BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

DirecTV & Dish

Satellite and streaming TV, receivers, remotes, signal trouble and the bill — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for satellite TV households

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For DirecTV, Dish and Sling · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to satellite TV from DirecTV and Dish, and to their internet-based cousins: DirecTV through the internet and Sling TV. Out in the country, where the cable never came down the road, a dish on the roof is still how many families watch the news and the ballgame. Read this guide in any order and at your own pace. You'll find what each box and remote does, what to do when the picture says it's searching for a signal, how to read the bill, and how to make the yearly price-increase phone call go your way. Companies change names, prices and menus often, so where your screen differs, your own receiver and your account have the final word.

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PART 1

Getting Started

Which kind of DirecTV or Dish service you have, what the companies are called now, and the honest story of the DirecTV and Dish deal.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you're reading this, there's a good chance a satellite dish is bolted to your roof or a pole in the yard, and a box under the TV with a remote that does almost what you want. Maybe the picture froze during a thunderstorm and a number like 771 came up. Maybe the bill crept up again and you'd like to know whether to call and complain. Or maybe a family member keeps saying you should "just stream it" and you're not sure what that would mean for you.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. Out in the townships, where cable never reached, satellite TV is still the everyday way to watch. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting on your couch: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything.

What this guide will do for you

- Help you tell whether you have satellite service or the internet version, because the fixes are different.
- Walk you through restarting a receiver, pairing a remote, and teaching the remote to turn the TV on and change the volume.
- Explain rain fade, snow on the dish and the common signal messages, so you know when to wait and when to call.
- Show you how to read the bill, what the extra fees are, and how to handle a price increase.
- Lay out contracts, cancellation fees and equipment returns, so nothing surprises you.
- Give you honest alternatives, including free local channels from an antenna.

The big promise: you can't break it

Pressing the wrong button on a satellite remote won't hurt anything. Restarting the receiver is safe and is the first thing the companies' own help pages tell you to try. The two things that genuinely matter are a **ladder and a roof** (please leave the dish to a technician) and a **stranger on the phone** offering a deal. I'll mark both clearly.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

When you understand your own setup, a frozen picture stops being a mystery. You'll know whether it's the weather, the box, or something worth a service call, and you'll go into the yearly billing conversation knowing what to ask for.

And I'm only a phone call away

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

Let's start by working out which kind of service you have.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Satellite or Internet: Which Do You Have?

Both companies now sell two quite different things under one name. Knowing which one is in your home is the most useful fact in this whole guide, because the problems and the fixes are different.

Satellite TV

With **satellite** service, a dish outside catches the TV signal straight from satellites far above the equator. A cable runs from the dish into the house to one main box, called a **receiver**. Other TVs get smaller boxes that borrow from the main one. You do **not** need home internet to watch live TV this way, which is exactly why satellite is still popular in rural areas.

TV over the internet

With the **internet** version, there's no dish. The same channels come through your home internet into a small streaming box, a smart TV app, a Roku or a Fire TV Stick. DirecTV sells this under its own name. Dish's internet sibling is a separate service called **Sling TV**.

	Satellite	Internet (streaming)
What's outside	A dish on the roof, wall or a pole	Nothing
Needs home internet?	No, for live TV (apps and some extras use it)	Yes, and a steady one
Bad weather	Heavy rain or snow can interrupt it	Only if your internet goes down
Typical contract	Often a two-year agreement	Usually month to month
Boxes	Receiver plus smaller boxes on other TVs	A streaming box, or an app on a TV you own

How to tell in ten seconds

1. Look outside. A round or oval dish pointed at the southern sky means satellite.
2. Look behind the TV box. A thick round coaxial cable (the screw-on kind) usually means satellite. Only a power cord and an HDMI cable, plus Wi-Fi, usually means internet.
3. Look at the bill. It will name your package and often your equipment.

TIP

Write it on the Cheat-Sheet

Write "satellite" or "internet" in Chapter 26 along with the company name. When you call for help, that's the first thing anyone will ask.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If it's satellite and the picture drops in a thunderstorm, you know to wait. If it's internet and the picture drops, you know to restart the internet router first. Half of all troubleshooting is knowing which road you're on.

CHAPTER 3

DirecTV Today: Names, Boxes & Owners

DirecTV has changed names and owners several times, which is why the paperwork in your drawer may say AT&T, DirecTV Now, AT&T TV or DirecTV Stream. Here's where things stand.

One name now: DirecTV

In April 2025, DirecTV retired the separate names "DirecTV via Satellite," "DirecTV via Internet" and "DirecTV Stream." Everything is now sold simply as **DirecTV**, and satellite or internet is just the way it reaches you. The old DirecTV Stream website now sends people to directv.com. DirecTV is no longer part of AT&T; it's run under private-equity owner TPG.

DirecTV's current choices fall into three groups: free channels with **MyFree DirecTV**, the full **Signature** packages, and smaller **genre packs** built around a theme such as sports or news. Chapter 18 covers prices.

The boxes

Box	What it is
Genie (HR-series)	The long-time satellite DVR. Records several shows at once and feeds smaller boxes on other TVs.
Genie Mini	A small box on a second or third TV. It borrows recordings and tuners from the main Genie.
Gemini	DirecTV's newer box. It runs Android TV, so it has apps such as Netflix and YouTube. DirecTV says the Gemini connects through your satellite setup.
Gemini Air	A small streaming device for DirecTV through the internet. No dish needed. DirecTV says new internet customers are given the Gemini Air.

