BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Dell Laptops & Desktops

Setup, SupportAssist, updates, warranty and recovery — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for Dell owners 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 Dell, XPS, Dell Pro and older Inspiron & Latitude PCs · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your Dell guide. It covers the parts of owning a Dell that are special to Dell: figuring out which model you have, the Service Tag, Dell's SupportAssist app, warranty and repair plans, Dell's own recovery tools, and the fake "Dell support" calls that target Dell owners. Windows itself gets just enough here to get you through the first day; the Windows 11 guide goes deeper. Read it in any order and at your own pace.

Part 1 — Getting to Know Your Dell

1 A Note from Bill
2 Which Dell Do I Have? Dell's Names, Old and New
3 Your Service Tag: The Code That Unlocks Dell's Help

Part 2 — Your First Day

4 Unboxing and Turning It On
5 Windows 11 Setup, Screen by Screen
6 Your PIN, Password and Recovery Key
7 Updates on Day One
8 Trial Software: What to Keep and What to Remove

Part 3 — Dell's Own Helper Apps

9 SupportAssist: Your Dell's Health Checkup
10 Running a Full SupportAssist Scan
11 Drivers and BIOS: What They Are and How to Update Them
12 Dell Command | Update (on Business Dells)
13 Old Dell Apps You Can Let Go Of

Part 4 — Warranty, Support Plans and Repairs

14 Checking Your Warranty
15 Dell Care Plans: What They Add, Honestly
16 Getting a Repair from Dell

Part 5 — When Something Goes Wrong

17 Quick Fixes to Try First
18 Back Up First, Always
19 Windows' Reset This PC
20 SupportAssist OS Recovery: Dell's Rescue Tool
21 Which Recovery Should I Use?

Part 6 — Staying Safe from Fake "Dell Support"

22 Fake Dell Support Calls and Pop-ups
23 If You Already Called, Paid or Let Them In

Part 7 — Living With Your Dell

24 Giving Away, Selling or Recycling an Old Dell
25 Everyday Care for a Long-Lasting Dell

Part 8 — When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

26 When to Call Bill
27 Your Dell Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Getting to Know Your Dell

A welcome, a plain-English guide to Dell's confusing model names, and the one code that unlocks all of Dell's help: your Service Tag.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and congratulations on your Dell. Whether it's a brand-new laptop that came as a gift, a desktop you've had for years, or a computer you're helping a parent with, you're in the right place.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help families here in Portage County, Ohio, get comfortable with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain things at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, with no jargon and no pressure.

What makes a Dell a Dell

Every Dell runs **Windows 11**, the same as computers from HP, Lenovo and the rest. What Dell adds is its own layer on top: a helper app called **SupportAssist**, a seven-character code called the **Service Tag** that identifies your exact computer, Dell's warranty and repair plans, and a recovery tool that can put the computer back the way it left the factory. Those Dell-specific parts are what this guide is about.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

Once you know where your Service Tag is, how to run a SupportAssist checkup and how to look up your warranty, you can handle most of Dell's own tools by yourself. You'll also know how to spot the fake "Dell support" callers who try to take advantage of Dell owners.

You can't break it

I say this to everyone: you really can't break your computer by exploring the menus. The only steps in this guide that erase anything are the reset and recovery chapters, and they're clearly marked, with a reminder to back up first. Everything else is safe to try.

And I'm only a phone call away

If something here doesn't match what you see, or you'd simply rather have a hand, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. Now, let's meet your Dell.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Which Dell Do I Have? Dell's Names, Old and New

If Dell's model names have confused you lately, you're not alone. Dell changed its whole naming system in 2025, then changed part of it back in 2026. Here's the story in plain English, so the name on your box or receipt makes sense.

The old names (before 2025)

For many years, Dell sold computers under these family names. You'll still see them on millions of computers in homes today:

- **Inspiron**: Dell's everyday home laptops and desktops.
- **XPS**: Dell's premium, thinner and more expensive home laptops and desktops.
- **Latitude**: business laptops.
- **OptiPlex**: business desktops.
- **Precision**: powerful "workstation" computers for engineers and designers.
- **Alienware**: gaming computers.

What changed in 2025

In January 2025, Dell retired the Inspiron, XPS, Latitude and Precision names. Everything was regrouped into three families: **Dell** for home use, **Dell Pro** for business, and **Dell Pro Max** for the most powerful machines. Each could also come in **Plus** or **Premium** versions, which is why you may see names like "Dell 14 Plus" or "Dell Pro Max Premium." The number is roughly the screen size in inches.

What changed again in 2026

In January 2026, Dell brought the **XPS** name back for its best home laptops, starting with a new **XPS 14** and **XPS 16**. The 2025 "Dell 14 Premium" and "Dell 16 Premium" laptops were renamed after the fact: Dell's own pages now call them the **XPS 14 (2025)** and **XPS 16 (2025)**. On the business side, Dell kept the **Dell Pro** name, and it is bringing back **Precision** as **Dell Pro Precision**, retiring the Dell Pro Max name as new models arrive.

The names you'll see in stores, as of November 2026

Family	Who it's for	Examples you might see
Dell	Everyday home use	Dell 14 Plus, Dell 16 Plus, Dell 14 Plus 2-in-1, Dell Slim Desktop, Dell Tower, Dell Tower Plus
XPS	Dell's premium home laptops	XPS 14, XPS 16
Alienware	Gaming	Alienware laptops and desktops
Dell Pro	Business (often bought by employers)	Dell Pro laptops and desktops
Dell Pro Precision (was Dell Pro Max)	Powerful workstations	Dell Pro Precision 5, Dell Pro Precision 7

Old name, new name: a quick translation

If you remember…	…it's now called
Inspiron	Now simply **Dell** (for example, Dell 14 Plus)
XPS laptop	Briefly **Dell Premium** in 2025; **XPS** again in 2026
XPS Desktop	**Dell Tower Plus**
Latitude	**Dell Pro**
Precision	**Dell Pro Max** in 2025; now becoming **Dell Pro Precision**

GOOD TO KNOW

Why the name matters (and why it mostly doesn't)

The family name tells you roughly what kind of computer you have, but Dell doesn't actually go by the name when you ask for help. It goes by your **Service Tag**, the code in the next chapter. Two computers called "Dell 16 Plus" can have very different parts inside; the Service Tag tells Dell exactly which one is yours.

