BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Facebook Messenger

Chatting with family, calling, sharing photos — and staying safe from the scams that target it

A plain-English guide to staying in touch, safely

Warm, simple, and watchful on your behalf

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Covers the Messenger app on phone & tablet · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to Facebook Messenger — the app where so many families now keep in touch, share photos, and call one another. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind. The first half shows you how to chat, call, and share with ease. The second half — just as important — makes you safe, because Messenger is a favorite hunting ground for scammers, and a little know-how makes you very hard to fool. Every step is explained slowly, in plain English. If a screen on yours looks a little different, the words you're looking for are still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Started with Messenger

What Messenger is, how it relates to Facebook, getting signed in, finding your way around the screen, and connecting with the people you love.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If your family has drifted onto "Messenger" to share photos and plans, and you've felt a step behind — or you're using it already but want to feel safer and more sure — you've opened the right book. Messenger is one of the loveliest ways to stay close to the people you care about, and I'm going to make it feel easy.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I wrote this book the way I'd explain it sitting right beside you: patiently, in plain English, with no rushing. If I use a term you don't know, I'll stop and explain it on the spot.

Two promises for this book

First: I'll make the **everyday** parts simple — sending a message, sharing a photo of the grandkids, making a video call to see a far-away face. These are genuine joys, and they're easier than you may fear.

Second, and just as important: I'll make you **safe**. I'll be honest with you — Messenger is a place where scammers go fishing, precisely because so many warm, trusting people are there. That is not a reason to avoid it; it's a reason to learn the handful of simple habits that make you nearly impossible to fool. The second half of this book is devoted to exactly that, and it may be the most valuable thing you read this year.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What Messenger gives you

A photo from your daughter the moment it's taken. A video call where you watch a grandchild blow out birthday candles from three states away. A quick "running late, start without me" to the whole family at once. Messenger keeps you woven into your family's daily life — and that closeness, used wisely and safely, is a wonderful thing.

And I'm only a phone call away

If you ever get a message that worries you, or you're unsure whether something is real, you are never on your own. Call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll sort it out together, with no judgment and no silly questions. A two-minute "is this real?" call is always welcome. Now — let's get you comfortable.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Messenger Is & How It Relates to Facebook

Let's clear up a common confusion right away, because it trips many people. **Facebook** and **Messenger** are two related things made by the same company (called Meta), and understanding how they fit together makes everything else clearer.

The simple relationship

- **Facebook** is the big social website and app — where people post photos and updates for friends and family to see, like a community bulletin board.
- **Messenger** is the *private messaging* part — the app for one-to-one and small-group conversations, like texting, calling, and video calls. It's the "mailbox and telephone" to Facebook's "bulletin board."

They share the same account, so your Facebook friends are who you message. You can use Messenger as its **own separate app** on your phone (which most people do), even checking messages without opening Facebook at all.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **You can use Messenger without 'being on Facebook' much**
>
> Some folks love the private messaging and video calls but have little interest in the public posting side of Facebook. That's perfectly fine — you can keep your Facebook quiet and still use Messenger happily to stay in touch with family. The two are linked, but you decide how much of each you use.

Messenger on your phone vs. your computer

Messenger works on a phone or tablet (as an app) and on a computer (through a web browser at messenger.com, or within Facebook). Most people find the **phone app** the handiest, especially for photos and video calls, so that's what this book focuses on — though the ideas are the same everywhere.

CHAPTER 3

Getting the App & Signing In

To use Messenger on your phone, you'll want the Messenger app and a Facebook account. If you already use Facebook, you're most of the way there. Let's get set up.

Installing the Messenger app

1. Open the **App Store** (on an iPhone/iPad) or the **Play Store** (on an Android phone/tablet) — the app for getting new apps.
2. Tap the search box and type **Messenger**.
3. Look for the one published by **Meta** (its icon is a blue-and-purple speech bubble with a lightning bolt). Tap **Get** or **Install**.
4. When it finishes, tap to open it.