GOOD TO KNOW

Already have the older internet package?

People who signed up for the older internet package and already have a Gemini box can keep their package. They don't have to switch to a Gemini Air.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

When someone on the phone says "Gemini" or "Genie Mini," you'll know which box they mean, and you won't be talked into an "upgrade" you don't need.

CHAPTER 4

Dish & Sling Today

Dish Network is owned by a company called **EchoStar**. EchoStar also owns **Sling TV**, the internet version, and HughesNet satellite internet. They're separate services with separate bills.

Dish satellite

Dish's satellite service uses a dish outside and a main DVR called the **Hopper** (the current model is the Hopper 3). Other TVs get a small box called a **Joey**, which borrows the Hopper's tuners and recordings over the coaxial cable. Dish packages carry names like **America's Top 120** and **America's Top 200**; Chapter 18 has the prices.

Sling TV

Sling is Dish's internet sibling. It works on a Roku, Fire TV, smart TV, phone or computer, with no dish and no contract. The main plans are **Sling Orange** (includes ESPN; one screen at a time), **Sling Blue** (more news and entertainment channels; several screens) and both together. Smaller, cheaper plans called **Sling Select** and **Sling Essentials** (built around ESPN and ESPN2) were added more recently. Chapter 18 has the prices.

HEADS UP

Sling isn't a Dish discount

Sling is a different product, not a cheaper way to keep your Dish recordings. Your Hopper recordings don't move to Sling, and Sling's local channels depend on where you live. Chapter 22 compares them honestly.

Dish's company finances, in plain words

On June 30, 2026, the part of EchoStar that runs Dish TV, called DISH DBS, filed what's known as a **prepackaged Chapter 11** case in Houston. That is a court-supervised plan, agreed with lenders ahead of time, to cut debt. Holders of more than 88% of its notes backed the plan, and EchoStar said it expected no disruption for customers. Reports say the plan took effect on October 1, 2026, so the Dish TV side has come out the other end. Your service, your Hopper and your bill carried on as normal throughout.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the family tree helps you sort the mail: a Dish bill, a Sling bill and a HughesNet bill are three separate accounts, even though one company owns them all.

CHAPTER 5

The DirecTV and Dish Deal: What's Actually Happened

You may have heard that DirecTV and Dish are merging. Headlines have said so more than once. Here's only what's confirmed, as of November 2026.

The timeline

When	What happened
Fall 2024	DirecTV agreed to buy Dish's satellite TV business (and Sling) from EchoStar.
November 2024	DirecTV called the deal off after Dish's bondholders turned down a required debt exchange.
March 2026	EchoStar reached a debt agreement with Dish's lenders. Business news said it could clear the way for a DirecTV deal to be revived.
June 30, 2026	DISH DBS filed its prepackaged Chapter 11 case to reduce debt (Chapter 4).
October 1, 2026	Reports say the Dish TV restructuring plan took effect.
November 2026	No new DirecTV and Dish merger agreement had been announced that I could confirm. They are still two separate companies.

What it means for you right now

- **Nothing changes today.** Your receiver, remote, channels and bill work exactly as before.
- **Don't switch or cancel because of a rumor.** If a deal is ever announced, it would need government approval and would take many months.
- **Be wary of anyone using the news.** A caller saying "because of the merger, you need to pay now to keep your channels" is a scam. Chapter 24 explains.

SCAM ALERT

"The merger means a new box" calls

Real companies don't phone out of the blue to demand payment for a box swap or a "merger fee." Hang up and call the number printed on your own bill.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can tune out the headlines. If anything real happens, it will arrive as a letter or a notice on your bill, with plenty of time to decide.

PART 2

Receivers & Remotes

The boxes under your TVs, the safe way to restart them, pairing and programming each company's remote, and finding your way around the guide.

CHAPTER 6

Your Receivers: Genie, Gemini, Hopper & Joey

A satellite home usually has one main box and one or more smaller ones. The main box does the real work; the small ones borrow from it. Knowing which is which explains a lot of odd behavior.

The main box and the helpers

	DirecTV	Dish
Main DVR	Genie, or the newer Gemini	Hopper (Hopper 3 is current)
Small box on other TVs	Genie Mini	Joey
Where recordings live	On the main Genie	On the Hopper
If the main box is off or unplugged	The Minis lose live TV and recordings	The Joeys show a "looking for Hopper" type message

Find the model number

1. Look on the front of the box for a logo and a model name, or on the sticker on the back or bottom.
2. DirecTV model numbers often start with letters such as HR (a DVR), H (no DVR) or C (a Mini).
3. Dish receivers say Hopper or Joey on the front or the label.
4. Write the model and the location ("living room," "bedroom") on the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 26.

TIP

Leave the main box plugged in

Don't put the main Genie or Hopper on a switched outlet or a power strip you turn off at night. The other TVs depend on it, and it downloads the program guide and updates while you sleep.

GOOD TO KNOW

The access card

Many DirecTV receivers have a small plastic access card behind a little door on the front or side. Leave it in place. It's what tells the box you're a paying customer.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

When the bedroom TV says it can't find the main box, you'll know to check the living room box first instead of fighting with the bedroom one.

