BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

ESPN

The ESPN app, ESPN Unlimited and ESPN Select, TV-provider sign-in and finding the game — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for sports fans and their families

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For the ESPN app, ESPN Unlimited & ESPN Select · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your ESPN manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test. Whether you want to watch your team on a Saturday afternoon, figure out whether you already pay for ESPN through your cable bill, or help a parent find the game on a new TV, every chapter explains what a feature does *for you* and walks you through it slowly. Prices and plans are as of November 2026. ESPN changes its app and its prices from time to time, so if a screen or a number looks a little different, the idea is still the same — and the price on ESPN's own sign-up screen is always the one that counts.

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PART 1

Getting to Know ESPN

What ESPN is today, how to tell whether you already have it, and the handful of words you'll see on the screen. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe you've watched ESPN on cable for years and someone told you it's "moving to streaming." Maybe you just cut the cord and you're wondering how to see your team on Saturday. Or maybe a son or daughter set up an ESPN app on your new TV and you'd like to understand what you're paying for. Whoever you are, this guide is for **you**.

I'm Bill. Helping people feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, here in Portage County. I've written this guide the way I'd explain it sitting beside you on the couch before kickoff: plainly, patiently, and without the sports-network jargon. When a word like "authenticate" or "blackout" comes up, I'll stop and tell you what it means.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

ESPN has more ways to pay for it than ever: through your cable or satellite bill, through a live TV streaming service, as a stand-alone app plan, or inside a bundle. Many people end up paying twice for the same games without realizing it. This guide helps you work out what you already have, pay only for what you'll actually watch, and find the game quickly when it's on.

You can't break it by exploring

Tapping around the ESPN app won't hurt anything. You can open menus, look at scores and back out again as often as you like. The only things that cost money are signing up for a plan or a bundle, and those always show you a price and ask you to confirm first. If you ever feel lost, press the **Back** button on your remote (or the back arrow on your phone) until you're on the home screen again.

What's in this guide

- **Getting to know ESPN**: what it is now and whether you already have it (Part 1).
- **Plans and prices**: ESPN Unlimited, ESPN Select and the bundles, in plain dollars (Part 2).
- **Signing in with your TV provider** so you don't pay twice (Part 3).
- **Finding the game**: which channel, ESPN on ABC, blackouts and football (Part 4).
- **Making it yours**: favorite teams, alerts, the big TV, your phone and captions (Part 5).

- **Your account and your money**: security, canceling and trimming the bill (Part 6).
- **Staying safe**: illegal stream sites, fake "activate" pages and betting ads (Part 7).
- **When things go wrong**: quick fixes, when to call me, and a one-page cheat-sheet (Part 8).

And I'm only a phone call away

If you get stuck, you're never stuck alone. Call me at **(330) 200-8042**. No question is too small and nobody will make you feel silly for asking. Now let's find you the game.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What ESPN Is Today

For most of its life, **ESPN** was simply a cable channel: you turned to it, and the game was on. Today ESPN is a family of TV channels *and* an app you can use on a smart TV, a streaming stick, a phone, a tablet or a computer. The games are the same; what has changed is the number of ways to reach them.

The ESPN family of channels

When people say "ESPN" they often mean a whole group of channels. You'll see these names in TV listings and in the app:

Channel	What's on it
ESPN	The main channel: big games, highlights and the familiar shows.
ESPN2	The second channel, with more live games and studio shows.
ESPNU	Mostly college sports.
ESPNews	Sports news and highlights.
SEC Network and ACC Network	College sports from those two conferences.
ESPN Deportes	Sports in Spanish.
ABC	Your free local broadcast channel. ESPN produces many of the games you see on ABC (Chapter 14).

The ESPN app

The **ESPN app** is free to download. Without signing in, it shows scores, news and some highlights. To watch the live channels, you either sign in with the company that sends you TV (your "TV provider") or you buy an ESPN plan directly. Part 2 explains the plans; Part 3 explains signing in with a provider.

What happened to ESPN+?

If you used to pay for **ESPN+**, that plan is now called **ESPN Select**. ESPN introduced two plans in August 2025: **ESPN Unlimited**, which includes the ESPN channels themselves, and ESPN Select, the renamed ESPN+. Chapter 5 compares them side by side.

GOOD TO KNOW

One app, many doors

Whichever way you pay — cable, a live TV streaming service, or an ESPN plan — you'll usually end up watching in the same ESPN app. That's good news: once you learn the app, it works the same no matter how you got in.

CHAPTER 3

Do You Already Have ESPN?

Before you pay for anything, check whether you already have ESPN. This is the single most useful money-saving step in this guide. If ESPN is part of a TV package you already pay for, you can usually watch it in the ESPN app at no extra cost by signing in with that account (Chapter 9).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Paying for an ESPN plan on top of a cable package that already includes ESPN means paying twice for the same games. Five minutes with your TV bill can save you hundreds of dollars a year.

How to check, step by step

1. Find your most recent TV bill: cable, satellite, or a live TV streaming service such as YouTube TV or Hulu + Live TV.
2. Look at the name of your TV package. Then look up that package's channel list on the provider's website or ask them on the phone: "Is ESPN in my package?"
3. On your TV, turn to ESPN using your provider's guide. If the game plays, you have it.
4. Write down the company name and the username and password you use on its website. You'll need them to sign in to the ESPN app.

The usual answers

How you get TV	Do you likely have ESPN?	What to do
Cable or satellite with a standard package	Usually yes	Sign in to the ESPN app with that account (Chapter 9).
A live TV streaming service (for example YouTube TV or Hulu + Live TV)	Usually yes in the main package	Check the channel list, then sign in with that service.
An antenna only	No ESPN channels, but ABC is free	See Chapter 14 for games on ABC, then decide on a plan (Chapter 7).
Netflix, Prime Video and the like only	No	Consider an ESPN plan or bundle (Part 2).

HEADS UP

Channels can come and go

TV companies and channel owners renegotiate their deals from time to time, and once in a while a channel disappears from a lineup for a few days or weeks while they argue. If ESPN suddenly vanishes from your cable or streaming service, check the provider's website or news before you buy a separate plan in a hurry.