SCAM ALERT

Install only the real Messenger — mind the imitators

Searching the app store turns up look-alikes with similar names and icons. Install only the genuine **Messenger** by **Meta** (the blue-and-purple speech-bubble icon). A fake messaging app can steal your details. If you're unsure which is the real one, stop and call me at **(330) 200-8042** — pointing you to the right app is exactly the kind of quick help I'm glad to give.

Signing in

1. Open Messenger. If you have a **Facebook account**, sign in with that email (or phone) and password.
2. If you don't have an account yet, you can create one — it asks for your name, a phone number or email, and a password you choose.
3. **Write your password down** and keep it somewhere safe at home. You'll need it again, and a little password notebook in a drawer is a perfectly sensible place.

STAY SAFE

A strong password matters more here than almost anywhere

Because Messenger connects you to your whole family, a hijacked account lets a scammer impersonate *you* to the people who trust you most. So give it a strong password you don't use elsewhere, and — as we'll cover in the safety chapters — turn on the extra "two-step" protection. It's the lock on the front door of your family's trust. I'm glad to help you set it up well.

CHAPTER 4

Finding Your Way Around the Screen

When you open Messenger, the screen is simpler than it first looks. Nearly everything happens in a few places. Let's name them so nothing feels strange.

The main parts

What you see	What it's for
Your list of chats	The main screen: a list of your recent conversations, newest at the top, each showing the person's name, picture, and a peek at the last message.
The search bar	At the top — tap it and type a name to find a person or an old conversation quickly.
A chat (conversation)	Tap any name to open your back-and-forth with that person. Your messages line up like a conversation, newest at the bottom.
The message box	At the bottom of a chat — where you type. A send arrow sits beside it.
Call buttons	In a chat, small **phone** and **video camera** icons at the top start a voice or video call.
Your profile / settings	Your picture or initials, usually a corner — tap it for your settings and privacy controls.

TIP

Tap a name to talk, tap Back to leave

The whole rhythm of Messenger is this: tap a person's name to open your chat with them; when you're done, tap the **back arrow** (top-left) to return to your list of chats. You can't get lost — Back always steps you out, one screen at a time. Practice opening a chat and backing out a few times and it'll feel natural fast.

A note on the 'active' dots and extras

You may notice little green dots, story circles at the top, and various icons. Don't let them clutter your mind — we'll explain the ones that matter (like the green "active" dot) in their own chapters, and the rest you can happily ignore. The heart of Messenger is simply: your list of chats, and the conversations inside them.

CHAPTER 5

Finding & Connecting with People

Messenger is only as good as the people you're connected to. Happily, if you're on Facebook, your friends and family are likely already reachable. Let's make sure you can find the people you want.

Messaging someone you're already connected to

1. On the main screen, tap the **search bar** at the top.
2. Type the person's name. Matching names from your Facebook friends appear as you type.
3. Tap the right person to open a chat with them, and you're ready to write.

Connecting with someone new

To message someone not yet in your contacts, you generally become **Facebook friends** first: you search for them on Facebook, send a **friend request**, and once they accept, you can message freely. You can also share your own "link" or let family add you. If this feels fiddly, it's a common thing to set up together.

STAY SAFE

Only connect with people you actually know

Here's a safety habit worth building from day one: accept friend requests and messages only from people you *genuinely know*. Scammers send friend requests to strangers by the thousands, often using a stolen photo and a friendly name. A request from someone you don't recognize — or a "second" request from a friend you're already connected to — deserves a pause, not a tap. We'll cover this fully in the safety chapters; for now, when in doubt, don't accept.

A gentle first step

The nicest way to get comfortable is to send a simple hello to someone you love and trust — a child, a grandchild, a dear friend. Ask them to reply, maybe send a photo back, perhaps try a short video call. A warm, low-stakes first conversation with someone patient is the best way to find your footing. Everything else in this book builds on that.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The people who matter, a tap away

Once you're connected to your circle, they're all right there in your list of chats — your daughter, your old friend, the grandchildren — each a single tap from a message, a photo, or a face-to-face call. That easy closeness is the whole gift of Messenger, and it's waiting for you.

PART 2

Everyday Messaging, Calling & Sharing

The warm, useful heart of Messenger: sending messages and photos, voice and video calls, group chats with the whole family, and keeping notifications sensible.