CHAPTER 7

Restarting & Refreshing a Receiver

A restart clears most freezes, black screens, stuck menus and missing-channel messages. It's safe, and it's exactly what both companies' help pages suggest first.

DirecTV: the red button or the plug

1. Find the small **red reset button**. DirecTV says it's on the side of the receiver or inside the access card door.
2. Press it briefly and let go. The box restarts on its own.
3. Or unplug the receiver's power cord, wait about 15 seconds, and plug it back in.
4. Wait a few minutes. The box may show progress messages while it starts up. Leave it alone until the picture returns.
5. If you have Genie Minis, DirecTV says to restart the main Genie too.

> HEADS UP
>
> **Restart, not factory reset**
>
> DirecTV also has a **factory reset**, done with a different button sequence. It erases your settings, playlists and favorites. You almost never need it. A plain restart is what you want.

DirecTV: refresh your channels

If one or two channels say you don't subscribe when you know you do, a **refresh** resends your channel permissions to the box. You can start one from your DirecTV account online at **directv.com/refresh**. The Ways Your DirecTV or Dish Can Make Life Easier topic walks through it step by step.

Dish: restart the Hopper

1. Unplug the Hopper's power cord from the wall.
2. Wait about 10 seconds, then plug it back in.
3. Let it finish starting. Dish says this should be done within about five minutes.
4. If the Joeys still aren't working, restart each Joey the same way after the Hopper is back.

TIP

Restart the main box first

For trouble on a second TV, always restart the main box (Genie or Hopper) first, then the small box. The small one can't work until the big one is up.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Two minutes and a power cord fix most problems without a phone call, a wait on hold, or a technician visit.

CHAPTER 8

The DirecTV Remote: Pairing & Programming to Your TV

A DirecTV remote does two jobs: it talks to the receiver, and once it's set up, it can turn the TV on and off and change the volume. Most current DirecTV remotes, such as the RC73 Genie remote, can be set up from the on-screen menu.

Teach the remote to control your TV

1. Turn on the TV and the receiver, and point the remote at the receiver.
2. Press **Menu**, then choose **Settings**.
3. Choose **Remote Control**, then **Pair/Program Remote**.
4. Choose **Program TV** (on some screens it's under your remote's name).
5. Pick your TV brand from the list and follow the on-screen tests. When the TV turns off or the volume changes, confirm it worked.
6. If the screen says the code transmission failed, choose **Try Again**.

> TIP
>
> **TV first, soundbar second**
>
> If you also use a soundbar, program the TV first and the soundbar after. DirecTV community members report that re-running the TV setup can erase the soundbar setup.

When the remote seems confused

Many DirecTV remotes can be reset to their factory settings, which clears any half-finished programming. On the RC7x remotes, the reset widely used in DirecTV's community is:

1. Press and hold **Mute** and **Select** together until the light at the top blinks.
2. Let go, then press **9**, **8**, **1**.
3. The light blinks to confirm. Now pair and program it again, using the steps above.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some TV brands just won't cooperate

Some lesser-known TV brands aren't in the remote's list. If your TV won't respond after several tries, a simple universal remote, or using the TV's own remote for power and volume, is a perfectly good answer.

Change the batteries first

Weak batteries cause more remote trouble than anything else. If buttons work only sometimes, or only up close, put in two fresh batteries of the same type before anything else.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One remote for the TV and the satellite box means no more juggling, and no more TV that turns on but won't change the volume.

CHAPTER 9

The Dish Remote: Pairing, Programming & Finding It

Dish's remotes, including the voice remotes that come with the Hopper 3, talk to the receiver by radio so they work through cabinet doors. That means each remote has to be **paired** with its box.

Pair a remote with the Hopper or Joey

1. Find the **System Info** button on the front panel of the Hopper or Joey you want this remote to control (sometimes it's a small button labeled SYS INFO).
2. Press System Info on the box. A system information screen appears on the TV.
3. Press the **SAT** button on the remote. Depending on the model, it's on the front or the side.
4. The remote beeps three times when it has paired.
5. Press **Back** or **Cancel** to close the information screen.

Teach the remote to control your TV

1. Press the **Home** button twice (on some remotes, **Menu**) to open the main menu.
2. Choose **Settings**, then **Remote Control**.
3. Pick the device to set up, usually **TV**, and follow the on-screen pairing wizard.
4. Test power and volume, and confirm when they work.

> TIP
>
> **One remote per box**
>
> Each remote is paired with one receiver. If you move a remote from the bedroom Joey to the living room, pair it again at the new box.

Find a lost Dish remote

Many Dish receivers have a **Locate Remote** button on the front panel. Press it and the paired remote beeps so you can follow the sound. The Ways Your DirecTV or Dish Can Make Life Easier topic has the details.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A paired remote works from across the room and through a cabinet door, and the locator button ends the nightly hunt between the couch cushions.

CHAPTER 10

The Guide, Channels & Local Channels

The **guide** is the on-screen grid of channels and times. Both companies' guides work about the same way, even though the colors and button names differ.

Using the guide

1. Press **Guide** on the remote.
2. Use the arrow buttons to move up and down through channels and left and right through times.
3. Press **Select** or **OK** on a show to watch it, or for more information.
4. Type a channel number with the number buttons to jump straight there.
5. Press **Exit** or **Back** to close the guide.

