send sound more clearly to your hearing aid instead of letting it whistle or buzz. Federal rules help here.

Look for "HAC"

The FCC requires that landline-type phones meet hearing aid compatibility rules, including working with a hearing aid's **telecoil** (T-coil) and offering enough volume range. Compatible phones are labeled **HAC**. The rules cover traditional landline phones and phones used with home internet phone service.

Using the telecoil

1. Ask your audiologist whether your hearing aids have a telecoil and a phone program.
2. Switch the hearing aid to its telecoil or phone program (some switch automatically).
3. Hold the handset's earpiece near the hearing aid and move it slowly to find the clearest spot. Your audiologist can show you where.

TIP

Bluetooth hearing aids

Many modern hearing aids stream calls from a smartphone. If yours do, Link2Cell can still let you use the home handset for cell calls, but some people find it easiest to take cell calls straight through the hearing aids. Bill's guide on Bluetooth hearing aids covers that.

GOOD TO KNOW

Problems with a phone?

The FCC takes complaints about phones that don't work with hearing aids through its online Consumer Complaint Center.

CHAPTER 30

Captioned Phones (CapTel and IP CTS)

A **captioned telephone** shows the words the other person says on a big screen, almost as they speak. You talk and listen normally, and read anything you miss. For people whose hearing loss makes even amplified phones hard, captions can bring the phone back.

How it's paid for

Internet-based captioning is called **IP CTS** (Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service). It's a federal relay service overseen by the FCC, and users don't pay for the captioning. You do need to register with a provider and certify that you have hearing loss that makes the service necessary.

Providers and phones

- Certified providers include CapTel (Hamilton CapTel), CaptionCall and InnoCaption, among others listed by the FCC.
- The CapTel 840i needs both regular phone service and high-speed internet.
- The CapTel 2400i (touch screen) needs high-speed internet; regular phone service is optional.
- Some providers also offer captioning apps for smartphones.

HEADS UP

Only for people with hearing loss

Federal rules allow only registered users with hearing loss to use IP captioned phones with captions turned on. Other people in the household should turn captions off when they use it.

SCAM ALERT

Be wary of pushy "free phone" offers

Real providers will ask you to register and certify your hearing loss. Be cautious of anyone who pressures you over the phone, asks for payment for the captioning service, or asks for your Social Security number outside the official registration.

PART 7

Power, Batteries & Fixes

Which phone services your cordless phone works with, what happens in a power outage, keeping handset batteries healthy, and fixing the most common problems.

CHAPTER 31

Landline, Cable or Internet Phone Service

A cordless phone doesn't care much where your phone service comes from. The same Panasonic, VTech, AT&T or Clarity set works with a traditional copper landline, cable phone service like Spectrum Voice, or another internet phone service. What changes is **where you plug in the base**.

Your phone service	Where the base plugs in
Traditional landline	Plug the base into a phone jack in the wall.
Spectrum Voice and other cable phone	Plug the base into the modem's phone port (often labeled Voice 1).
Internet phone box (such as Ooma)	Plug the base into the phone port on the provider's box.
Cellular home phone base	Plug the base into the phone port on the cellular box.

Using the phone jacks around the house

With cable or internet phone service, the wall jacks in other rooms may or may not be connected, depending on how your home was wired when service was installed. A cordless set avoids the question: only the base needs to be plugged into the phone service, and every other handset just needs a power outlet.

GOOD TO KNOW

Features from the service, features from the phone

Caller ID, call waiting and phone company voicemail come from your phone service. The answering machine, phonebook, intercom and built-in call blocking come from the phone. Bill's *Home Phone Service* guide explains the service side, including switching providers and keeping your number.

TIP

New service, same phones

If you switch from a copper landline to cable or internet phone service, you can usually keep your cordless phones. Just move the base's phone cord to the new modem or box.

CHAPTER 32

When the Power Goes Out

This is the most important safety fact about cordless phones: **they need electricity**. The FCC notes that cordless phones won't work during a power outage unless they're connected to a battery backup (UPS) or the home has a generator. The handsets may light up, but with the base dark they can't make calls.

What still works

Phone	In a power outage
Corded phone on a copper landline	Usually keeps working, because the line itself carries power.
Cordless phone	Usually doesn't work unless the base has backup power.
Cable or internet phone service	Stops unless the modem has battery or other backup power.
Cell phone	Works as long as its battery lasts and the towers have power.

Be ready

1. If you have a copper landline, keep one inexpensive **corded phone** plugged into a wall jack.
2. Keep your cell phone charged, and keep a charged power bank or car charger handy.
3. If your phone service runs through a modem, ask your provider about a backup battery for it.
4. Know where your flashlight is, and write important numbers on paper too.