CHAPTER 6

Sending Your First Messages

At its simplest, Messenger is just like texting: you type a note, you send it, the other person reads it and writes back. Let's walk through it slowly so it's completely comfortable.

Sending a message

1. Tap a person's name to open your chat with them.
2. Tap the **message box** at the bottom (it often says "Aa" or "Message"). The keyboard slides up.
3. Type your note. Don't worry about perfection — a short, friendly message is lovely.
4. Tap the **send arrow** (a paper-airplane or arrow beside the box). Your message appears in the conversation.

Knowing your message arrived

After you send, small markers tell you what's happening. A little circle with a check means it's **sent** and then **delivered**; when the other person reads it, their tiny photo appears beneath the message. So you can tell when your note has been seen — handy, though it also means *they* can tell when you've read theirs (more on that in a later chapter).

TIP

There's no 'wrong' way to send a message

Don't fret about capital letters, punctuation, or typing fast. Messages are meant to be casual and quick — a warm "Thinking of you!" is perfect just as it is. If you make a typo, you can even press and hold your message to edit or unsend it shortly after. Relax and write the way you'd speak.

If typing is a chore — talk instead

If the small keyboard is hard on your eyes or fingers, tap the little **microphone** on your keyboard to *speak* your message and have the phone type it for you. Or send a voice message (next chapter) and skip typing entirely. There's always an easier way; you needn't struggle with the keys.

CHAPTER 7

Sharing Photos, Videos & Voice Messages

Sharing a photo is one of the real delights of Messenger — and one of the things families use it for most. Sending a picture of your garden, or receiving one of a new great-grandchild, is a simple joy. Here's how.

Sending a photo

1. Open a chat with the person you want to send to.
2. Tap the little **photo** icon near the message box (it looks like a picture, or tap the plus sign to see more options).
3. Your recent photos appear. Tap the one (or ones) you want to send.
4. Tap **Send**. Off it goes, and they'll see it in moments.

Taking a photo right in Messenger

You can also snap a fresh photo without leaving the chat: tap the **camera** icon, point and take the picture, then send it. Lovely for "look what I'm seeing right now" moments.

Voice messages — the easiest of all

A **voice message** lets you just *talk* instead of typing — wonderful if the keyboard is a bother. Press and hold the **microphone** icon, speak your message, and let go to send it. The other person taps to hear your actual voice. It's warm, personal, and effortless.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A picture (or your voice) says it all

A quick photo or a few spoken words carry so much more warmth than typed text — your tone, your smile, the thing you're looking at. For staying close to family, these are Messenger at its best: the next best thing to being in the room. Don't be shy about using them; your loved ones treasure them.

STAY SAFE

Think before sharing photos of others — especially children

A gentle word: when you share photos, remember they can be saved and forwarded. Before posting pictures of grandchildren or others widely, it's courteous (and wise) to check that their parents are comfortable with it. In private family chats this is rarely a worry, but it's a good habit to keep in mind.

CHAPTER 8

Reactions, Stickers & Little Extras

Messenger has a handful of playful touches that make conversations feel lively and warm. None are necessary, but they're fun and easy, and families use them constantly.

Reactions — a quick way to respond

Instead of typing a reply, you can react to a message with a little symbol — a heart, a thumbs-up, a laugh. **Press and hold** a message, and a row of reactions pops up; tap the one that fits. It's a sweet, instant way to say "I saw this and I love it" without typing a word.

Stickers, emojis & GIFs

- **Emojis** — the little faces and symbols (a smile, a heart, flowers). Tap the smiley-face icon by the message box to add one.
- **Stickers** — bigger cartoon pictures that add personality.
- **GIFs** — short, looping little moving pictures (a clapping crowd, a wagging puppy). Fun for a laugh.

TIP

A thumbs-up is a perfectly good reply

You don't owe everyone a long typed response. A quick thumbs-up or heart reaction lets someone know you saw and appreciated their message — perfect when you're busy or when words aren't needed. Your family will understand it exactly as you mean it: "got it, love you."