TIP

Ask the family

If an adult child pays for a cable or live TV account at their house, they may be allowed to share the sign-in with you. Every provider has its own rules about this, so ask them to check their provider's terms first.

CHAPTER 4

Words You'll See on ESPN

Sports streaming comes with its own vocabulary. Here are the words you'll meet most often, in plain English. You don't need to memorize them; come back here whenever one puzzles you.

Word	What it means
Streaming	Watching over the internet instead of through a cable box or antenna.
TV provider	The company that sends you TV channels: cable, satellite, or a live TV streaming service. Also called a "pay-TV provider."
Sign in with your TV provider	Proving to the ESPN app that you already pay for ESPN through your TV company. You may also see it called "authenticate" or "link your provider."
ESPN Unlimited	ESPN's top stand-alone plan, with the ESPN channels and more (Chapter 5).
ESPN Select	ESPN's smaller plan. It used to be called ESPN+ (Chapter 5).
Bundle	Two or more services sold together for one lower monthly price (Chapter 6).
Live	Happening right now. A red "LIVE" label usually marks it.
Replay or on demand	A game or show you can start whenever you like, after it has aired.
Blackout	When a game isn't available in your area on a particular channel or app, usually because a local channel has the rights to show it (Chapter 15).
Activation code	A short code the TV shows you, which you type on a phone or computer to connect the TV to your account (Chapter 10).
Annual plan	Paying for a full year at once, usually for less than twelve monthly payments.

TIP

Write it down

Keep a short note of which way *you* watch ESPN — "through Spectrum" or "ESPN Unlimited, paid on my Visa" — on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 29. It saves a lot of guessing later.

A word about "free"

The ESPN app is free to download, and scores and news are free to read. Live ESPN channels are not free: someone is paying, whether it's you through a TV bill, you through an ESPN plan, or a family member whose account you use. Games on **ABC** are the exception — with an antenna, they cost nothing (Chapter 14). Any website promising every ESPN game free is not legitimate (Chapter 24).

PART 2

Plans, Prices & Bundles

ESPN Unlimited, ESPN Select and the bundles, in plain dollars — and a simple way to decide which, if any, you need.

CHAPTER 5

ESPN Unlimited and ESPN Select, Side by Side

If you don't get ESPN through a TV provider, you can buy it straight from ESPN. There are two plans. Think of **ESPN Unlimited** as "the ESPN channels you used to get on cable, plus everything else," and **ESPN Select** as "the extras, but not the main channels."

What each plan costs (as of November 2026)

Plan	Monthly	Yearly (paid at once)	In plain words
ESPN Unlimited	$31.99 a month	$319.99 a year	The live ESPN channels in the app, plus everything in Select.
ESPN Select (formerly ESPN+)	$13.99 a month	$139.99 a year	ESPN's streaming-only games and shows. Not the main ESPN TV channels.

These prices took effect on **September 17, 2026**. Before that, Unlimited was $29.99 a month ($299.99 a year) and Select was $12.99 a month ($129.99 a year). People who were already subscribed saw the new price on their first bill after September 17.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the two plans apart keeps you from buying the wrong one. Many fans buy Select because it's cheaper and then discover that the Monday night game on the ESPN channel isn't in it.

ESPN Unlimited, in a little more detail

ESPN Unlimited lets you watch the ESPN channel lineup live in the app — no cable box needed — along with ESPN's replays and shows and everything that's in Select. ESPN launched Unlimited on **August 21, 2025** at $29.99 a month. It's the plan to choose if you want "real ESPN" without a cable or live TV package.

ESPN Select, in a little more detail

ESPN Select is the plan many people knew as ESPN+. It carries a large number of games that are streamed only in the app — plenty of college sports and some professional events — plus ESPN's on-demand library. It does *not* give you the regular ESPN and ESPN2 TV channels.

HEADS UP

Check before you pick Select

Before choosing Select to save money, look up two or three games you really care about. If they're shown on ESPN or ESPN2 (the TV channels), Select won't get you those games. The listing in the app usually shows which channel or plan a game is on.

TIP

Monthly or yearly?

Yearly is cheaper overall (about $64.00 less for Unlimited and about $28.00 less for Select compared with twelve monthly payments), but you pay it all up front. If you only care about one season, monthly lets you stop when the season ends.

CHAPTER 6

Bundles: Disney+, Hulu, ESPN & Fox One

A **bundle** is a few services sold together for one price that's lower than buying each one alone. ESPN is part of several. A bundle only saves you money if you'd actually use the other services in it.

Disney+, Hulu and ESPN Unlimited

Disney sells all three together. As of November 2026, Disney's bundle page lists two versions:

Bundle	Price	What's included
Disney+, Hulu, ESPN Unlimited (with ads)	$35.99 a month	Disney+ with ads, Hulu with ads, ESPN Unlimited with ads.
Disney+, Hulu, ESPN Unlimited (Premium)	$44.99 a month	Disney+ and Hulu with no ads, ESPN Unlimited with ads.

Notice that ESPN Unlimited is only $4.00 a month cheaper on its own ($31.99) than this whole three-service bundle with ads. If anyone in the house watches Disney+ or Hulu, the bundle is often the better value. When ESPN raised its stand-alone prices in September 2026, these two bundle prices did not change.

Disney+, Hulu and ESPN Select

There are also lower-priced bundles that include ESPN Select instead of Unlimited. Their prices went up by about two dollars a month in September 2026. Check the exact current price on the Disney+, Hulu or ESPN sign-up page before you choose, and remember the Select caution in Chapter 5.

ESPN and Fox One

Fox One is Fox's streaming service, with Fox Sports and Fox News among its channels. ESPN and Fox sell a bundle of **ESPN Unlimited** and Fox One together. It launched in October 2025 at $39.99 a month, about ten dollars less than buying the two separately at the time. It works only with ESPN Unlimited, not Select. Prices may have changed since launch, so confirm the current figure on ESPN's or Fox One's sign-up page.