Local channels: where they come from

Local channels are the Cleveland-Akron stations that carry local news, weather and network shows: WKYC 3 (NBC), WEWS 5 (ABC), WJW 8 (FOX) and WOIO 19 (CBS), among others. Satellite companies pay these stations to carry them, and that cost shows up on your bill.

- **Dish:** as of October 2026, Dish moved local ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC on most packages into a separate **Locals Pack**, reported at about $17 a month.
- **DirecTV:** locals are usually included in packages, with a broadcast-related fee on the bill. Chapter 17 explains the fees.
- **Free option:** the same local stations come in free with a TV antenna in much of Portage County. Chapter 22 explains.

GOOD TO KNOW

When a local channel goes dark

Sometimes a station and a TV company can't agree on a price and the channel disappears for days or weeks. It isn't your equipment. An antenna keeps that station on your TV in the meantime.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing where local channels come from lets you decide whether a $17-a-month locals charge is worth it, or whether a one-time antenna does the job.

PART 3

Signal, Weather & the Dish

Why the picture drops in a storm, what the common signal messages mean, and how to stay safely on the ground while the dish gets looked after.

CHAPTER 11

Rain Fade, Snow & Storms

If you have satellite TV, you've probably seen the picture break into blocks or freeze during a heavy downpour. That's called **rain fade**, and it's normal. It isn't your receiver failing.

Why weather gets in the way

The signal travels a very long way from a satellite above the equator down to the small dish at your house. Very heavy rain, thick wet snow, or a dense storm cell between the dish and the southern sky can soak up enough of that signal that the receiver can't read it. When the worst of the storm passes, the picture comes back by itself, usually within minutes.

What you see	What it usually means	What to do
Blocky or frozen picture in a downpour	Rain fade	Wait. It clears when the heavy rain passes.
Picture gone after wet snow	Snow or ice on the dish face	Wait for it to melt, or have it cleared from the ground (below).
Gone after a windstorm, sky now clear	Dish may have been knocked out of aim	Restart once, then call the company.
Gone on one TV only, weather fine	That box or its cable	Restart that box and the main box (Chapter 7).

Snow on the dish

Northeast Ohio winters can pack snow into the dish. If the dish is on a pole or a low wall you can reach **from the ground**, you can gently brush loose snow off the front with a soft broom. Never chip at ice, never pour hot water on it, and never push on the dish arm, which can knock it out of aim.

STAY SAFE

Stay off the roof

If the dish is on the roof, leave it alone and wait for the thaw. A snowy or icy roof is no place for anyone, and no TV show is worth a fall. Chapter 13 says more.

When it isn't the weather

If the sky is clear and the picture is still gone on every TV, the dish may have been bumped, a tree branch may have grown into the way, or water may have gotten into an outdoor cable connection. Those are jobs for the company's technician. Chapter 12 explains the messages you'll see.

TIP

Trees grow

A dish that worked fine when it was installed can lose signal years later as trees leaf out. If your trouble starts every spring and goes away every fall, a growing branch is a likely suspect.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing what rain fade looks like saves a pointless service call and a long wait on hold during a storm. Put on the radio for the weather and give it a few minutes.

CHAPTER 12

Signal Messages & Error Codes

Both companies show short codes when something is wrong. You don't have to memorize them. It's enough to know the few that come up most, and what to try before you call.

DirecTV: 771 and "searching for satellite signal"

DirecTV says error **771** means your dish isn't communicating with the satellite. In other words, the box is fine but the signal isn't arriving. Severe weather is the most common cause. Others include a dish knocked out of aim, something blocking the view of the sky, or a damaged outdoor cable.

1. Look outside. If it's storming, wait until it passes.
2. If the weather is fine, restart the receiver (Chapter 7) and give it a few minutes.
3. If only some channels show 771, note which ones. That helps the technician.
4. To see the signal readings, press **Menu**, then go to **Settings** > **Satellite** > **View Signal Strength** and let the numbers fill in. Many zeros on a clear day point to the dish.
5. If it doesn't clear, call DirecTV at the number on your bill and say "771 on a clear day."

Dish: 015 and "looking for Hopper"

Message	What it means and what to try
015 (Complete Signal Loss)	The receiver has lost the satellite signal, or was just plugged in and is still searching. Check the weather, check that cables are snug, and restart the Hopper.
1303 "Looking for Hopper"	A Joey can't talk to the main Hopper. Make sure the Hopper is on and plugged in, restart it, then restart the Joey.

HEADS UP

Don't start the dish check on your own

Dish receivers have a setup screen that re-tests the dish connection, often called a **check switch**. Experienced Dish users warn against running it while a Hopper is stuck on a signal-loss message. Let the support agent tell you if it's needed.

Write the code down

Whatever the message, write down the code, the time, the weather and which TVs are affected. That short note gets you through a support call much faster.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A code you understand turns "the TV is broken" into "it's the weather" or "it's the dish," and you'll know which one needs a phone call.

CHAPTER 13

The Dish, the Roof & Your Safety

This is the one chapter where I'll be firm. The dish outside looks simple, but it's aimed very precisely, and it's often somewhere you shouldn't be climbing.