Where to see your model name

- On the box, the receipt or the order email.
- On Dell's support page for your computer, after you enter the Service Tag (Chapter 14).
- In SupportAssist, which shows your computer's details along with the Service Tag.

TIP

Is my old Inspiron still fine?

Yes. A model name being retired doesn't affect your computer at all. Dell still lists older Inspiron, XPS and Latitude computers on its support site, and Windows keeps updating them as long as they meet Windows 11's requirements.

CHAPTER 3

Your Service Tag: The Code That Unlocks Dell's Help

Every Dell has a **Service Tag**: a **7-character code** made of letters and numbers, unique to your computer. Dell uses it to look up your exact model, the parts inside, the right drivers, and your warranty. Write it down today; it's one of the most useful things you can know about your Dell.

Where to find it

1. **On the computer itself.** On a laptop, turn it over: the Service Tag is printed on a sticker or etched into the bottom cover, usually marked **ST** or **Service Tag**. On a desktop, look for a sticker on the case.
2. **In the SupportAssist app.** Open SupportAssist (Chapter 9). The Service Tag is shown in the top-right corner.
3. **In the BIOS setup screen.** If the sticker has worn off and Windows won't start, the Service Tag is also listed on the **Overview** screen of the computer's BIOS setup. (This is a job I'm happy to help with.)

GOOD TO KNOW

The Express Service Code

Next to the Service Tag you may see an **Express Service Code** (marked **EX**), a longer string of numbers. It's just the Service Tag converted into digits, so you can type it on a phone keypad when Dell's phone system asks. Either one identifies your computer.

HEADS UP

Old instructions online may not work anymore

Many websites tell you to type a command called **wmic** into the Command Prompt to show your Service Tag. Microsoft has removed that tool from current versions of Windows 11, so that trick no longer works. Use the sticker or SupportAssist instead.

Keep it private, mostly

Your Service Tag isn't a password, and Dell will ask for it whenever you contact them. But scammers have been known to call Dell owners and recite their computer's details to sound official. Knowing your Service Tag proves nothing about who is calling. There's more on this in Chapter 22.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With your Service Tag written down, you can check your warranty, download the right drivers or get repair help in a minute or two, even if the computer won't turn on.

PART 2

Your First Day

Unboxing, the Windows 11 setup screens, catching up on updates, and clearing out the trial software that comes with a new Dell.

CHAPTER 4

Unboxing and Turning It On

A new computer is exciting, and a little nerve-wracking. Take it slow. There's nothing in the box you can ruin by opening it carefully.

Before you press the power button

1. Keep the box and packing for the first few weeks, in case you need to return or exchange it.
2. Find the charger (laptop) or power cord (desktop) and plug it in. Let a laptop charge while you set it up; setup and the first updates take a while and use a lot of battery.
3. Turn the computer over (or look at the side of a desktop) and write down the **Service Tag** (Chapter 3) in the blank in Chapter 27.
4. Have your **Wi-Fi name and password** handy. They're often printed on a sticker on your internet router.
5. Have your **email address** and its **password** ready, or decide with your family which email to use.

Turning it on

On a laptop, open the lid; many new laptops start by themselves when opened or when first plugged in. If not, press the power button, usually at the top-right of the keyboard or built into a key there. On a desktop, the power button is on the front or top of the case. You'll see the Dell logo, then the first Windows setup screen.

What's usually in the box

- The computer itself, and on a laptop, its charger (often a USB-C charger).
- On a desktop, a power cord, and sometimes a keyboard and mouse.
- A small leaflet with safety and setup information. There's rarely a printed manual; Dell's manuals are on dell.com/support.
- No recovery disc. Dell's recovery tools are built in (Chapter 20).

TIP

Give yourself an hour

Setup, updates and getting your email and photos in place can easily fill an hour or two. Pick a quiet afternoon, not the evening before a trip.

GOOD TO KNOW

Moving from an old computer?

If you're replacing an older Windows PC, the separate "Moving to a New Windows PC" guide walks through backing up the old one first, so the new Dell can bring your files and settings across during setup.

CHAPTER 5

Windows 11 Setup, Screen by Screen

The first time a Dell starts, Windows 11 asks a series of questions. Microsoft changes the wording from time to time, but the order is usually the same. Read each screen, and don't worry; almost every choice can be changed later in **Settings**.

The usual screens

1. **Country or region** and **keyboard layout**. Choose **United States** and **US**. Skip the second keyboard.
2. **Connect to a network.** Pick your Wi-Fi name and type the password carefully (it's case-sensitive).
3. **Updates.** Windows may download a few updates and restart. Let it.
4. **Name your device.** Something simple like **Mary-Laptop** helps if you have more than one computer.
5. **Sign in with a Microsoft account.** Use your Outlook, Hotmail or Live email if you have one, or another email you'll keep. If you don't have one, choose the option to create one.
6. **Create a PIN.** A short number you'll type to unlock the computer each day. Choose one you'll remember.
7. **Restore your old PC?** If you backed up an older Windows PC with the same Microsoft account, Windows offers to restore it. Otherwise, carry on as a new PC.
8. **Privacy settings.** Read each one. It's fine to turn off the ones about advertising and sharing extra data.
9. **Offers.** You may be offered Microsoft 365, Xbox Game Pass or extra OneDrive storage, sometimes with a trial. You can choose **Skip** or **No thanks** on anything you didn't plan to buy.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why Windows wants a Microsoft account

Windows 11 setup expects an internet connection and a Microsoft account. The account is free. It lets you reset a forgotten password from your phone, backs up your settings, and safely stores your computer's **BitLocker recovery key** (Chapter 6). Use an email address you'll keep for years.