HEADS UP

Bundles you already have

Some phone and internet companies include Disney+, Hulu or an ESPN plan as a perk. Look at your phone and internet bills before you buy a bundle — you might already be getting part of it.

GOOD TO KNOW

One login for the whole bundle

When you buy a Disney bundle, you usually sign in to Disney+, Hulu and ESPN with the same email address and password. Use that same email in each app.

CHAPTER 7

Which Choice Is Right for You?

Here's the whole decision on one page. Start at the top and stop at the first line that fits you.

If this is you…	The likely best choice
You have cable, satellite or a live TV service that includes ESPN	Pay nothing extra. Sign in with your TV provider (Chapter 9).
You only watch a few big games a year, and they're on ABC	An antenna and your TV's ABC channel. Free (Chapter 14).
You want the ESPN channels and also watch Disney+ or Hulu	The Disney+, Hulu, ESPN Unlimited bundle (Chapter 6).
You want the ESPN channels and nothing else	ESPN Unlimited, monthly during your season or yearly if you watch all year.
You want ESPN plus Fox's sports	The ESPN and Fox One bundle — check the current price.
You mostly follow college or niche sports streamed only in the app	ESPN Select may be enough — check your games first.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A clear decision keeps you from stacking up subscriptions. One good choice, written down, beats three half-remembered ones on the credit card statement.

Questions to ask yourself

1. Which teams or sports do I really watch, and during which months?
2. Which channel are those games usually on? (Chapter 13 shows how to check.)
3. Does anyone in the house already pay for TV, Disney+ or Hulu?
4. Am I comfortable paying for a whole year up front?
5. Would an antenna cover the games I care most about?

TIP

Try one season first

If you're not sure, start monthly and set a reminder on your calendar for the end of the season. You can always switch to yearly next time once you know you'll use it.

FROM BILL

Want a second opinion?

Choosing how to get your sports is exactly the kind of thing I help with in my TV & Streaming Setup visits. We'll look at your bills together and find the simplest setup. Call (330) 200-8042.

CHAPTER 8

Signing Up Without Surprises

If you decide to buy an ESPN plan directly, signing up takes a few minutes. Go slowly, read each screen, and you'll know exactly what you're paying.

Where to sign up

You can sign up on ESPN's own website, in the ESPN app, or through the app store on your phone or TV (Apple, Google, Roku, Amazon and others). Where you sign up matters later: **you cancel in the same place you signed up** (Chapter 22).

Step by step

1. Type **espn.com** yourself into your web browser, or open the ESPN app you installed from your device's official app store. Don't sign up through a link in an email or a text.
2. Choose the plan or bundle you decided on in Chapter 7.
3. Pick monthly or yearly. Read the price shown on the screen — that's the one that counts.
4. Create your account with an email address you check, and a strong password you don't use anywhere else.
5. Enter your payment details only on that official page.
6. Watch for the confirmation email. Save it in a folder; it's your receipt and tells you when you'll be charged next.

HEADS UP

Automatic renewal

ESPN plans renew automatically every month or every year until you cancel. Put a note on your calendar a few days before the renewal date so the charge never catches you by surprise.

GOOD TO KNOW

Prices change

ESPN raised its prices in September 2026, and streaming prices in general tend to rise once a year or so. Services usually email you before a price change. If an email about a new price arrives, it's a good moment to ask whether you still use the plan.

SCAM ALERT

Only sign up at the real ESPN

Websites selling "ESPN for life" or "ESPN plus 1,000 channels for $15 a year" are not ESPN. They take your card number and either deliver nothing or an illegal stream. Chapter 24 explains how to spot them.

PART 3

Unlocking ESPN with Your TV Provider

If you already pay for ESPN through cable, satellite or a live TV streaming service, this is how you watch it in the ESPN app without paying again.

CHAPTER 9

Signing In with Your TV Provider

If ESPN is part of the TV package you pay for (Chapter 3), the ESPN app will let you watch the same channels — on your phone, your tablet, or a streaming device on another TV — once you prove it. That proof is called **signing in with your TV provider**. You do it once on each device, and it usually stays signed in for a long time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You get to watch ESPN on the kitchen tablet, on the bedroom TV without a cable box, or on your phone at the grandkids' house — all for what you already pay. No new bill.

Before you start

- The name of your TV company exactly as it appears on your bill.
- The **username or email and password for your TV company's website** — not your ESPN password, and not the PIN for your cable box.
- The ESPN app installed from your device's official app store.

Step by step

1. Open the ESPN app.
2. Choose a live ESPN game or channel you'd like to watch, or look for the option to **choose your provider** (sometimes under your account or settings).
3. When the list of TV providers appears, select your company. If you don't see it, use the search box and type its name.
4. Sign in with the username and password for your TV company's website.
5. Once you're signed in, you can watch the channels and programs that are included in your TV subscription.

GOOD TO KNOW

What you'll be able to watch

Signing in unlocks what your TV package includes. If your package has ESPN and ESPN2 but not SEC Network, the app will play the first two and ask you about the third. That's not an error — it's your package.

TIP

Live TV streaming services count too

If you watch through a live TV streaming service such as YouTube TV or Hulu + Live TV, look for that service's name in the provider list and sign in with the same login you use for it.

HEADS UP

Don't buy what you already have

During sign-in, the app may also show buttons to buy ESPN Unlimited or a bundle. If you're signing in with a TV provider, you don't need to buy anything. Look for the option that names your provider.

CHAPTER 10

Activating ESPN on Your TV with a Code

Typing a long password with a TV remote is slow and frustrating. So on smart TVs and streaming devices (Roku, Fire TV, Apple TV, Google TV and so on), the ESPN app often shows a short **activation code** on the screen instead. You type that code on your phone or computer, sign in there, and the TV connects by itself.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You do the typing on your phone, where it's easy, and the TV takes care of itself. It also means your password never has to be typed one letter at a time with arrow buttons.