Leave the dish to the technicians

- **Don't climb onto the roof** to look at, clean or adjust the dish. Falls from ladders and roofs are a serious danger, especially for older adults.
- **Don't re-aim the dish.** Moving it even slightly can lose the signal entirely. The company has tools and the exact angles for your address.
- **Don't unscrew outdoor cable connectors** in wet weather. Water inside a connector causes long-lasting signal trouble.
- **Do** look from the ground with binoculars. You can often see a bent arm, a hanging cable or a branch in the way, and that's useful to tell the technician.

STAY SAFE

If you must use a ladder

Only for a pole-mounted dish at a safe height, on dry level ground, with someone holding the ladder. If it means going higher than a step stool, please call the company or a trusted helper instead.

When a technician comes

1. Clear a path to the TVs and the main box, and put pets in another room.
2. Tell the technician what you saw: the code, the weather, and when it started.
3. Ask whether there's a charge for the visit before work starts. Some plans include repairs, others don't.
4. Ask them to show you where the cables come into the house, so you know for next time.

Storm damage and insurance

If a storm bends or tears off a dish, call the TV company first; the dish is usually their equipment. If the roof itself was damaged where the dish was mounted, take photos before anything is moved, and mention it to your homeowner's insurance.

SCAM ALERT

"We were in the neighborhood" dish repairs

Be wary of a stranger who knocks after a storm offering to fix or "upgrade" your dish for cash. Repairs are arranged by calling DirecTV or Dish yourself, on the number printed on your bill.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You keep your feet on the ground, and the person who climbs is trained, insured and has the right tools. That's the right trade every time.

PART 4

Recording & Apps

Recording shows on the Genie and the Hopper, finding them again, and watching on a phone, tablet or streaming stick.

CHAPTER 14

Recording Shows on DirecTV

A **DVR** (digital video recorder) is the box that records TV for you to watch later, with no tapes. On DirecTV satellite that's the Genie or the Gemini. The buttons below are the same idea on both, even if the screens look a little different.

Record one show

1. Press **Guide** and move to the show you want, now or later in the week.
2. Press the **Record** button (it often has a red dot) once.
3. A small red mark appears next to the show in the guide. That means it's set.

Record every episode

1. Highlight the show in the guide and press **Select** or **OK** to open its information.
2. Choose the option to record the series (on many DirecTV screens, pressing Record twice does the same thing).
3. Choose whether you want new episodes only. That keeps the DVR from filling with reruns.

Find and watch your recordings

1. Press **List** on the remote (or open the menu and choose **Recordings** or **My Playlist**).
2. Pick the show and press **Select**, then **Play**.
3. Use the fast-forward and rewind buttons to skip around, and **Stop** when you're done.

TIP

Delete what you've watched

A DVR that's nearly full can't record new shows. Every few weeks, delete the ones you've seen. Your series recordings will keep coming.

GOOD TO KNOW

Recordings live in the main box

Your shows are stored on the main Genie. A Genie Mini in the bedroom plays them from there, which is why the main box needs to stay on (Chapter 6).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No more planning your evening around the TV schedule. The news, the game or a favorite program waits for you.

CHAPTER 15

Recording on the Dish Hopper

Dish's Hopper is a DVR with several tuners, so it can record more than one show at a time while you watch something else. The Joeys on other TVs play the same recordings.

Record a show or a series

1. Press **Guide** and move to the show.
2. Press the **Record** button on the remote.
3. A small window offers choices such as this episode only, or all episodes. Pick one and press **Select**.
4. A red record mark appears in the guide next to the show.

Watch your recordings

1. Press the **DVR** button on the remote.
2. Pick a show and press **Select**, then choose **Play** or **Resume**.
3. Press **Back** or **Exit** to return to live TV.

Prime-time recordings

The Hopper has a feature, often called **PrimeTime Anytime**, that can record the evening shows on the big broadcast networks all at once. It depends on your local channels being on your account. If you've dropped the Locals Pack (Chapter 10), it may not have anything to record.

HEADS UP

Recordings stay with the Hopper

If the Hopper is swapped for a new one or returned, the recordings on it are usually lost. Watch the ones you care about before any equipment swap.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With several tuners, two people can watch and record different programs without arguing over the remote.

CHAPTER 16

Watching on a Phone, Tablet or Streaming Stick

Both companies have free apps for their customers. They're handy for watching in another room, setting a recording while you're out, or keeping up with a show at a grandchild's house.

The DirecTV app

- Free for DirecTV customers on iPhone, iPad, Android and many streaming devices. Sign in with your DirecTV account.
- Satellite customers can **schedule recordings** on the Genie from the app, even when they're away from home.
- DirecTV says you can watch your Genie DVR recordings in the app when you're not home. Some recordings may be marked as viewable on the receiver only.
- At home, keep the phone or tablet on the same Wi-Fi as the receiver so it can find the box.

The DISH Anywhere app

- Free for Dish customers with a MyDISH account.
- To watch live TV and your recordings in the app, you need a **Hopper 3** or a **Hopper with Sling**. Other receivers can still use the app's On Demand shows.
- You can **schedule DVR recordings** from anywhere with the app.

Getting started with either app

1. On your phone or tablet, open the **App Store** (iPhone or iPad) or **Google Play** (Android).
2. Search for **DIRECTV** or **DISH Anywhere**. Choose the one made by the company itself.
3. Install it, open it, and sign in with the same email and password you use to pay your bill online.
4. Allow it to find devices on your network if it asks. That's how it locates your receiver.