STAY SAFE

Set it up in the right person's name

If you're setting up a Dell for a parent, use **their** email and a password they'll remember, not yours. Mixed-up accounts cause confusion for years. Write the password down for them and keep it somewhere safe.

TIP

Stuck on a screen?

If a setup screen won't go forward, check the Wi-Fi password first; it's the most common snag. If the Microsoft account password is rejected, try it on your phone at outlook.com to be sure it's right.

When you reach the desktop

Once you see the desktop and the taskbar along the bottom, setup is done. Dell may show a welcome window or a SupportAssist message; it's fine to close those for now. The next step is updates (Chapter 7).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A careful setup means one account, one password and one PIN, all written down. That's what makes everything later, from recovering a password to restoring the computer, simple instead of stressful.

CHAPTER 6

Your PIN, Password and Recovery Key

Three pieces of information keep your Dell safe and get you back in if something goes wrong. Write all three in the blanks in Chapter 27.

What	What it's for
Your PIN	The short number you type to unlock this computer. It only works on this one computer.
Your Microsoft account email and password	The account you signed in with during setup. Used for Outlook, OneDrive, the Microsoft Store and to reset a forgotten PIN.
Your BitLocker recovery key	A 48-digit number Windows may ask for after certain repairs or BIOS updates. It's stored in your Microsoft account.

Change or reset your PIN

1. Open **Settings** (press the **Windows key + I**).
2. Select **Accounts** > **Sign-in options**.
3. Select **PIN (Windows Hello)** and choose **Change PIN**. If you forgot it, choose **I forgot my PIN** on the sign-in screen instead and follow the steps; you'll need your Microsoft account password.

Find your BitLocker recovery key

Many new Windows 11 computers quietly lock (encrypt) their drive with **BitLocker**, which protects your files if the computer is stolen. Very occasionally, after a repair or a firmware update, a blue screen asks for the recovery key. Don't panic: on another device, go to **aka.ms/myrecoverykey**, sign in with your Microsoft account, and the key is listed there.

HEADS UP

Look it up before you need it

Microsoft can't recover a lost BitLocker key for you. Take two minutes today to visit **aka.ms/myrecoverykey** and make sure your Dell is listed. If it isn't, call me before you need it.

SCAM ALERT

No real company asks for your PIN or recovery key by phone

Dell and Microsoft will never call and ask for your PIN, password or recovery key. Anyone who does is a scammer. Hang up.

CHAPTER 7

Updates on Day One

A new Dell may have sat in a warehouse for months. On the first day, let it catch up. There are two kinds of updates on a Dell, and they come from two places:

Kind of update	Who sends it	Where you get it
Windows itself, security fixes, Microsoft apps	Microsoft	**Settings** > **Windows Update**
Drivers and BIOS (the software that runs Dell's own hardware)	Dell	**SupportAssist** (Chapter 11), and some arrive through Windows Update too

Step 1: Windows Update

1. Plug in the charger.
2. Open **Settings** > **Windows Update**.
3. Select **Check for updates**. Let everything download and install, and restart when asked.
4. Check again. Two or three rounds are normal on a brand-new computer.

Step 2: Dell's updates

Open **SupportAssist** and let it check for driver updates (Chapter 11 has the steps). On a business **Dell Pro** or **Latitude** computer, you may have **Dell Command | Update** instead (Chapter 12).

GOOD TO KNOW

Which version of Windows do I have?

Open **Settings** > **System** > **About** and look under **Windows specifications**. In late 2026, a current Dell will most likely show version **25H2** or **26H2**. Either is fine as long as Windows Update says you're up to date.

SCAM ALERT

Real updates don't pop up in your web browser

Windows updates come through Settings, and Dell's come through SupportAssist. A web page, email or text saying "Your Dell needs an urgent update, click here" or "call Dell now" is fake. Close it.

CHAPTER 8

Trial Software: What to Keep and What to Remove

Like most new computers, a Dell arrives with some extra programs. Some are genuinely useful, some are trials that will eventually ask you to pay, and some are simply advertising. You can remove what you don't want, but do it carefully.

The antivirus trial

Dell has long included a trial of **McAfee** security software on many of its Windows computers. When the trial ends, it may show increasingly urgent messages asking you to pay. You don't have to. Windows 11 comes with **Windows Security** (also called Microsoft Defender) built in and free, and it switches itself on when no other antivirus is installed.

Keep these

- **SupportAssist** (sometimes listed as Dell SupportAssist): it checks your Dell's health and delivers Dell's drivers.
- **SupportAssist OS Recovery** and anything with **Dell** and **Recovery** in the name.
- **Dell Command | Update** on business models.
- Anything with **driver**, **audio**, **Realtek**, **Intel**, **AMD**, **graphics**, **touchpad** or **Bluetooth** in the name.
- Anything you don't recognize. When in doubt, leave it.

Usually safe to remove

- Antivirus trials you don't plan to pay for.
- Games, streaming and shopping shortcuts you don't use.
- Trial offers for programs you already own elsewhere.

How to uninstall a program

1. Open **Settings** > **Apps** > **Installed apps**.
2. Type the program's name (for example, **McAfee**) in the search box at the top.
3. Select the three dots **...** next to it and choose **Uninstall**.
4. Confirm, and follow any steps the program shows. Restart when it's done.