Step by step

1. On the TV, open the ESPN app and choose to sign in (with ESPN or with your TV provider).
2. The TV shows a web address and a short code. Leave that screen up.
3. On your phone or computer, type the web address **exactly as it appears on your TV** into the browser. Don't search for it and click the first result.
4. Type the code from the TV.
5. Sign in with your ESPN account or your TV provider, as the screen asks.
6. Wait a few seconds. The TV should refresh and say you're signed in.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "activate" websites

Some websites are made to look like ESPN's activation page and show up near the top of search results. They may ask for a fee to "activate" your TV or offer a phone number for "activation support." ESPN doesn't charge to activate a device. Always type the address shown on your TV screen, and never pay anyone to enter a code. Chapter 25 covers this in more detail.

TIP

If the code runs out

Activation codes only work for a short time. If you see an "expired" message, go back on the TV and start again to get a fresh code.

Signing in on a phone or tablet instead

On a phone or tablet, there's usually no code — the ESPN app simply opens a sign-in screen where you type your email or provider login directly. Many phones can fill in a saved password for you.

CHAPTER 11

When the Provider Sign-In Doesn't Work

Most provider sign-ins work the first time. When they don't, the cause is nearly always one of a few simple things. Work down this list in order.

The usual suspects

What you see	What to try
"Incorrect password"	You may be using your ESPN password or cable-box PIN. Use the login for your TV company's *website*. If you've forgotten it, reset it on the TV company's website first.
"Not included in your package"	Your package doesn't carry that channel. Check your channel list or call your provider.
Provider not in the list	Search for it by name. Smaller local companies sometimes sign in under a partner's name; your provider can tell you which to pick.
It worked yesterday, not today	Sign out of the provider in the ESPN app, close the app, open it again and sign back in.
Stuck on a spinning circle	Restart the device (Chapter 27) and try again.

TIP

Need to switch providers?

If you changed TV companies, sign out of the old provider in the ESPN app first, then sign in with the new one. The option to sign out is usually where you signed in, in the app's account or settings area.

Who to call

If your username and password work on your TV company's website but not in the ESPN app, call your TV company — they handle the provider login. If you bought an ESPN plan directly, use the help pages at **support.espn.com**, which ESPN calls Fan Support.

SCAM ALERT

Watch for fake help numbers

If you search the web for "ESPN help phone number," you may find numbers that belong to scammers who ask to take over your computer or want payment in gift cards. Use your TV company's number from your bill, and ESPN's help pages at support.espn.com, which you type in yourself.

FROM BILL

Let me do the sign-ins

Getting the ESPN app signed in on every TV and tablet in the house is a regular part of my TV & Streaming Setup visits. Call (330) 200-8042.

PART 4

Finding the Game

Today's games, which channel they're on, ESPN games on free ABC, blackouts, and football on ESPN.

CHAPTER 12

Finding Today's Games

The ESPN app is crowded: scores, headlines, videos and live games all compete for space. The trick is knowing the two or three places where the games actually live.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Instead of scrolling past highlights and news stories while the clock ticks, you go straight to the game and catch the opening kickoff.

Three ways to find a game

1. **Look for "Live" on the home screen.** Games happening right now usually appear near the top with a red LIVE label. Select one to start watching.
2. **Use the search.** Look for the magnifying-glass icon and type the team's name, such as "Browns," "Guardians," "Cavaliers" or "Ohio State." The team's page shows its next game and where to watch it.
3. **Use the schedule.** The app has a schedule or "upcoming" listing that shows today's and the coming days' games, with the channel for each.

TIP

Live games versus highlights

A short video called a "highlight" or "recap" is not the game. If what you start lasts two or three minutes, go back and look for the item labeled LIVE or the full replay.

Starting from the beginning

If you tune in late, some games offer a choice to watch from the beginning or jump to the live action. Read the buttons on the screen when the game opens. If you start from the beginning, you can catch up later by choosing the live option.

Replays

Missed it? Many games and shows are available afterward as a replay. Search for the team and look for the full game rather than the highlights. What's available, and for how long, depends on the event and on your plan or package.

GOOD TO KNOW

Scores without spoilers

If you plan to watch a replay later, be careful scrolling the app — scores are everywhere on the home screen. Go straight to search and type the team name.

CHAPTER 13

Which Channel Is It On?

"It's on ESPN" might mean ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU, SEC Network, ACC Network, ABC, or a game that's streamed only in the app. Knowing which one tells you whether your plan or package includes it.

How to check

1. In the ESPN app, find the game through search or the schedule (Chapter 12).
2. Look at the small label or logo next to the game. It names the channel — ESPN, ESPN2, ABC — or shows that it's a streaming-only event.
3. If you're using cable or satellite, look up that channel's number in your provider's guide.
4. If you're using ESPN Select, check whether the game is streaming-only. If it's on a TV channel like ESPN or ESPN2, Select may not include it (Chapter 5).

Label you see	How you can watch it
ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU, ESPNews	Included with ESPN Unlimited, and with most TV packages that carry ESPN.
SEC Network, ACC Network	Included with ESPN Unlimited; on cable, depends on your package.
ABC	Free over the air with an antenna; also on cable and most live TV services (Chapter 14).
Streaming-only events	Shown in the ESPN app for ESPN Select and ESPN Unlimited subscribers.

TIP

Write down your channel numbers

If you watch on cable, jot down the channel numbers for ESPN, ESPN2 and ABC on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 29. It saves hunting through the guide every game day.

GOOD TO KNOW

Newspaper and TV listings

Printed TV listings and the sports page usually name the channel too. If the listing says ESPN2 and your cable box is on ESPN, that's why you're seeing a studio show instead of the game.

CHAPTER 14

ESPN on ABC: Free with an Antenna

ABC and ESPN are part of the same company, and many big games you think of as "ESPN games" are actually broadcast on **ABC**. ABC is a free local channel. With an antenna on your TV, you can watch those games without any subscription at all.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If the games you care about are mostly on ABC, you may not need an ESPN plan at all. An antenna is a one-time purchase and then the games are free.