Don't feel you must use any of it

If stickers and GIFs aren't your style, ignore them entirely — plain words are always welcome and always enough. These extras are there to enjoy if they please you, not a hoop to jump through. Use what brings you a smile and leave the rest.

CHAPTER 9

Voice & Video Calls

Here is where Messenger truly shines: free **voice and video calls** to family anywhere in the world, over your internet, at no cost beyond what you already pay for Wi-Fi. Seeing a loved one's face across the miles is a gift technology has genuinely given us.

Making a call

1. Open a chat with the person you want to call.
2. At the top of the screen, tap the **phone** icon for a voice call, or the **video camera** icon for a video call where you see each other.
3. It rings; when they answer, you're connected. For video, hold the phone up so your face shows, and theirs appears on your screen.
4. To hang up, tap the red **end-call** button.

Tips for a good video call

- **Good light in front of you** (a window you face) makes you easy to see; light behind you turns you into a shadow.
- **Prop the phone up** — against some books or on a stand — so you're not holding it the whole time.
- **Use Wi-Fi** if you can, for the clearest picture and to avoid using up phone data.
- **Speak normally** — the microphone hears you fine; no need to shout.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A face is worth a thousand texts

A video call to a far-away grandchild — watching them show you a drawing, or just seeing them smile — is one of the most heartwarming things this little device can do. For families spread across the country, these free calls turn distance into something almost cozy. If getting a first video call going feels daunting, let's do a practice one together; you'll be delighted.

STAY SAFE

Be sure who you're calling with video

Video calls are wonderful with people you know. But be cautious about video-calling, or accepting video calls from, people you've only met online and haven't met in person — scammers sometimes use calls to seem trustworthy, or to record you. With real family and friends, call away with joy; with online strangers, keep your guard up (much more in Part 3).

If a call won't connect

Now and then a call won't go through, or the picture freezes. Almost always it's the **internet**, not you. A few simple fixes: make sure you're on **Wi-Fi** with a good signal; if the picture stutters, hang up and call again; and if nothing works, a quick restart of your phone (off and back on) clears most glitches. The other person's connection matters too — sometimes it's their end, so don't assume the trouble is yours.

TIP

Agree on a time for important video calls

For a call that matters — a birthday, catching up with far-away family — it helps to agree on a time beforehand with a quick message, so you're both ready, in good light, somewhere quiet. A little planning turns a fumbled "can you hear me?" into a relaxed, joyful visit. And if a first video call feels daunting, remember we can do a practice run together any time.

CHAPTER 10

Group Chats with the Whole Family

A **group chat** is a single conversation with several people at once — the whole family, say, or your card club. Everyone sees every message and can reply, like all sitting around one kitchen table. It's a wonderful way to keep a family connected.

Being part of a group

Often a family member will create the group and add you; you'll simply find it in your list of chats, with a name like "The Johnson Family" and several little photos. You read and reply exactly as in any chat — but remember *everyone in the group* sees what you write.

Starting your own group

1. On the main screen, look for a **pencil-and-paper** or **plus** icon to start a new message, and choose to create a group.
2. Tap the names of the people to include, give the group a friendly name if you like, and start it.
3. Now a message you send reaches everyone at once — grand for planning a get-together or sharing news with the whole clan.

TIP

Mind that the whole group is listening

The one thing to remember in a group chat is that *everyone* sees your message — so a note meant for just one person should go in a private chat with them, not the group. It's the same as not sharing a private aside at a crowded dinner table. An easy habit once you're used to it, and it saves the occasional "oops."

GOOD TO KNOW

Leaving or muting a busy group

A lively family group can chime at all hours. You don't have to endure it: you can **mute** a group (silence its notifications while still reading when you like) or quietly **leave** it. Muting is the gentle choice for a chatty group you still want to follow — no one is notified, and you check in on your own schedule.

CHAPTER 11

Active Status, Read Receipts & Typing Dots

Messenger shows a few little signals about who's around and what's happening. They're harmless and even handy once you understand them — and you can turn some off if you'd rather have privacy.