TIP

If McAfee won't go away completely

Dell's own community moderators often point people to McAfee's official removal tool when bits of the trial are left behind. Search McAfee's own support site for it, or call me; don't download "uninstaller" programs from random websites.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Fewer pop-ups and nag screens, a little more speed and space, and no surprise bill when a trial quietly turns into a subscription.

GOOD TO KNOW

Check that Windows Security took over

After removing an antivirus trial, open **Start**, type **Windows Security**, and open it. A green check next to **Virus & threat protection** means you're protected. The separate Antivirus and Windows Security guide has the details.

PART 3

Dell's Own Helper Apps

SupportAssist, the checkup app on home Dells; Dell Command | Update on business models; and which older Dell apps you can safely retire.

CHAPTER 9

SupportAssist: Your Dell's Health Checkup

SupportAssist is Dell's own helper app, and it comes installed on Dell's home computers. Dell describes it as watching over your computer's health, performance and security from one dashboard. As of November 2026, its full name is still **SupportAssist for Home PCs**; it hasn't been renamed or retired.

What it does for you

- **Checks your hardware** (memory, drive, battery, fans and so on) for problems.
- **Finds and installs Dell's driver updates**, the small programs that make Dell's hardware work properly.
- **Cleans up** unneeded temporary files.
- **Shows your Service Tag** and connects you to Dell support if a part has failed.

Open SupportAssist

1. Select **Start** (the Windows logo on the taskbar).
2. Type **SupportAssist**.
3. Select **SupportAssist** in the results. The first time, it may ask you to accept Dell's terms; read them and continue.

> TIP
> **Your Service Tag is right there**
> Once SupportAssist is open, look in the top-right corner. That's your Service Tag, the code from Chapter 3.

What's free and what isn't

SupportAssist itself is free, and the basic checkups and driver updates work on every Dell it's installed on. Dell says some features depend on your service plan, so you may see extra options marked as needing **Dell Care** or Premium Support (Chapter 15). You never have to buy a plan to use the basics.

HEADS UP

Keep SupportAssist itself up to date

Dell released security fixes for SupportAssist in both 2025 and 2026. Let it update itself when it offers to, and don't uninstall it to "tidy up."

SCAM ALERT

SupportAssist never asks you to call a phone number from a pop-up

The real SupportAssist lives in your Start menu. A web page or pop-up claiming to be "Dell SupportAssist" that shows a warning and a phone number is fake. Close it (Chapter 22).

CHAPTER 10

Running a Full SupportAssist Scan

Once a month or so, or any time the computer feels "off," let SupportAssist give it a full once-over. One button runs everything: the hardware check, driver updates and cleanup.

Run all the checks at once

1. Plug in the charger and close any work you have open.
2. Open **SupportAssist** (Chapter 9).
3. On the home screen, select the small **down arrow** next to the start button, and choose **Run all**.
4. Leave it alone while it works. The name of each task shows above the tiles, and each tile shows its progress.
5. When it finishes, read the summary. If it found driver updates, it may ask you to approve them and restart.

If it finds a problem

- **A hardware problem**: SupportAssist shows a details page about the issue. How loud the notice is depends on how serious the problem is. If your Dell is under warranty, it can help you start a support request.
- **A program that may be unwanted**: it shows a notice on the virus and malware tile, so you can decide whether to remove it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A single button that checks the hardware, updates Dell's drivers and clears out clutter. It catches a failing drive or battery early, while there's still time to save your files and use your warranty.

How often to run it

- Once a month as routine.
- Any time the computer feels slow, noisy or hot.
- A month before your warranty ends (Chapter 14), so a hidden problem is found while it's still covered.

TIP

Write down what it says

If SupportAssist reports a hardware failure, take a photo of the screen with your phone or jot down the message. That's exactly what Dell (or I) will want to see.

CHAPTER 11

Drivers and BIOS: What They Are and How to Update Them

Two words come up a lot with Dell updates. They sound technical, but the idea is simple.

Word	In plain English
Driver	A small program that lets Windows talk to a piece of hardware: the screen, the speakers, the Wi-Fi, the touchpad. Updated drivers fix glitches and improve battery life.
BIOS (or firmware)	The built-in software that starts the computer before Windows loads. Dell occasionally updates it to fix problems and close security holes.

Update drivers with SupportAssist

1. Plug in the charger. Never update a BIOS on battery alone.
2. Open **SupportAssist** and run a full scan (Chapter 10), or use its driver-update option.
3. Review the list of updates it found and approve them.
4. Restart when asked. A BIOS update may show a progress bar on a black screen and restart more than once. **Don't turn the computer off while that's happening.**

HEADS UP

Have your BitLocker key handy before a BIOS update

Occasionally, after a BIOS update, Windows asks for the BitLocker recovery key. Look it up first at **aka.ms/myrecoverykey** (Chapter 6) so a surprise screen doesn't become a crisis.

Or download them from Dell's website

You can also get drivers directly from Dell. Go to **dell.com/support**, enter your Service Tag (or let the site detect your computer), and open the **Drivers & Downloads** section for your model. Only ever download Dell drivers from **dell.com** itself.

SCAM ALERT

"Driver updater" programs are a trap

Websites and ads offering a "free driver scan" or "driver updater" often install junk or demand payment to fix made-up problems. Your Dell already has the real tool: SupportAssist.

CHAPTER 12

Dell Command | Update (on Business Dells)

If your Dell came from work, or is a **Dell Pro**, **Latitude**, **OptiPlex** or **Precision** model, it may have **Dell Command | Update** instead of SupportAssist. It's Dell's update tool for business computers: it finds and installs the right drivers, BIOS and firmware for that model.

Which computers use it

Dell lists its business families (Latitude, OptiPlex, Precision and the newer Dell Pro laptops) as supported, along with some newer Dell Plus laptops, all-in-ones and older XPS models. On a typical home Dell, SupportAssist does the same job, so you don't need both.