How to tell if a game is on ABC

In the ESPN app or in a TV listing, look for the ABC label next to the game (Chapter 13). Games on ABC may also be shown in the ESPN app, depending on your plan or provider — but with an antenna, you can watch on your TV's regular ABC channel.

Getting ABC with an antenna, in brief

1. Buy an indoor or outdoor TV antenna.
2. Connect it to the **antenna** or **cable/antenna** connector on the back of your TV.
3. On the TV, open its settings and run a **channel scan** (sometimes called "auto program" or "channel search").
4. When the scan finishes, tune to your local ABC channel.

TIP

More on antennas

Bill's "TV Antennas & Free Local Channels" manual explains choosing, placing and scanning an antenna in much more detail, including what to do if a channel won't come in.

HEADS UP

Not every game is on ABC

ABC carries some of the biggest games, but most ESPN games are on the ESPN channels or streamed in the app. Check your must-see games before you decide an antenna alone is enough.

CHAPTER 15

Blackouts and "Not Available in Your Area"

Sometimes you find the game, press play, and get a message that it isn't available in your area. That's called a **blackout**. It's frustrating, but it isn't a fault with your TV or your account.

Why blackouts happen

Sports leagues sell the rights to show games separately for different places. When a local channel or a regional sports network has the right to show a game where you live, ESPN may not be allowed to stream that same game to you. Someone in another part of the country may see it in the ESPN app at the same moment you don't.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Understanding blackouts saves you from resetting your router, reinstalling the app or calling for help when nothing is actually broken — and points you to where the game really is.

What to do

1. Read the message. It often says the game is blacked out in your area.
2. Check your local channels — the game is often on a local broadcast channel or a regional sports channel instead.
3. Look at the team's own website or the league's website for "how to watch" information in your area.
4. If you're traveling, remember the app judges your location by where you are now, not where you live.

HEADS UP

Your location matters

The ESPN app needs to know roughly where you are to apply blackout rules. If it asks for permission to use your location on a phone, allowing it can help the right games appear. If you say no, some games may not play.

SCAM ALERT

"Get around blackouts" offers

Ads and videos promising to "beat blackouts" often push illegal stream sites or apps that carry malware. The game is almost always available legally on a local or regional channel. Chapter 24 explains the risks.

CHAPTER 16

Football on ESPN: NFL Network & RedZone

Football is the reason many people want ESPN in the fall. In 2026 there's a new wrinkle: ESPN now owns **NFL Network**, the NFL's own TV channel.

What changed

ESPN's deal to take over NFL Network closed on **January 31, 2026**, after government approval. As part of the deal the NFL took a 10 percent ownership stake in ESPN. ESPN said NFL Network would come to **ESPN Unlimited** subscribers starting with the 2026 NFL season, and stay available through cable and other TV providers that carry it.

What about RedZone?

NFL RedZone is the Sunday-afternoon channel that jumps from game to game whenever a team is close to scoring. Under the deal, ESPN distributes RedZone to cable and other TV providers starting with the 2026 season. If you want RedZone without a TV provider, it remains available directly from the NFL through the premium tier of NFL+.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If you already have ESPN Unlimited or a TV package with NFL Network, you may not need a separate football subscription for NFL Network games. Check before you buy one.

Finding an NFL game on ESPN

1. In the ESPN app, search for your team, for example "Browns."
2. Look at the team's next game and the channel label (ESPN, ABC, NFL Network or another network).
3. If it's on ESPN, ABC or NFL Network, it may be available to you through ESPN Unlimited or your TV provider. If it's on CBS, Fox, NBC, Prime Video or Netflix, it's on another service.

GOOD TO KNOW

Football is spread across many services

No single service carries every NFL game. Local broadcast channels (CBS, Fox, NBC and ABC) still carry many games, and an antenna gets those for free. Bill's "Streaming Services Explained" manual helps you see the whole picture.

PART 5

Making ESPN Yours

Favorite teams and alerts, watching on the big TV, on a phone or tablet, and captions for easier viewing.

CHAPTER 17

Favorite Teams and Game Alerts

The ESPN app can learn which teams you follow. Once it knows, it puts their scores and games first and can send a short message to your phone when a game is about to start or a score changes. That message is called an **alert** or a **notification**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No more checking the schedule every day. Your phone tells you when the Guardians start, and you can turn the TV on in time. Your favorite teams also appear at the top of the app, so you scroll less.

Adding a favorite team

1. Open the ESPN app and sign in, so your favorites are saved to your account.
2. Search for the team by name.
3. On the team's page, look for a **Follow** or **Favorite** button (often a star or a plus sign) and select it.
4. Repeat for each team you follow. You'll find them gathered together on the home screen.

Turning alerts on — or off

1. The first time you open the app on a phone, it may ask whether it can send notifications. Choose **Allow** if you'd like game alerts.
2. In the app's settings, look for **Alerts** or **Notifications**. You can usually choose which teams and which kinds of alerts (game start, final score, breaking news) you get.
3. If the alerts become too many, turn off the kinds you don't want, or turn notifications off for the whole app in your phone's own settings.

TIP

Start small

Pick just one or two kinds of alert, such as "game starting" and "final score" for your favorite team. You can always add more. A phone that buzzes all day is a phone you start to ignore.

HEADS UP

Alerts that look like ads

Some notifications promote shows or offers rather than your team. If those bother you, look in the app's notification settings for promotional or marketing alerts and turn them off.

CHAPTER 18

Watching on the Big TV

The ESPN app is available on most smart TVs and streaming devices, including Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, Google TV and game consoles. If you watch through cable, you can also just use your cable box as always — the app is for TVs without one.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A second TV in the bedroom or the den can show ESPN without renting another cable box, using the account you already have.

Installing the ESPN app on your TV

1. Press the **Home** button on your TV or streaming-device remote.
2. Open the device's app store. Depending on the device it may be called "Apps," "Store" or "Search."
3. Search for **ESPN**. Choose the app made by ESPN.
4. Select **Install**, **Add** or **Get**. It's free to install.
5. Open the app and sign in using the activation code method in Chapter 10.