TIP

Some Panasonic bases can run on batteries

Certain Panasonic models let you put batteries into the base during a power failure so it keeps working for a while. Panasonic recommends rechargeable Ni-MH batteries for this; standard alkaline batteries can be used only during the outage and must be removed when power returns. Check your manual to see whether your base has this feature.

STAY SAFE

Medical alert devices and alarms

If a medical alert system or home alarm uses your phone line, ask its provider how it behaves in an outage. Bill's *Home Phone Service* guide covers backup batteries in more detail.

CHAPTER 33

Handset Batteries: Charging and Replacing

Cordless handsets run on rechargeable batteries that slowly wear out. After a couple of years, you may notice the handset dies partway through a call, or the battery icon drops fast. New batteries make an old handset feel new again and cost far less than a new phone.

Use the right kind

Most Panasonic handsets use two **AAA rechargeable Ni-MH** batteries. Panasonic's manuals say to use only rechargeable Ni-MH AAA batteries, and not alkaline, manganese or Ni-Cd batteries. Panasonic sells its own replacements (model HHR-4DPA) and suggests replacing them every couple of years for best performance. Some VTech and AT&T handsets use AAA Ni-MH batteries too; others use a small battery pack with a plug. The manual or the label inside the battery cover tells you which.

To replace the batteries

1. Slide or press open the battery cover on the back of the handset.
2. Take out the old batteries, noting which way they faced.
3. Put in the new batteries with + and – matching the marks inside.
4. Close the cover and set the handset in its charger.
5. Let it charge fully before relying on it.

HEADS UP

Never use regular alkaline batteries in a handset

Alkaline batteries aren't made to be recharged. Putting them in a charging handset can damage the phone and the batteries.

TIP

Recycle the old ones

Many hardware and home stores have battery recycling bins. Don't throw rechargeable batteries in the household trash.

Charging habits

- Keep handsets in their chargers when you're not using them. Modern batteries don't need to be run down first.

- If a handset won't charge, wipe the metal charging contacts on the handset and charger with a dry cloth.
- Make sure the charger is plugged into an outlet that isn't turned off by a wall switch.

CHAPTER 34

Fixing Common Problems

Most cordless phone problems have simple causes. Try these in order before you buy a new phone. Start by unplugging the base's power for a minute and plugging it back in; that alone fixes a surprising amount.

Problem	Try this
No dial tone on any handset	Check the base's power and phone cord. Plug a corded phone into the same jack or modem port. If it's silent too, the problem is your phone service; call your provider.
Handset says "Out of range" or "No base"	Move closer to the base. Check the base has power. If it persists, register the handset again (Chapter 11, *Adding and Registering Extra Handsets*).
Handset dies quickly	Replace the batteries (Chapter 33, *Handset Batteries: Charging and Replacing*).
No caller names or numbers	Ask your phone company whether Caller ID is on your line.
Wrong date or time	Set it by hand once (Chapter 6, *Setting the Date and Time*).
Answering machine doesn't pick up	Make sure it's on, the memory isn't full, and voicemail isn't answering first (Chapter 17, *Ring Count and Toll Saver*).
Can't check messages from away	Set a remote code and enter it during the greeting (Chapter 18, *Checking Messages from Away (Remote Access)*).
Static or crackling	Move the base, check batteries, compare with a corded phone (Chapter 13, *Range, Static and Range Extenders*).
Blocked call still rings	Some phones ring once before blocking. Panasonic help has a page on turning off that first ring for some models.

When it's time for a new phone

- The base won't power on with a known-good adapter.
- Handsets won't register even after following the manual's steps.
- The phone is so old it's labeled 900 MHz, 2.4 GHz or 5.8 GHz rather than DECT 6.0, and it interferes with Wi-Fi.
- You need features it doesn't have: call blocking, louder sound, bigger buttons.

TIP

Write down settings before replacing

Before retiring an old set, write down phonebook entries you care about and listen to any saved messages you want to keep.

HEADS UP

Factory reset

Many phones can be reset to factory settings from the menu. That erases the phonebook, block list and messages. Use it only before giving the phone away, or when a manual tells you to.

CHAPTER 35

Choosing a New Cordless Set

Bill's *Home Phone Service* guide covers choosing service. This chapter is about choosing the phone itself. Start with how you'll actually use it, then match the features.

If this sounds like you	Look for
Robocalls are a daily problem	Panasonic with Call Block, or VTech/AT&T with Smart call blocker.
You mostly use a cell phone	A Link2Cell or Connect to Cell model so home handsets ring for cell calls.
Hearing is getting harder	An amplified model (40 to 50 dB) such as the Panasonic KX-TGM series or Clarity XLC3.4+.
Small keys and screens are hard	A big-button model with talking caller ID and a backlit screen.
Power outages worry you	A set with a corded base, or keep a separate corded phone.
Big house or several floors	Enough handsets for each floor; check the base supports a range extender.