Run it

1. Plug in the charger.
2. Select **Start**, type **Dell Command**, and open **Dell Command | Update**.
3. Choose the option to check for updates. It lists the updates your model needs.
4. Choose to install them, and restart when asked. As with any BIOS update, don't turn the computer off part-way.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **A work computer belongs to your employer**
>
> If your company manages the computer, its IT department may control updates. Don't uninstall their tools; ask them first.

CHAPTER 13

Old Dell Apps You Can Let Go Of

Over the years Dell has shipped a parade of helper apps, and older Dells may still have several. Some have been retired by Dell and no longer get fixes. Here's what's current and what isn't, as of November 2026.

App	Status	What to do
SupportAssist (for Home PCs)	Current	Keep it and let it update.
Dell Update / **Alienware Update**	Ended December 31, 2024	SupportAssist replaces it, and removes it automatically on computers that have SupportAssist.
My Dell (MyDell) and older **Dell Optimizer**	Retired by Dell	Dell points to the newer Dell Optimizer (version 6 or later) where it's offered. If an old version is still installed, it's fine to remove it.
Dell Command | Update	Current (business models)	Keep it if your Dell came with it.
SupportAssist OS Recovery	Current	Keep it. It's your rescue tool (Chapter 20).

GOOD TO KNOW

What "end of life" means

Dell explains that once an app reaches end of life, it stops getting security patches and fixes; after end of support, it's no longer available to download. A retired app may keep running, but it isn't being looked after, which is why it's better to remove it.

TIP

Not sure? Leave it

Removing an old Dell app won't hurt anything as long as SupportAssist stays. But if you're unsure what something is, leaving it alone is always safe.

PART 4

Warranty, Support Plans and Repairs

How to check what's covered, what Dell's paid support plans add, and how to get a repair without falling for a fake.

CHAPTER 14

Checking Your Warranty

Before you pay for any repair, check whether your Dell is still under warranty. It takes about a minute, and all you need is your Service Tag.

Look it up on Dell's website

1. Open your web browser and type **dell.com/support** into the address bar yourself. (Don't search for it; see the warning below.)
2. Enter your **Service Tag** (or Express Service Code) in the search box. If you're on the Dell itself, you can instead let Dell's site detect your computer automatically.
3. On your computer's support page, look for the **warranty** details. Dell shows your warranty status and the date it expires.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

In one minute you know whether a repair is free under warranty, covered by a plan you bought, or something you'll pay for. That's the difference between a free fix and an expensive one.

What a basic warranty does and doesn't cover

Dell's standard hardware warranty covers parts that fail on their own. Dell's own help pages are clear that the basic warranty does **not** cover accidents like a drop, a spilled cup of coffee or a cracked screen. That's what accidental-damage coverage is for (Chapter 15). Dell says accidental-damage coverage can be added to a Dell that's still under an active warranty.

SCAM ALERT

Type dell.com yourself

Fake "Dell support" websites and phone numbers show up in search results and ads. The real one is **dell.com/support**. Type it into the address bar yourself, every time.

TIP

Write down the expiry date

Put the warranty end date in the blanks in Chapter 27, and on your calendar. A month before it ends is a good time to run a full SupportAssist scan (Chapter 10) so any problem is found while it's still covered.

CHAPTER 15

Dell Care Plans: What They Add, Honestly

When you buy a Dell, you'll be offered a paid support plan. The names changed recently, so here's a plain translation. As of November 2026, Dell's newer computers (models released after January 2025) are offered **Dell Care Plus** and **Dell Care Premium**. Older models were sold with **Premium Support** and **Premium Support Plus**; if you have one of those plans, it still applies.

	Basic warranty	Dell Care Plus	Dell Care Premium
Parts that fail on their own	Yes	Yes	Yes
24/7 help from Dell experts	Varies	Yes	Yes
Repair at home after remote diagnosis	Depends on model	Yes	Yes
Accidents: drops, spills, power surges	No	No	Yes, no deductible

The fine print on accidents

- Accidental-damage coverage does **not** cover theft, loss, intentional damage, or fire, flood and other natural disasters.
- Dell allows **one** qualifying accident claim per contract year.
- The damaged computer has to go back to Dell.
- Terms differ by country, and Dell's US pages sometimes list accident coverage as an add-on. Read the description on the checkout page before you pay.

Is a plan worth it?

Honestly, it depends. Accidental-damage coverage makes the most sense for a laptop that travels, gets used by grandchildren, or lives near the coffee cups. For a desktop that sits on a desk, the basic warranty is often enough. Dell also offers monthly payment options for some plans; add up the total before you agree.

GOOD TO KNOW

Check your credit card, too

Some credit cards extend the manufacturer's warranty on things you buy with them. It's worth a call to your card company before paying for a long plan.

SCAM ALERT

Warranty "renewal" calls and letters

If someone calls, emails or mails you saying your Dell warranty is "about to expire" and asks for payment by phone, don't pay them. Check your warranty yourself at dell.com/support, and buy any plan only there.

CHAPTER 16

Getting a Repair from Dell

If SupportAssist finds a failed part, or the computer has a problem you can't fix, here's how to get it repaired safely.

Before you contact Dell

1. Have your **Service Tag** ready (Chapter 3).
2. Run a SupportAssist scan if the computer still works (Chapter 10), and note what it found.
3. **Back up your files** (Chapter 18). Repairs, especially drive replacements, can erase everything.
4. Write down what's wrong in plain words: what happens, when it started, and what you've tried.

Starting a request

- **From SupportAssist**: when it finds a hardware failure on a Dell under warranty, it can help you start a support request with your details filled in.
- **From Dell's website**: go to **dell.com/support**, enter your Service Tag, and use the contact options shown for your computer. The right options depend on your country and your plan.