SCAM ALERT

Only from the official app store

Don't install a TV app from a link in a text message or a pop-up. The real apps are free in the App Store and Google Play, and they never ask for a gift card or a payment to "activate."

TIP

Write the sign-in down

Put the account email on the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 26 and keep the password somewhere safe. It's the same sign-in you'll need for the bill and the apps.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Forgot to record the game before you left? Set it from your phone in a minute, and it's waiting when you get home.

PART 5

The Bill, Prices & Contracts

Reading the bill line by line, what the packages cost now, handling the yearly increase, and the rules for contracts, canceling and sending equipment back.

CHAPTER 17

Reading Your Bill & the Extra Fees

The package price in the ad is rarely what you pay. Satellite bills add several fees on top. None of them are a trick on their own, but together they can add a good deal each month.

DirecTV fees you may see

On the bill	What it is
Regional Sports Fee	Charged on the Choice package and higher in many areas, to pay for regional sports channels. The amount depends on where you live and rose in 2026; recent reports put the top of the range in the low $20s a month.
Advanced Receiver Service	A monthly charge for having a DVR (Genie) on the account. DirecTV says it may be included in the package price depending on your package and when you signed up.
Receiver or TV access fees	A charge for each extra box beyond the first.
Vacation hold charge	A lower monthly charge if you pause service for a few months (see the Ways Your DirecTV or Dish Can Make Life Easier topic).

Dish fees you may see

On the bill	What it is
Locals Pack	Since October 2026, local ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC on most packages, reported at $17 a month (Chapter 10).
Receiver fees	A monthly charge for the Hopper and for each Joey.
Regional sports charge	On some packages, in areas with a regional sports channel.

Read a bill in five minutes

1. Find the **package name** and its monthly price.
2. Look for the line that says when a **promotion or price lock ends**. That's when the price jumps.
3. Count the **receiver lines**. Is there a box listed that you no longer use? Ask to remove it and return it.
4. Look at **add-ons** such as premium movie channels or sports packs. Do you still watch them?
5. Compare the total with last month. If it changed, the bill should say why.

TIP

Paper bills can cost extra

Some companies charge a small fee for a mailed paper bill or for paying by phone with an agent. Ask whether your company does, and whether autopay or an online bill would save that fee.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing each line lets you drop a box you don't use or an add-on you forgot, and that saving comes back every single month.

CHAPTER 18

What It Costs Now (November 2026)

These are the prices reported as of November 2026, before taxes, fees and equipment. Prices change often and vary by address, so treat this as a starting point and check your own account.

Dish satellite

Package	As of November 2026
America's Top 120	About $104.99 a month at the everyday rate after the October 2026 increase, or about $121.99 with the $17 Locals Pack.
New-customer offers	Dish advertises two-year price guarantees for new customers that include locals and a Hopper 3. Read the price that applies after the two years.

DirecTV

DirecTV raised prices on many plans starting June 25, 2026, with amounts that vary by package; one customer notice showed the Premier package going up $14 a month. DirecTV doesn't publish one simple price list for every address, so the most reliable figure is the one on your own bill or on directv.com for your ZIP code. Its free tier, **MyFree DirecTV**, costs nothing but carries far fewer channels.

Sling TV (internet only)

Plan	Price a month	Notes
Sling Essentials	$19.99	Small plan built around ESPN and ESPN2
Sling Select	$19.99	Small entertainment plan
Sling Orange	$45.99	Includes ESPN; one screen at a time
Sling Blue	$45.99	More news and entertainment; several screens; can cost more where Sling carries locals
Orange & Blue	$60.99	Both together

HEADS UP

The first-year price isn't the price

Most satellite offers are a lower price for the first year or two. Write down the date the promotion ends on the Cheat-Sheet (Chapter 26), so the jump doesn't catch you by surprise.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Real numbers make it easier to compare your bill honestly with an antenna, Sling or a streaming service, which Chapter 22 does.

CHAPTER 19

Price Increases & the Retention Call

Both companies have raised prices almost every year. You don't have to just accept it. A short, polite phone call often brings a credit or a lower rate. Here's how to make it.

Before you call

1. Have your latest bill in front of you, with the account number.
2. Write down the total you pay now and the total you'd be happy with.
3. Know your alternatives (Chapter 22): an antenna for locals, Sling, or a streaming service. You don't have to switch; you just need to be able to say you've looked.
4. Check whether you're under a contract (Chapter 20). It changes what they can offer.

Making the call

1. Call the number printed on your bill. When the automated system asks why you're calling, say "cancel service." That usually reaches the team that can offer discounts, often called the **retention** or loyalty department.
2. Be friendly and plain: "My bill went up again. I've been a customer a long time, and I'm looking at other options. What can you do to bring it down?"
3. Listen to the offer. Ask how long it lasts, and whether it starts a new contract.
4. If it's not enough, it's fine to say "Let me think about it" and call back another day.
5. Before you hang up, ask for the new monthly total and write down the agent's name and the date.

HEADS UP

Read the strings attached

A discount that comes with a new two-year agreement can trap you if you were planning to switch. Ask plainly: "Does this start a new contract?"