HEADS UP

Pick the real app

App stores sometimes show look-alike apps with sports names. Choose the one published by ESPN. If an app wants money just to install it, it isn't the ESPN app.

Moving around with the remote

- Use the arrow buttons to move and **OK** or **Select** to choose.
- Press **Back** to step back one screen.
- During a game, pressing OK or a down arrow usually shows the pause and rewind controls.
- Press **Home** to leave the app entirely. It doesn't sign you out.

TIP

Make it easy to find

Most TVs let you move an app to the front of your home screen. Put ESPN next to the apps you use most so it's always one or two presses away. Bill's "TV & Streaming Setup" visit can arrange this for you.

CHAPTER 19

Watching on a Phone or Tablet

The ESPN app on a phone or tablet goes wherever you go: the porch, the doctor's waiting room, a grandchild's game when another one is on at home.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You never have to miss part of a game because you had to step away from the TV.

Getting started

1. Open the **App Store** (iPhone or iPad) or the **Play Store** (Android).
2. Search for **ESPN** and install the app made by ESPN.
3. Open it and sign in with your ESPN account or your TV provider (Chapter 9).
4. Allow notifications if you'd like game alerts (Chapter 17).

Sending the game to your TV

Many phones can send what's playing to a TV. On an iPhone or iPad this is called **AirPlay**; on many Android phones and Google TV devices it's **casting**. During a game, look for a small screen icon near the video controls, tap it, and choose your TV. Both the phone and the TV need to be on the same home Wi-Fi. Not every game or TV supports this.

HEADS UP

Mind your phone data

Live sports use a lot of data. On Wi-Fi it doesn't matter, but on cellular data a long game can eat up a limited plan quickly. Connect to Wi-Fi at home, and check your phone plan before watching on the go.

TIP

Bigger is better

A tablet makes the score and the clock much easier to read than a phone. Turning the device sideways fills the screen with the game.

CHAPTER 20

Captions and Easier Viewing

Captions put the words being spoken on the screen. They help if your hearing isn't what it was, if the room is noisy, or if someone's asleep and the volume has to stay low.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You catch every word of the commentary and the interviews, without turning the TV up so loud the neighbors know the score.

Turning captions on in the ESPN app

1. Start playing a game or show.
2. Bring up the video controls (tap the screen on a phone, or press OK or the down arrow on a TV remote).
3. Look for a **CC** button or a speech-bubble icon, and select it.
4. Choose **On** or **English**. Captions appear at the bottom of the picture.

If there's no caption button

Many TVs and streaming devices have their own captions setting that applies to every app. Look in the device's **Accessibility** settings for **Captions** or **Subtitles**. On those menus you can often make the caption text larger or put it on a dark background for easier reading.

GOOD TO KNOW

Live captions lag a little

Captions on live games are typed or generated as the words are spoken, so they run a second or two behind and sometimes contain mistakes. That's normal for live TV.

TIP

Other ways to make it easier

A small soundbar or TV speaker that boosts voices can make commentary clearer, and turning on your phone's text-size setting makes the scores in the app easier to read.

PART 6

Your Account & Your Money

Keeping your ESPN account safe, canceling or changing a plan, and keeping the sports bill down.

CHAPTER 21

Keeping Your ESPN Account Safe

Your ESPN account holds your email address, your payment card if you bought a plan, and — if you bought a Disney bundle — the same login for Disney+ and Hulu. That makes it worth protecting, just like an email account.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A strong, unique password keeps strangers from running up charges, changing your plan, or locking you out of the game on a Sunday afternoon.

Four habits that protect you

1. **Use a password you don't use anywhere else.** If another website is ever hacked, the thieves try the same email and password on popular services like ESPN.
2. **Keep your email account secure.** Whoever controls your email can reset your ESPN password. Turn on two-step sign-in for your email.
3. **Never share a one-time code.** If a text gives you a sign-in code you didn't ask for, someone may be trying to get into your account. Don't read it to anyone, ever.
4. **Sign in only by typing espn.com yourself** or through the app — not from links in emails or texts.

If you forgot your password

1. On the ESPN sign-in screen, choose the option for a forgotten password.
2. Enter the email address on your account.
3. Open the email that arrives and follow its steps, or type in the code it gives you.
4. Choose a new password and write it on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 29, or save it in your password manager.

HEADS UP

Reset emails you didn't ask for

If a password-reset email or code arrives and you didn't request it, don't click anything in it. Just delete it. If it keeps happening, change your password by typing espn.com yourself.

STAY SAFE

Remembered on shared devices

If you signed in on a friend's TV or a hotel TV, sign out before you leave. Otherwise the next person can watch on your account.

TIP

Your TV provider login matters too

If you sign in to ESPN with your cable or satellite login, that password unlocks more than ESPN — often your bill and your account details as well. Give it the same care.

CHAPTER 22

Canceling or Changing Your Plan

Whether the season is over or you've found a better deal, canceling an ESPN plan is straightforward once you know the one rule: **cancel in the same place you signed up.**

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Canceling in the right place the first time means the charges actually stop — no surprises on next month's statement.

Where did you sign up?

Look at your card statement or the confirmation email from when you signed up. The charge will be from ESPN or Disney, or from Apple, Google, Roku, Amazon, or your phone or TV company. Then use the matching row below.

You signed up through…	Cancel here
Directly with ESPN	Sign in at espn.com, open your account, find your subscriptions, and choose to cancel. ESPN's Fan Support pages at support.espn.com explain the current steps.
A Disney bundle bought through Disney+ or Hulu	Cancel from your account on the service where you bought the bundle.
iPhone or iPad (Apple)	Open **Settings**, tap your name, then **Subscriptions**. Choose ESPN and cancel.
Android phone (Google Play)	Open the **Play Store**, tap your profile picture, then **Payments & subscriptions** > **Subscriptions**. Choose ESPN and cancel.
Roku, Amazon Fire TV or another TV device	Cancel from that company's account or subscriptions page.
A phone, internet or TV company perk	Call that company. Canceling ESPN alone may not be possible.