If your Dell is out of warranty

Dell can still arrange a paid repair on many out-of-warranty computers; the support site shows the options for your Service Tag. For an older Dell, it's worth comparing that price with a local repair, or with replacing the computer. That's a conversation I'm happy to have with you.

STAY SAFE

Before you hand it over

If the computer is going away for repair, back up first and make sure you know your Microsoft account password and BitLocker recovery key. Never write your password on the computer or give it to anyone who calls you.

SCAM ALERT

Dell doesn't call you to fix problems you didn't report

Dell says it does not make unsolicited calls asking to charge you for fixing an issue you never reported. The only exception is if you signed up for one of its proactive monitoring services. When in doubt, hang up and contact Dell yourself through dell.com/support.

PART 5

When Something Goes Wrong

Calm first steps, backing up before any big fix, and the two ways to put Windows back: Windows' own Reset this PC and Dell's SupportAssist OS Recovery.

CHAPTER 17

Quick Fixes to Try First

Most computer troubles are small and fixable. Before anything drastic, try these, in order. They solve a surprising number of problems.

1. **Restart.** Select **Start** > the **power** icon > **Restart**. Restart, not Shut down: a restart gives Windows a cleaner fresh start.
2. **Check the power.** Is the charger firmly plugged in at both ends? Is the outlet working? On a desktop, is the monitor turned on and its cable snug?
3. **Check for updates.** Run Windows Update, then a SupportAssist scan (Chapters 7 and 10).
4. **Unplug extras.** Remove USB drives, printers and other gadgets, then restart again.
5. **Note the message.** If an error appears, take a photo of it with your phone.

If the laptop won't turn on

- Plug in the charger and wait 30 minutes; a completely empty battery can take a while to show any sign of life.
- Look for a light on the charger or the laptop's side.
- Hold the power button for about 15 seconds, let go, then press it once normally.

If the screen stays black

- On a laptop, check the screen brightness keys; it may be turned all the way down.
- On a desktop, check that the monitor is on, its power light is lit, and the cable is pushed in at both ends.
- Listen for fans. If the computer seems to be running but the screen is dark, it's often the display or its cable.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

These five steps take ten minutes and fix most everyday glitches, without calling anyone or erasing anything.

HEADS UP

If it's dropped or got wet

If a laptop got wet, turn it off, unplug it, and don't try to turn it back on until it has been checked. Check your warranty or Dell Care plan (Chapters 14 and 15) before paying anyone for repairs.

CHAPTER 18

Back Up First, Always

Before any repair, reset or recovery, make sure your photos and documents are safely copied somewhere else. This is the single most important habit in this guide.

Two easy ways to back up

Way	How
OneDrive (through Windows Backup)	Copies your Documents, Pictures and Desktop folders to your Microsoft account online. The free plan includes 5 GB; more space costs extra. Check it in **Settings** > **Accounts** > **Windows backup**.
An external USB drive	Plug it in, open **File Explorer**, and copy your Documents, Pictures and Desktop folders onto it. Unplug it and put it away when you're done.

TIP

Doing both is best

A copy online and a copy on a drive in a drawer means a single accident can't take everything.

HEADS UP

Recovery tools can erase everything

The tools in the next three chapters can erase your files. Dell's own recovery article warns that a factory reset permanently deletes everything on the drive, and that its backup option saves files but not your programs or settings. Back up first.

CHAPTER 19

Windows' Reset This PC

If your Dell is slow, unstable or full of problems that updates don't fix, Windows has a built-in tool called **Reset this PC**. It reinstalls Windows. You choose whether to keep your personal files.

The two choices

Choice	What it does
Keep my files	Reinstalls Windows and removes your apps and settings, but keeps your personal files. You'll need to reinstall programs afterward.
Remove everything	Erases everything and reinstalls Windows. For giving away or selling the computer (Chapter 24), or a completely fresh start.

Run Reset this PC

1. Back up first (Chapter 18). Plug in the charger.
2. Open **Settings** > **System** > **Recovery**.
3. Next to **Reset this PC**, select **Reset PC**.
4. Choose **Keep my files** or **Remove everything**.
5. Choose **Cloud download** (gets a fresh copy of Windows from Microsoft) or **Local reinstall** (uses the copy already on the computer). Either is fine.
6. Review the summary, select **Reset**, and let it run. It can take an hour or more.

GOOD TO KNOW

Afterward: bring Dell's drivers back up to date

After any reset, run Windows Update and then a SupportAssist scan, so Dell's drivers are current again. If SupportAssist is missing afterward, get it again from Dell's support site at dell.com/support.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A fresh, fast Windows without buying anything or sending the computer away.

CHAPTER 20

SupportAssist OS Recovery: Dell's Rescue Tool

Many Dells have a second rescue tool built in: **SupportAssist OS Recovery**. It works even when Windows won't start, and it can put the computer back exactly as it left the Dell factory.

Does my Dell have it?

- It's available on certain Dell models that came with Windows 10 or Windows 11 installed at the factory. Dell keeps a list of supported models on its website.
- It is **not** available on Dells with **Qualcomm** (Snapdragon) processors. On those, use Windows' Reset this PC (Chapter 19) instead.

Start SupportAssist OS Recovery

1. Plug in the charger. Back up first if you can still reach your files (Chapter 18).
2. Turn the computer off completely, then turn it on.
3. As soon as the **Dell logo** appears, tap the **F12** key repeatedly. This opens the **One Time Boot Menu**. (If Windows starts loading instead, restart and try again.)
4. Choose **SupportAssist OS Recovery** from the menu.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **It may start by itself**
> If your Dell fails to start Windows several times in a row, SupportAssist OS Recovery can open automatically. That's normal; it's trying to help.