What the signals mean

Signal	What it tells you
A green dot	The person is **active** on Messenger right now (or was very recently). Handy for knowing if it's a good moment to reach them.
Their photo under your message	They've **read** it. This is the "read receipt."
"..." or bouncing dots	They're **typing** a reply right now — a reply is on its way.
"Active 20m ago"	Roughly when they were last on Messenger.

Turning off 'Active Status' for privacy

If you'd rather not broadcast when you're online — so you don't feel you must reply the instant someone sees you're active — you can turn off **Active Status** in your settings (tap your profile picture, then look under privacy or Active Status). Then the green dot won't show for you, and you lose sight of others' dots too. It's entirely your choice.

TIP

You never owe an instant reply

Those read receipts and green dots can make people feel they must answer right away — please don't. It's perfectly polite to read a message and reply hours later when you're ready, or to answer with a simple thumbs-up. If the pressure bothers you, turn off Active Status. Messenger should fit your pace, not rush it.

CHAPTER 12

Keeping Notifications Sensible

Notifications are the little alerts — a sound, a buzz, a banner — that tell you a new message has arrived. They're useful, but too many can feel like a pestering. Let's set them to a level that suits you.

Taming the alerts

- **Mute a chatty conversation** — open it, tap the person's or group's name at the top, and choose **Mute**. You'll still see messages when you look; you just won't be pinged.
- **Quiet hours** — in Messenger's notification settings you can silence alerts overnight, so it doesn't buzz at 2 a.m.
- **Turn off sounds** but keep the little number badge, if you prefer to check on your own schedule.

GOOD TO KNOW

Notifications are yours to command

Your phone should serve you, not nag you. If Messenger's buzzing feels like too much, it's completely fine to mute busy groups, set quiet hours, or soften the sounds. You won't miss anything important — the messages wait patiently in your chat list for whenever you choose to look. Set it up to feel calm, not frantic.

If you'd like a hand

Notification settings live in a few different spots — some in Messenger, some in your phone's own settings — and they can be a little fiddly to find. If you'd like the alerts tuned just right, that's a small, satisfying thing we can do together in a few minutes on a call.

PART 3

Staying Safe: The Most Important Part

Messenger is a favorite hunting ground for scammers — so these chapters make you hard to fool. Read them slowly; the habits here protect you and the people you love.

CHAPTER 13

Why Messenger Attracts Scammers

Before we learn the specific tricks, it helps to understand *why* Messenger draws so many scammers. Knowing their game makes their moves easy to spot — because once you see the pattern, you see it everywhere.

What the scammers are after

Nearly every Messenger scam wants one of three things from you: your **money** (directly, or through gift cards and transfers), your **account** (so they can fool your friends as "you"), or your **personal information** (to steal from you another way). Everything they do is aimed at one of those three.

Why they target kind, trusting people

Scammers deliberately seek out warm, trusting, generous people — which, I'm sorry to say, often means older folks. This is not because you're foolish; it's because you're *kind*, and they weaponize that kindness. Falling for a clever scam is no reflection on your intelligence — these are practiced criminals running scripts refined on thousands of victims. The defense isn't being smarter than them; it's knowing their handful of tricks in advance. That's what these chapters give you.

FROM BILL

The one feeling that signals a scam

If you remember nothing else from this whole book, remember this: **urgency is the scammer's signature.** Almost every scam tries to make you feel you must act *right now* — before you can think, or check with someone. The moment a message makes your heart race and pushes you to hurry, *slow down*. That feeling of rushed pressure is itself the warning. Real family and real companies will always let you take your time.

Your three-second defense

Against every trick in these chapters, you have one simple, powerful defense: **pause, and check with someone you trust.** Don't act on an alarming or too-good message alone or in a hurry. Hang up, set the phone down, and call a family member — or me — before you do anything. That pause defeats nearly every scam ever invented.

CHAPTER 14

Message Requests & Strangers

Messenger sorts incoming messages into two piles, and knowing the difference is your first line of defense. Messages from your friends come straight to your chats; messages from **strangers** are set aside in a separate **Message Requests** folder for you to judge.