A short checklist

- DECT 6.0 on the box.
- Built-in answering machine, if you don't use phone company voicemail.
- Call blocking.
- HAC label if anyone wears hearing aids.
- Number of handsets, plus how many the base can support later.

TIP

Count the handsets you'll really use

Sets are sold with one to five or more handsets. More handsets mean more chargers and more batteries to replace someday. A handset in the kitchen, bedroom and main living area covers most homes.

GOOD TO KNOW

Prices change often

Basic cordless sets are inexpensive, and features like Bluetooth, call blocking and amplification add to the price. Compare current prices at a couple of stores before you buy.

CHAPTER 36

Setting Up a Phone for a Parent

If you're setting up a cordless phone for a parent, a few extra minutes now saves a lot of confusion later. The goal is a phone that rings loud enough, shows who's calling, keeps scammers out, and takes messages reliably.

A setup checklist for family

1. Set the date and time (Chapter 6, *Setting the Date and Time*).
2. Add family, doctors, the pharmacy and a neighbor to the phonebook and speed dial.
3. Turn on call blocking or Smart call blocker, with those numbers on the allow list.
4. Record a simple greeting that doesn't say anyone lives alone (Chapter 15, *Recording Your Greeting*).
5. Set the ring count so there's time to reach the phone, and make sure voicemail doesn't answer first.
6. Turn up the ringer volume and turn on Talking Caller ID.
7. Set a remote access code you both know, so you can help check messages from away (Chapter 18, *Checking Messages from Away (Remote Access)*).
8. Put a large-print card by the phone with the most important numbers.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth an afternoon

A well-set-up home phone keeps a parent connected and independent, and screens out the calls most likely to cost them money.

Keeping a precious message

Answering machine messages live only in the base, and they can be lost in a reset or when the phone is replaced. If there's a message you want to keep forever, play it on the speaker and record it with a smartphone's voice recorder app held close to the base. Save the recording with your photos and back it up.

TIP

Leave notes for next time

Write the model number, remote code and a two-line "how to play messages" note on a card kept by the phone. Bill's *Helping a Parent from Afar* guide has more ideas for long-distance help.

PART 8

Getting Help

When to call Bill, and a one-glance cheat-sheet of the most-used steps.

CHAPTER 37

When to Call Bill

Most cordless phone jobs are quick once you know the menu, but some are easier with someone beside you. Here are good reasons to call.

- Setting up a new cordless set and moving phonebook entries from the old one.
- Adding handsets that won't register.
- Answering machine and phone company voicemail fighting over calls.
- Turning on call blocking and building an allow list so the right people get through.
- Pairing a cell phone with Link2Cell or Connect to Cell and copying contacts.
- Choosing an amplified, big-button or captioned phone for a family member.
- Planning for power outages so you can always make a call.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Device Training

This guide pairs with my **Device Training** service. We'll sit with your phone, set it up the way you like it, and practice the steps you'll use most, like playing messages, blocking a caller and answering a cell call on the home handset, until they feel easy.

SCAM ALERT

I will never call you out of the blue

If someone calls claiming to be "Bill" or "tech support" and asks for money or remote access to your computer, hang up. Call me back at the number below.

How to reach me

FROM BILL

Bill's Home Tech

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book at **billshometech.com/book**. Bill's Home Tech serves **Portage County, Ohio**, with 30+ years of professional experience. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. My help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. The guides themselves are free.

— Bill

CHAPTER 38

Your Cordless Phone Cheat-Sheet

Everyday steps

I want to…	Do this
Make a call	Press Talk, dial, press Off when done. Or dial first, then press Talk.
Call back a missed call	Caller ID button, scroll, press Talk.
Find a lost handset	Press Find Handset (Locator) on the base.
Play messages	Press Play on the base, or Menu > Answering system on a handset.
Record a greeting	Menu > Answering system > Greeting.
Block the caller who's ringing	Press Call Block (Panasonic) or use the block list.
Set date and time	Menu > Set date & time.
Check messages from away	Call home, enter your remote code during the greeting.

Safety in five lines

1. Caller ID can be faked. Hang up on anyone demanding money or personal information.
2. Never say you're away or live alone in your greeting.
3. Change the default remote access code.
4. Keep a corded phone or charged cell phone for power outages.
5. Use only rechargeable Ni-MH batteries in handsets.

Keep this handy

Item	Yours
Phone brand and model	_____
Remote access code	_____
Phone service company and number	_____
Handset battery type	_____
Date batteries last replaced	_____
Who to call for help	Bill's Home Tech, (330) 200-8042

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One last thing

The kitchen phone is still one of the most important lines in the house. Set it up once with care, and it will quietly do its job for years. If anything here doesn't match your phone, call or text me.

— Bill