Reset to factory settings

1. On the SupportAssist OS Recovery main screen, select **Start Reset**.
2. Select **Reset to factory settings**, then **Next**.
3. Read the warning carefully. This permanently deletes your files and the programs you installed, and puts back Windows and Dell's software as they were when the computer shipped.
4. Follow the remaining screens and let it finish. Then set Windows up again (Chapter 5).

Local or cloud?

Option	What it means
Local restore	Uses the recovery copy saved on your Dell's own drive.
Cloud restore	Downloads the latest version of Windows from Dell. Needs an internet connection, and Dell lists a USB drive of at least 16 GB as a requirement.

HEADS UP

Have your product keys and passwords ready

After a factory reset, programs you bought separately (Microsoft Office, tax software, and so on) must be reinstalled, and some will ask for a product key or account sign-in. Gather those first.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the recovery copy itself is damaged

Newer Dells have a feature called **BIOSConnect** that can download and restore the recovery tool over the internet, even if the copy on the drive is damaged. This is a good moment to call me or Dell.

CHAPTER 21

Which Recovery Should I Use?

Here's the whole recovery picture on one page, from gentlest to most drastic.

Situation	Try this	Erases files?
Slow or glitchy	Restart, updates, SupportAssist scan (Chapters 10 and 17)	No
Still unstable after that	Reset this PC, **Keep my files** (Chapter 19)	No, but removes apps
Windows won't start	F12 > SupportAssist OS Recovery (Chapter 20)	Depends on the option
Want it exactly like new	Reset to factory settings in SupportAssist OS Recovery (Chapter 20)	**Yes**
Selling or giving it away	Reset this PC, **Remove everything** (Chapter 24)	**Yes**
Hardware failure found	Contact Dell with your Service Tag (Chapter 16)	No

FROM BILL

When in doubt, call before you erase

If you're not sure which to pick, or your files aren't backed up, stop and call me at (330) 200-8042. Erasing can't be undone; a phone call can save the photos.

PART 6

Staying Safe from Fake "Dell Support"

How the fake Dell support scams work, what the real Dell will and won't do, and how to reach the real Dell safely.

CHAPTER 22

Fake Dell Support Calls and Pop-ups

Dell owners are a favorite target for "tech support" scammers, because so many people own Dells. The scam comes in a few disguises, but the goal is always the same: get into your computer, then get your money.

How it usually starts

- **A phone call** from someone saying they're from "Dell" or "Dell Technical Support," claiming your computer has a virus or a problem, sometimes reading out your model or Service Tag to sound official.
- **A pop-up or full-screen warning** in your web browser, often with a loud alarm, saying your Dell is infected and to call a number right away.
- **A search result or ad** for "Dell support" that leads to a fake website and phone number.
- **An email or letter** about a warranty renewal, refund or subscription you don't remember buying.

What the real Dell says

- Dell doesn't make unsolicited calls asking to charge you to fix a problem you never reported (unless you signed up for a proactive monitoring service).
- Dell will never ask you to pay for tech support with **gift cards** or a **wire transfer**.
- Never give control of your computer to someone who called you out of the blue, however convincing they sound.
- If a caller pressures you to act quickly, asks for financial information, or turns threatening or rude, that's a sign of a scam.

SCAM ALERT

Hang up. Close the page. Call someone you trust.

You will never lose anything by hanging up on "Dell." If you're worried there's a real problem, contact Dell yourself by typing **dell.com/support** into your browser, or call me at (330) 200-8042.

What a real Dell contact looks like

Real Dell	What that looks like
You started it	You typed dell.com/support yourself, or opened SupportAssist from your Start menu.
They have your case	If Dell calls back, it's about a support request you opened, and you know the case.
Payment is normal	Plans and repairs are paid on dell.com or by card, never by gift card, wire or crypto.
No rush	Real support never threatens you or says your computer will be "locked" in minutes.

If a scary pop-up won't close

1. Don't call the number, and don't click anything inside the warning.
2. Press **Ctrl + W** to close the browser tab, or **Alt + F4** to close the browser.
3. If that doesn't work, press **Ctrl + Shift + Esc** to open **Task Manager**, select your browser (Edge or Chrome) and choose **End task**.
4. Still stuck? Hold the power button until the computer turns off, wait a moment, and turn it on again.
5. When the browser reopens, if it offers to restore your tabs, say no.

GOOD TO KNOW

The warning itself can't hurt you

A browser pop-up is just a web page dressed up to look scary. It can't see your files. The danger only begins if you call the number or let someone connect to your computer.

CHAPTER 23

If You Already Called, Paid or Let Them In

It happens to smart, careful people every day. If you talked to a fake support person, the important thing is to act quickly. You have nothing to be embarrassed about.

Do these right away

1. **Disconnect from the internet.** Turn off Wi-Fi from the taskbar, or unplug the network cable.
2. **Call your bank and card companies** using the number on the back of your card. Tell them you were scammed and ask them to stop or dispute any payment.
3. If you bought gift cards for them, call the gift card company's number on the back of the card right away.
4. **Change your passwords** from a different, safe device, starting with email and banking.
5. **Get the computer checked.** If they connected to it, they may have installed a remote-control program that lets them come back. This is a good time to call me.
6. **Report it** to the Federal Trade Commission at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

SCAM ALERT

Watch for the "refund" follow-up

Scammers often call back offering a refund, or claiming they "accidentally" refunded too much and need you to send the difference. That's the same scam, round two. Hang up.

FROM BILL

I'll help you clean up

After a scam, I can check the computer for remote-access programs, remove them, and help you secure your accounts. $49 remote · $99 in your home. Call (330) 200-8042.

GOOD TO KNOW

There's a whole guide on this

The "I Think I've Been Scammed" and "Remote Support and Fake Tech Support" guides go into more detail on the next steps after a scam.

PART 7

Living With Your Dell

Simple habits that keep a Dell healthy for years, and how to pass an old one on safely.