How message requests work

When someone you're not connected to messages you, it lands in **Message Requests** (look for it near the top of your chats, or under your profile). The sender *cannot* tell whether you've seen it, and you're under no obligation to reply. You can accept it, ignore it, or delete it — and most requests from strangers deserve to be ignored or deleted.

Judging a request

- **Do you actually know this person?** Not "does the name sound familiar" — do you truly know them? If not, be very wary.
- **Is it a 'friend' you're already connected to?** A *second* request from someone you're already friends with is a classic sign their account was copied (see the next chapters).
- **What does it want?** A stranger opening with flattery, a sad story, a business offer, or a "you've won" is almost always a scam.

SCAM ALERT

A stranger's friendly 'hello' is often a baited hook

Scammers open with the most innocent messages — "Hello, how are you today?" from a nice-seeming stranger — precisely to get a reply and start reeling you in. You owe a stranger nothing. It is perfectly polite, and very wise, to simply **ignore and delete** a message request from someone you don't genuinely know. Not every "hello" deserves an answer, and silence costs you nothing.

CHAPTER 15

The Impersonation Scam: "Is This Really My Grandchild?"

This is one of the cruelest and most common scams, and it's aimed squarely at loving grandparents — so let's disarm it completely. In it, a scammer pretends to be a family member in trouble, to frighten you into sending money fast.

How it unfolds

You get a message — on Messenger, or a call — seemingly from a grandchild or other relative. They're in a crisis: arrested, in an accident, stranded, in trouble abroad. They need money **right now**, and — crucially — they beg you to **keep it secret** ("don't tell Mom, she'll be furious"). The voice or writing may even sound like them; scammers can now copy voices and photos. It is designed to bypass your judgment through love and panic.

How to defeat it, every single time

1. **Stop.** Notice the urgency and secrecy — the two signatures of a scam — and take a breath.
2. **Hang up or don't reply.** Do not send money, gift cards, or any payment, no matter how convincing.
3. **Call the real person back** on the number you already have for them — or call their parents, or another family member. The real grandchild will answer, safe and sound.
4. **Ask the 'safe word'** (see below) if you're still unsure.

STAY SAFE

Set a family 'safe word' today

Agree now, with your family, on a secret **safe word** or question that only your real family knows — something a scammer couldn't guess. If anyone ever messages or calls claiming to be family in urgent trouble, ask for the safe word. Your real grandchild will know it; a scammer won't, and the whole scheme collapses. This one simple agreement is the single best protection against impersonation scams. Set it up at your next family gathering.

FROM BILL

Real emergencies survive a phone call

Here's the comforting truth that frees you to always check: a *genuine* emergency is never ruined by your hanging up and calling the person back on their real number. If it's real, you'll reach them and help properly. If it's a scam, calling back is exactly what exposes it. So you lose nothing by verifying and risk everything by not — always, always call back. And call me too if you're shaken: (330) 200-8042.

CHAPTER 16

The Hacked-Friend & Cloned-Account Scams

A chilling variation: the scam comes from an account that really *is* your friend's — because a criminal has broken into it — or from a **copy** of their account. Either way, you think you're talking to a trusted friend. Here's how to see through it.

Two forms of the same trick

- **A hacked account** — a scammer got into your friend's real Messenger and is messaging their friends (including you), usually asking for money or help, or sending a suspicious link.
- **A cloned account** — a scammer made a *fake copy* of your friend using their public photo and name, then sent you a fresh friend request and started chatting as "them."

The tell-tale signs

- A friend you're *already* connected to sends a **new friend request** — a big red flag of cloning.
- A friend suddenly asks for **money**, a **gift card**, or a **code**, or sends an urgent "help me" — out of character and pressing.
- A friend sends a bare **link** with "is this you in this video?" or "look at this!" and little else.
- The writing feels slightly **off** — odd phrasing, unusual requests, strange urgency.

SCAM ALERT

Verify through another channel before you act

If a 'friend' on Messenger asks for money, a code, or urges you to click something, **reach them another way before doing anything** — call their phone, or text them directly. Say, "Did you just message me on Messenger asking for money?" Nine times in ten you'll discover their account was hacked or copied, and you'll have saved yourself (and alerted them). Never send money or codes based on a Messenger chat alone, even from a dear friend.