TIP

Removing things saves too

Dropping a premium channel you don't watch, or a box from a spare bedroom, is a guaranteed saving, with or without a retention offer.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Fifteen minutes on the phone once a year can keep your bill from creeping, and you stay in control of the decision.

CHAPTER 20

Contracts & Early Cancellation Fees

Satellite service often comes with a **24-month agreement**. If you cancel before it ends, there's an **early cancellation fee**, also called an ETF (early termination fee).

How the fee works

- **DirecTV satellite:** typically $20 for each month left on a 24-month agreement, so up to $480 near the start.
- **Dish satellite:** reported the same way, $20 for each month left on the commitment.
- **Internet versions:** Sling is month to month. DirecTV through the internet is usually month to month too, but check your own agreement.

Find your end date

1. Sign in to your account online, or look at the first bill or the welcome letter.
2. Look for the agreement end date or the number of months remaining.
3. Or call and ask, "When does my agreement end, and what would the fee be today?"
4. Write the date on the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 26.

TIP

Moving or a death in the family

If you're moving where the service can't go, or closing a loved one's account, tell the company the reason. Ask whether the fee can be waived. Policies vary, but it's always worth asking.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the end date means you can plan a switch for the month the fee reaches zero, instead of paying to leave early.

CHAPTER 21

Canceling, Moving & Returning Equipment

The receivers and remotes are usually **leased**, which means they belong to the company. When you cancel, they want them back, and they charge if they don't arrive.

Canceling, step by step

1. Call the number on your bill and say you'd like to cancel. Ask for the final date, any fees, and a **confirmation number**.
2. Ask how to return the equipment and by when. Write the deadline down. Your confirmation email or letter should say it too.
3. Wait for the return kit or box, or ask about a drop-off location.
4. Pack every receiver, Joey or Mini, and the access cards and remotes if they ask for them. You don't send back the dish on the roof unless told to.
5. Get a **tracking receipt** when you send it, and keep it until your final bill shows zero.

HEADS UP

Unreturned-box charges are steep

Reported charges for an unreturned box run from about $25 for a small Joey to several hundred dollars for a Hopper 3 or a Genie. A tracking receipt is your proof.

Moving to a new home

Both companies can usually move your service to a new address, and the new house may need its own dish installed. Call a few weeks ahead. If the new home can't get a clear view of the southern sky, or you're moving into a building that doesn't allow dishes, ask about the internet version.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A confirmation number and a tracking receipt protect you from a surprise charge months after you've moved on.

PART 6

Alternatives & Staying Safe

An honest look at other ways to watch, fixing the internet version when it stutters, and the scams aimed at satellite customers.

CHAPTER 22

Honest Alternatives to Satellite

Satellite is still a good answer for many rural homes, especially without strong internet. But it's worth knowing the other options, because some households can save a lot. Here they are, plainly.

Option	What it gives you	Needs	Good fit if…
TV antenna	Free local channels: news, weather, network shows, many games	A one-time antenna; a decent view toward the Cleveland or Akron towers	You mostly watch local channels
Sling TV	Cable-style channels over the internet, no contract	Steady home internet	You want ESPN or cable news for less
Live TV streaming (YouTube TV and others)	Most cable channels, locals and a cloud DVR	Strong home internet	You want a full lineup without a dish or contract
DirecTV through the internet	DirecTV channels with no dish	Strong home internet	You like DirecTV but want to lose the dish
Stay on satellite	Reliable TV without depending on internet	A clear view of the southern sky	Your internet is slow or capped

Local channels for free

The same Cleveland-Akron stations that Dish now charges $17 a month for (Chapter 10) come in free over the air with an antenna in much of Portage County. Distance and hills matter, so results vary by address. Bill's guide **TV Antennas & Free Local Channels** walks through choosing and aiming one.

The internet question

Streaming services need steady internet. Out in the country, that may mean Starlink or another rural provider. Before you cancel satellite, try streaming for a week on your home internet during your usual viewing hours. If the picture keeps pausing, satellite may still be your best friend.

TIP

Sports fans: check before switching

Sports are the hardest thing to replace. Bill's guide **Watching Sports Without Cable** covers where the Browns, Guardians, Cavs and Buckeyes are shown. Make sure your teams come along before you cancel.

HEADS UP

Don't forget the contract

If you're under agreement, compare the early cancellation fee (Chapter 20) with what you'd save. Sometimes waiting a few months is the better deal.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can choose with clear eyes: keep the dish, trim the package and add an antenna, or move to streaming, based on what you actually watch and the internet you actually have.

CHAPTER 23

When the Internet Version Acts Up

If you watch DirecTV through the internet, on a Gemini Air or an app, or you use Sling, the troubles look different from satellite. Weather rarely matters. Your internet does.

Picture keeps pausing or getting blurry

1. Pause the show and check other devices. If the internet is slow everywhere, it's the internet.
2. Restart the streaming device: unplug it for about 15 seconds, then plug it back in.
3. Restart your internet modem and router the same way, and give them a few minutes.
4. If you can, move the router closer to the TV, or connect the device with a network cable.
5. Turn off other heavy uses during the game, such as big downloads or several people streaming at once.

The app won't open or won't sign in

1. Close the app completely and open it again.
2. Check for an update in the device's app store.
3. Sign out and back in with the email and password you use for the bill.
4. Still stuck? Restart the device, then try once more.