CHAPTER 24

Giving Away, Selling or Recycling an Old Dell

When a Dell is ready to move on, to a grandchild, a buyer or the recycling center, your files need to go with you, not with the computer. Here's the careful order.

Before you wipe it

1. Copy your files to the new computer or a USB drive, and check they opened correctly (Chapter 18).
2. Sign out of programs that limit how many computers they run on (Microsoft Office, tax software, and so on).
3. Write down the old Dell's **Service Tag** if you might need it for records; the new owner can check its warranty with that same tag.

Wipe it with Reset this PC

1. Plug in the charger.
2. Open **Settings** > **System** > **Recovery**, and next to **Reset this PC**, select **Reset PC**.
3. Choose **Remove everything**.
4. Choose **Cloud download** or **Local reinstall**.
5. On the next screen, select **Change settings** and turn on **Clean data**. This takes longer, often several hours, but makes your old files much harder to recover.
6. Select **Next**, then **Reset**. When it reaches the first Windows setup screen, stop and shut it down. The next owner will set it up with their own account.

HEADS UP

Don't skip Clean data

Without it, Windows removes your files but doesn't fully scrub the drive. For a computer leaving your home, turn Clean data on.

TIP

Recycling

Many electronics stores and community collection days take old computers for recycling. Wipe it first, every time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Thinking of a new computer?

The "Buying a New Computer" guide covers choosing between Windows, Mac and Chromebook, and what to look for in a new laptop, Dell or otherwise. The "Moving to a New Windows PC" guide covers moving everything across.

CHAPTER 25

Everyday Care for a Long-Lasting Dell

A Dell that's looked after gently can serve you well for many years. None of this is complicated.

A simple monthly routine

1. Restart the computer at least once a week (Start > power > Restart).
2. Once a month, run **Windows Update** and a **SupportAssist** full scan (Chapters 7 and 10).
3. Check that your backup is working (Chapter 18).
4. Remove programs you don't use any more (Chapter 8).

Kind habits for a laptop

- Use it on a table or desk, not a bed or blanket that blocks the air vents.
- Keep drinks well away from the keyboard.
- Close the lid gently, and never with a pen or earbuds on the keyboard.
- Carry it in a padded bag or sleeve.
- Use the charger that came with it, or one Dell lists for your model.

Battery habits

- It's fine to leave a laptop plugged in; modern batteries and chargers manage themselves.
- If the battery seems to drain fast, SupportAssist's hardware check (Chapter 10) can test it.
- A battery that swells, bulges or lifts the keyboard or case is a safety issue: stop using the laptop, unplug it and contact Dell or me.

Cleaning

- Shut the computer down and unplug it first.
- Wipe the screen with a dry microfiber cloth. If you need moisture, dampen the cloth slightly with water; never spray anything directly on the screen.
- A soft brush or a few puffs of air clears crumbs from the keyboard.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Ten minutes a month keeps your Dell secure, quick and backed up, and gives you early warning if a part starts to fail while it's still under warranty.

GOOD TO KNOW

Windows itself

For everything else about Windows 11, from the Start menu to email to printing, see the separate "Windows 11" guide. It works the same on every brand of computer.

PART 8

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and one page that sums up the whole guide.

CHAPTER 26

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can do most of this yourself. But sometimes it's simply easier to have a patient person do the technical part with you. Here's my honest advice on when that's worth it.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Setting up a new Dell**: the Windows setup, your Microsoft account, updates, removing the trials, and bringing your files, email and printer across from the old computer.
- **Before any recovery or reset**, especially if you're not sure your photos are backed up.
- **A failing part**: reading SupportAssist's results with you and working out whether it's a warranty repair.
- **After a scam call** or if someone has connected to your computer.
- **A BitLocker recovery screen** or a computer that won't start.
- **Passing on an old Dell**: wiping it properly so nothing personal goes with it.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, in your home here in Portage County or over a remote session, and I explain what I'm doing in plain words. I bring more than 30 years of professional experience with technology. This is part of my **Computer Help** service, and I'll always tell you honestly when something is better handled by Dell under your warranty.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. This guide is yours to keep and share, and no question is too small.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie

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

Enjoy your Dell. And remember, I'm only a phone call away.

— Bill

CHAPTER 27

Your Dell Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide on one page. Print it and keep it near the computer.

The essentials

Task	How
Service Tag	7 characters, on the bottom of a laptop or a sticker on a desktop; also top-right in SupportAssist.
Warranty	Type **dell.com/support**, enter your Service Tag, look at the warranty details.
Health checkup	Start > **SupportAssist** > down arrow > **Run all**.
Windows updates	**Settings** > **Windows Update** > **Check for updates**.
Remove trial software	**Settings** > **Apps** > **Installed apps** > ... > **Uninstall**.
BitLocker recovery key	**aka.ms/myrecoverykey**, signed in with your Microsoft account.
Reset Windows	**Settings** > **System** > **Recovery** > **Reset PC**.
Dell's rescue tool	Restart, tap **F12** at the Dell logo, choose **SupportAssist OS Recovery**.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Model name	_____
Service Tag	_____
Warranty / Dell Care ends	_____
Microsoft account email	_____
Password kept	_____
Wi-Fi name and password kept	_____
Where my backup drive is	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Restart (Start > power > Restart).
2. Check the charger and cables.
3. Run Windows Update, then a SupportAssist full scan.
4. Back up your files before trying anything bigger.
5. Reset this PC with **Keep my files**.
6. Windows won't start? Tap F12 at the Dell logo for SupportAssist OS Recovery.
7. Hardware failure? Check your warranty at dell.com/support.
8. Unsure about anything? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

SCAM ALERT

The golden rule

Real Dell support never calls out of the blue to fix a problem you didn't report, never asks for gift cards, and never needs you to call a number in a pop-up. Hang up, close it, and type dell.com yourself.