If you spot a clone or a hack

If you believe a friend's account is hacked or cloned, don't engage with the scammer. Instead, contact your friend by phone to warn them, and **report** the fake or compromised account to Messenger (we'll cover reporting in a coming chapter). You'll be doing your friend a real kindness.

CHAPTER 17

Romance & Friendship Scams

This scam plays the longest game and breaks the most hearts, so it deserves careful, compassionate attention. A stranger strikes up a warm friendship or romance over Messenger, builds trust over weeks or months, then — once you care — asks for money.

How it works

It often begins with a friend request or message from an attractive, charming stranger — perhaps claiming to be a widower, a soldier overseas, a doctor abroad, or simply a lonely soul who finds you wonderful. They're attentive, affectionate, and endlessly available with words. But they **always have a reason they can't meet or video-call properly**, and eventually a crisis arises: a medical bill, a stuck shipment, a plane ticket, a customs fee — and they need your help, promising to repay you.

The unmistakable warning signs

- A new online sweetheart or friend you've **never met in person**.
- They profess strong feelings **very quickly** — "I've never felt this way."
- They always have an excuse **not to video-call** or meet, or the calls are odd and brief.
- The relationship **always** turns, sooner or later, to a request for **money** — however small at first.
- They want to move the chat **off Messenger** to a private app quickly.

SCAM ALERT

A new online love who asks for money is a scam — full stop

I'll say this as plainly and kindly as I can, because it protects you: **anyone you've met only online, who you've never met in person, who asks you for money — for any reason — is running a scam.** It does not matter how kind, how genuine, how in-love they seem; that feeling is the product they're selling. Never send money, gift cards, or your bank details to such a person. If this is happening to you, please — without any shame — talk to a family member or call me. These schemes fool warm, wonderful people every day, and reaching out is the brave, smart thing.

A word of compassion

If you recognize yourself here, please know this: you are not foolish, and you are not alone. These criminals are expert manipulators who do this for a living, and they target the

warm-hearted precisely because warmth is a virtue, not a flaw. There is no shame in having been drawn in — only wisdom in stepping back. Talk to someone you trust. I will never judge you; I'll only help.

CHAPTER 18

Prize, Lottery, Grant & Giveaway Scams

These scams dangle good news instead of bad: you've **won** something, or free money is waiting for you. The hook is excitement rather than fear, but the goal is the same — your money or your information.

The common versions

- **"You've won!"** — a lottery, a prize, a sweepstakes you never entered. To claim it, you must first pay a "fee" or "taxes," or give your bank details.
- **Government or 'Facebook' grants** — a message (often from a hacked friend) says you can get a big free grant; you just pay a processing fee first.
- **Giveaways** — "the first 100 people to reply win a prize" from a page impersonating a real company.

SCAM ALERT

You can't win a contest you never entered — and real prizes are free

Two truths dismantle every one of these: you cannot win a lottery or sweepstakes you never entered, and **a genuine prize never requires you to pay a fee to receive it.** Any message asking you to pay money, buy gift cards, or hand over bank details to "release" your winnings is a scam, every time. Delete it, and never send a cent. If a message says you've won and you're tempted, that's the perfect moment to call me first — (330) 200-8042.

Why the 'small fee' is the whole scam

The fee *is* the scam. There is no prize behind it — once you pay the first "fee," there will be another, and another, each with a fresh excuse, until you stop. No legitimate prize, grant, or inheritance works by making you pay to receive it. Hold that rule firmly and these scams lose all their power over you.

CHAPTER 19

Investment & "Get Rich" Scams

A newer breed of scam promises not a prize but an **investment** — a can't-miss opportunity, often involving "crypto" (a kind of digital money) — that will multiply your savings. These are especially dangerous because they can cost people their life savings.

How they lure you

- A friendly contact (sometimes after a romance-style buildup) shares how they "made so much" with a special investment or trading platform.
- They show screenshots of big profits and offer to "mentor" you or connect you with their "advisor."
- You're urged to put money into an app or website that shows your balance growing — but when you try to **withdraw**, you can't, or you're told to pay more "fees" first.