HEADS UP

Deleting the app is not canceling

Removing the ESPN app from your phone or TV does not stop the charges. You must cancel the subscription itself.

GOOD TO KNOW

You keep watching until the period ends

When you cancel, you can generally keep watching until the end of the month or year you've already paid for. Look for the end date in the confirmation email and save it.

Changing plans instead of canceling

If you'd rather switch — say from ESPN Unlimited to a Disney bundle — look at the options in your account before canceling. Switching may be simpler than canceling one and signing up for another, and it avoids paying for both in the same month.

SCAM ALERT

"Your subscription has been canceled" texts

Scammers send messages saying your ESPN or Disney+ payment failed or your plan was canceled, with a link to "update your card." Don't tap it. Sign in by typing espn.com yourself to check.

CHAPTER 23

Keeping the Sports Bill Down

Sports are some of the most expensive things to stream. A little planning can trim a lot without missing the games you care about.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Money saved on duplicate or unused subscriptions stays in your pocket — often more than a hundred dollars a year.

Ideas that work

1. **Use what you already pay for.** If your TV package includes ESPN, sign in with it (Chapter 9) and don't buy a separate plan.
2. **Get ABC free with an antenna** for the games broadcast there (Chapter 14).
3. **Subscribe for the season.** If you only watch football, pay monthly in the fall and cancel when your season ends.
4. **Go yearly if you watch all year.** ESPN Unlimited's yearly price saves about $64.00 compared with twelve monthly payments as of November 2026.
5. **Bundle only what you watch.** The Disney bundle is a good deal if someone uses Disney+ or Hulu; otherwise it isn't.
6. **Check for perks.** Phone, internet and TV companies sometimes include streaming services.
7. **Review once a year.** Look at your card statement for every streaming charge and ask, "Did we watch this?"

TIP

A calendar reminder pays for itself

When you subscribe for a season, set a calendar reminder for the week after the last game: "Cancel ESPN?" It takes thirty seconds and prevents months of forgotten charges.

HEADS UP

Too-good-to-be-true deals

Real discounts exist, but they come from ESPN, Disney or your own provider. A website offering ESPN for a few dollars a year, or a "lifetime" plan, is not a real deal (Chapter 24).

PART 7

Staying Safe

Illegal stream sites, fake "activate" pages and help lines, phishing emails, and how to tune out betting ads.

CHAPTER 24

Illegal Stream Sites and "Free Game" Links

Search the web for almost any big game and you'll find websites claiming to show it free. They are not run by ESPN or the leagues, and they're not safe. They make their money from aggressive ads, fake "download" buttons and stolen information.

SCAM ALERT

What these sites really do

Illegal stream sites are a common way for malware to reach a computer or phone. Pop-ups may claim your device is infected and show a phone number to call, or ask you to "update your video player." Some ask for a card number to "verify your age." Close the page instead.

How to tell a real site from a fake one

Real	Fake
You typed espn.com or opened the official ESPN app	You clicked a link from a search ad, social media post or text
Asks you to sign in with ESPN or your TV provider	Asks you to install a "player" or extension first
Charges a clear monthly or yearly price	Says free, "lifetime," or a price far below ESPN's
No pop-ups claiming your computer has a virus	Pop-ups, new tabs and warnings that won't close

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the signs keeps your computer, phone and bank card safe — and you'll still see the game through a legal route, often one you already pay for.

If you already clicked

1. Close the browser tab or window. On a computer, if it won't close, restart the computer.
2. Don't call any phone number that appeared in a pop-up.
3. If you downloaded anything, don't open it; delete it.
4. If you typed a card number, call the number on the back of your card and tell them.
5. If you typed a password, change it on the real site, starting with your email.

HEADS UP

"Fully loaded" streaming boxes

Boxes or sticks sold online as "every channel free" or "no more cable bills" usually rely on illegal streams. They can stop working without warning and may carry malware. Stick with devices from well-known brands and official app stores.

CHAPTER 25

Fake Activate Pages, Help Lines and Phishing

Some scams target people who are trying to do everything right: activate the ESPN app, get help, or pay their bill. Knowing the patterns takes away their power.

Fake "activate" pages

When your TV shows an activation code (Chapter 10), it also shows a web address. Scam websites copy that look and buy search ads so they appear first when you search for "ESPN activate." They may say activation costs money or ask you to call a number.

SCAM ALERT

The rule for activation

Type the address **exactly as your TV shows it**. ESPN does not charge an activation fee, and no real activation page asks you to call a technician or pay with a gift card.

Fake help lines

Scammers publish phone numbers claiming to be "ESPN support" or "streaming activation support." The person who answers may ask to connect to your computer, then claim it's infected and charge hundreds of dollars. Get help from ESPN's pages at support.espn.com, typed in yourself, or from your TV company's number printed on your bill.

Phishing emails and texts

- "Your ESPN payment failed — update your card now."
- "Your account will be suspended in 24 hours."
- "You've won a free year of ESPN Unlimited — claim it here."
- "Confirm your TV provider login to keep watching."

SCAM ALERT

What to do with a suspicious message

Don't click the link or call the number in it. Instead, sign in by typing espn.com yourself or opening the app. If there's really a problem with your account, you'll see it there. Then delete the message.

STAY SAFE

Gift cards are for gifts

No real company — not ESPN, not Disney, not your cable company — asks you to pay a bill or fix a problem with gift cards. Anyone who does is a scammer. Stop and call someone you trust.

TIP

Talk it over first

If a call or message makes you feel rushed or frightened, that's a sign of a scam. Hang up, take a breath, and call a family member or me before doing anything.

CHAPTER 26

Betting Ads: How to Tune Them Out

Sports broadcasts and apps today carry a lot of sports-betting talk: odds next to the scores, ads for betting apps, and announcers mentioning point spreads. You don't have to take part in any of it to enjoy the game.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A calmer screen with just the game and the score — and fewer temptations for anyone in the family who would rather avoid gambling.