GOOD TO KNOW

One screen at a time

Some plans limit how many TVs can watch at once. Sling Orange, for example, allows one screen at a time. A "too many devices" message usually means someone else in the family is watching.

TIP

Forgot the password?

Use the **Forgot password** link on the sign-in screen. The reset email goes to the address on the account, so check the spam folder if it doesn't arrive.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most streaming hiccups are fixed by restarting two boxes in the right order. You can be back to the game in five minutes.

CHAPTER 24

Scams Aimed at Satellite Customers

TV customers are a common target, because almost everyone has a bill and most people would like it lower. Here are the scams worth knowing about, and the one rule that beats them all.

The common ones

- **The "big discount" call:** a caller says they're from DirecTV or Dish and can cut your bill in half if you prepay, often with gift cards. Real companies don't take gift cards.
- **The "merger" or "new equipment" call:** a caller says that because of a company change you must pay now for a new box or lose your channels (Chapter 5).
- **Fake support numbers:** a search ad or website lists a phone number that isn't the company's. The person who answers asks for remote access to your computer or payment.
- **Text and email links:** a message says your payment failed or your account will be shut off, with a link to "update" your card.
- **The door knock:** someone offers to fix or upgrade the dish for cash after a storm (Chapter 13).

SCAM ALERT

Gift cards mean scam

No real TV company asks you to pay with gift cards, cryptocurrency or a money transfer app. If anyone does, hang up. That's a scam every time.

The one rule

Hang up, and call the number printed on your own bill. If there's really a problem, the company will tell you. That one habit stops almost every TV scam.

If you already paid or gave information

1. Call your bank or card company right away, using the number on the back of the card. Ask them to stop or dispute the charge.
2. If you bought gift cards, call the number on the back of the card quickly and report the fraud.

3. If you let someone onto your computer, turn it off and have it checked before you bank online again.
4. Call the real TV company to make sure your account is fine.
5. Report it to the FTC at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

SCAM ALERT

Fake bill-payment pages

Pay your bill only by typing the company's address yourself (directv.com or dish.com), through the official app, or by calling the number on your bill. Don't use a link from a text.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With one simple rule, you can take any phone call calmly. You never have to decide on the spot, because you'll always call back on a number you trust.

PART 7

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep by the TV.

CHAPTER 25

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Remotes that won't cooperate**: pairing them, teaching them to run the TV and soundbar, or setting up a simpler remote for someone who finds the big one confusing.
- **Sorting out the bill**: going through it line by line with you, finding boxes and add-ons you don't need, and getting ready for the retention call.
- **Weighing the alternatives**: testing whether your internet can handle streaming, and setting up an antenna, Sling or a streaming service if you decide to switch.
- **Setting up the apps** on a phone or tablet so you can record from anywhere.
- **A call or message you're not sure about**: a "discount" offer, a payment-failed text or a support number you found online.
- **Helping a parent**: making the TV simple, writing out easy instructions, and filling in the Cheat-Sheet together.

What I don't do

I don't climb onto roofs or re-aim satellite dishes. That's work for the TV company's own technicians, who have the tools and the exact settings. I'm happy to help you figure out what to tell them, and to sit with you on the support call.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, explain what I'm doing in plain words, and never talk down to anyone. I'll tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money. I've been doing this kind of work for more than 30 years, and I serve Portage County, Ohio, in person, and folks farther away by remote help.

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 for free; if you'd like a hand, I'm only a phone call away.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might be greeted by **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. A real person, me, does the actual help.

Thank you for taking the time to learn your TV setup. Keep the Cheat-Sheet handy, wait out the storms, and enjoy the show.

— Bill

CHAPTER 26

Your DirecTV & Dish Cheat-Sheet

Keep just this page near the TV. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
First fix for almost anything	Restart the main box (Genie or Hopper), then the small box.
DirecTV restart	Red reset button, or unplug for 15 seconds.
Dish restart	Unplug the Hopper for 10 seconds; allow about 5 minutes.
Picture breaks up in a storm	Rain fade. Wait it out.
DirecTV 771	Dish isn't getting the satellite. Weather? Wait. Clear sky? Restart, then call.
Dish 015	Signal lost. Check weather and cables, restart the Hopper.
Dish 1303 "Looking for Hopper"	Restart the Hopper, then the Joey.
Snow on a roof dish	Wait for the thaw. Stay off the roof.
Bill went up	Call, say "cancel service," ask what they can do. Ask if it starts a new contract.
Early cancellation fee	Typically $20 for each month left.
Canceling	Get a confirmation number. Return boxes with a tracking receipt.
Free local channels	A TV antenna.
Unexpected call or text	Hang up. Call the number on your bill.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Company & satellite or internet	_____
Account number	_____
Support number (from my bill)	_____
Account email for the app	_____
Main box model & location	_____
Other boxes & locations	_____
Package name & monthly total	_____
Promotion ends (date)	_____
Agreement ends (date)	_____
Last retention call (date, agent, offer)	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Look outside. Heavy rain or snow? Give it time.
2. Check that the TV is on the right input and the remote has fresh batteries.
3. Restart the main box, then any small boxes. Wait a few minutes.
4. Write down any code on the screen, and which TVs are affected.
5. Internet version? Restart the modem and router, then the streaming device.
6. Call the number on your bill.
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.