Ways to see less of it

1. Look in the ESPN app's settings. If there's an option about betting, odds or sportsbook content, you can turn it off.
2. Turn off promotional notifications in the app (Chapter 17) so offers don't arrive on your phone.
3. Don't install betting apps you've seen advertised, and ignore offers of "free bets" or bonus money.
4. On your phone, use the app store's parental or purchase controls if a child or grandchild uses your device.

GOOD TO KNOW

Odds are not news

Numbers like "-3.5" or "+150" next to a game are betting odds. They don't tell you anything about how to watch, and you can safely ignore them.

STAY SAFE

If betting is becoming a problem

Gambling can become a real problem for anyone, at any age. If it's worrying you or someone you love, the National Council on Problem Gambling runs a free, confidential helpline: call or text **1-800-GAMBLER**. You can also ask your doctor for a referral.

SCAM ALERT

"Guaranteed winners"

Texts, social media accounts and websites selling "guaranteed" betting picks or "inside tips" are scams. Nobody can guarantee the outcome of a game.

PART 8

When Things Go Wrong

Quick fixes for the common hiccups, when to call Bill, and your ESPN cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 27

Quick Fixes for Common Problems

Most ESPN problems are fixed by one of a few simple steps. Try them in this order, and give each one a fair chance before moving on.

The five-step fix

1. **Close the ESPN app completely** and open it again.
2. **Restart the device.** On a TV or streaming stick, unplugging it from the wall for 30 seconds and plugging it back in is the most thorough restart.
3. **Check the internet.** Try another app, such as YouTube. If nothing works, restart your modem and router the same way.
4. **Update the app.** Check your device's app store for an ESPN update.
5. **Sign out and back in** — both your ESPN account and your TV provider, if you use one.

Specific problems

What's happening	What to try
The picture keeps stopping (buffering)	Restart the device and router. Move the router closer to the TV, or use a wired connection. Other people streaming at the same time can slow things down.
"Not available in your area"	That's a blackout, not a fault (Chapter 15).
"Not included in your package"	Your plan or TV package doesn't include that channel (Chapters 5 and 11).
Asked to sign in again	Sign in again with your ESPN account or TV provider. This happens from time to time and is normal.
Got charged twice	Check whether you have both a TV provider and an ESPN plan, or two plans bought in different places (Chapter 22).
No sound	Check the TV volume and mute, then try another app. Restart the device.
Captions stopped showing	Turn them on again in the player (Chapter 20).
Forgot my password	Use the forgotten-password option on the sign-in screen (Chapter 21).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most of the time you'll be back to the game in a couple of minutes, without waiting on hold.

TIP

Is it just you?

During very big games, a streaming service can have trouble for everyone. If the five-step fix doesn't work, check ESPN's Fan Support pages or the news before spending more time on your own equipment.

HEADS UP

Don't reset everything

Resetting your TV or router to factory settings erases its Wi-Fi and app setup. Save that for after you've talked to someone.

CHAPTER 28

When to Call Bill

This guide can take you a long way, but some days you'd rather have someone just sort it out. That's what I'm here for.

Good reasons to call

- You'd like someone to look at your bills and work out whether you already have ESPN, or are paying twice.
- You want the ESPN app installed and signed in on every TV and tablet in the house.
- Your TV provider sign-in won't work and you've been passed back and forth between companies.
- You're cutting the cord and want to keep your games, with an antenna for ABC and the right plan for the rest.
- You clicked something on a "free stream" site and you're worried about your computer.
- You'd like a parent set up so they can watch their team without calling you every Saturday.

This is exactly what my **TV & Streaming Setup** service is for. We'll sit down together, at your pace, and get everything working the way you'd like — then make sure you know how to use it.

What working with me is like

I bring more than 30 years of professional experience, and I serve Portage County, Ohio. I explain as I go, I don't rush, and I won't sell you anything you don't need. Many problems can be handled remotely, too, without a home visit.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. Help costs **$49 remote · $99 in your home**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Meet Sophie

If you call the main line or visit the website, you may reach my assistant, **Sophie**, an AI receptionist. She can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule.

SCAM ALERT

Real help never asks for gift cards

I'll never call you out of the blue about your ESPN account, and I'll never ask for payment in gift cards. If someone claiming to be me — or ESPN — does, hang up and call the number above.

CHAPTER 29

Your ESPN Cheat-Sheet

The essentials, all in one place. Fill in the blanks once and keep it near the TV.

The essentials

Question	Answer
Already have cable or a live TV service?	Sign in to the ESPN app with that provider (Chapter 9).
ESPN Unlimited	$31.99 a month or $319.99 a year (as of November 2026).
ESPN Select (formerly ESPN+)	$13.99 a month or $139.99 a year. Not the main ESPN channels.
Disney+, Hulu, ESPN Unlimited bundle	$35.99 a month with ads; $44.99 Premium.
Games on ABC	Free with an antenna (Chapter 14).
Activate a TV	Type the address shown on the TV, then the code (Chapter 10).
Game won't play in your area	Probably a blackout (Chapter 15).
Cancel	In the same place you signed up (Chapter 22).
ESPN help pages	support.espn.com — typed in yourself.

Write it down once

Item	Yours
I watch ESPN through	_____
TV provider name	_____
TV provider website username	_____
ESPN or Disney account email	_____
My plan and price	_____
Renews on	_____
I signed up through	_____
Cable channel numbers: ESPN / ESPN2 / ABC	_____
My favorite teams	_____

STAY SAFE

Keep it private

Store this somewhere safe at home, not on the fridge where visitors can see it. Never share your passwords or a one-time code with anyone who contacts you.

When something's wrong, in order

1. Close the app and open it again.
2. Restart the TV, stick or phone.
3. Check that the internet works in another app.
4. Update the ESPN app.
5. Sign out and back in (ESPN and your TV provider).
6. Check whether it's a blackout or a channel your package doesn't include.
7. Call your TV provider about sign-in problems, or use support.espn.com.
8. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

FROM BILL

I'm here when you need me

Whether it's the big game tonight or setting up a new TV, call **(330) 200-8042** or book at billshometech.com/book. **$49 remote · $99 in your home**.

— Bill