SCAM ALERT

If it's guaranteed, urgent, and secret — it's a scam

Real investing is never a sure thing, never requires you to rush, and never comes as a private tip from someone on Messenger. Any "opportunity" promising big **guaranteed** returns, pressing you to act **fast**, and urging **secrecy** is a scam designed to drain your savings. Never move money into an investment because of a Messenger chat. Before investing a dollar anywhere, talk to a licensed professional you found independently — and feel free to run it by me or a family member first.

The special danger of these

Unlike a small gift-card scam, investment scams can take *everything* — people have lost their retirement to them. The "growing balance" you see on the scammer's app is a fiction shown only to you. If you're ever tempted by an opportunity that came through Messenger, please treat that temptation as a flashing red light, and talk to someone you trust before acting.

CHAPTER 20

Dangerous Links & Attachments

Not every Messenger scam asks for money directly — some try to get you to **click a link** or open an attachment that steals your account or infects your device. A little caution with links keeps you safe.

The usual bait

- "**Is this you in this video?**" or "OMG look what they said about you!" with a link — often from a hacked friend. The link steals *your* login when you "sign in" to see it.
- A "**you need to verify your account**" message with a link to a fake Facebook login page.
- Links promising shocking news, free money, or prizes.
- Attachments you weren't expecting, even from a friend.

STAY SAFE

When in doubt, don't tap — check first

The safest habit with any unexpected link or attachment is simple: **don't tap it.** If it seems to come from a friend, ask them (by phone or text) whether they really sent it — their account may be hacked. Never sign in to Facebook or Messenger through a link someone sends you; if you need to check your account, open the app yourself. A link you didn't expect is guilty until proven innocent.

What a bad link can do

Clicking a scam link and entering your details can hand over your account (letting them scam your friends as you), or load harmful software. The good news: *simply not tapping* unknown links defeats this entirely. You're in control — no link can hurt you if you don't follow it, and nothing of value is ever lost by pausing to check.

CHAPTER 21

The Red Flags, All in One Place

Let's gather the warning signs from all these scams into one list you can hold in your mind. Scams come in endless costumes, but they wave the same few flags. Spot any of these, and your guard should go up at once.

The scam warning flags

- **Urgency** — "act now," "right away," "before it's too late."
- **Secrecy** — "don't tell anyone," "keep this between us."
- **A request for money** — especially by **gift card, wire transfer, or crypto**, which are hard to trace and get back.
- **A request for a code or password** — no real person or company needs these from you.
- **Too good to be true** — winnings, free grants, guaranteed profits.
- **Strong emotion fast** — sudden love, or sudden fear about a loved one.
- **An unexpected link** or attachment, even from a friend.
- **Pressure to move off Messenger** to another app, or to pay in unusual ways.

FROM BILL

One rule to cover them all

If you'd like a single sentence to keep you safe through every scam ever made, here it is: **Never send money, gift cards, codes, or personal details to anyone because of an urgent message — stop, and check with someone you trust first.** Tape that to your refrigerator. It covers every trick in this book and every new one they'll dream up. And I'm always a free, no-judgment phone call away for a second opinion: (330) 200-8042.

CHAPTER 22

Blocking & Reporting

You have real power to shut scammers and nuisances out of your Messenger. **Blocking** stops someone from contacting you; **reporting** tells Messenger to investigate and protect others. Both are easy, and using them feels good.

Blocking someone

1. Open the chat with the person, and tap their **name** at the top.
2. Scroll down and tap **Block**.
3. Confirm. They can no longer message or call you, and they're not told that you blocked them.

Reporting a scam or fake account

1. In the chat, tap the person's **name** at the top.
2. Choose **Report** (you may pick a reason, like "scam" or "pretending to be someone").
3. Messenger reviews it. Reporting a cloned friend or a scammer helps protect everyone, including the person being impersonated.

TIP

Blocking is not rude — it's your front door

Never feel guilty about blocking. You are under no obligation to stay reachable to a stranger, a scammer, or anyone who makes you uncomfortable — blocking is simply closing your own front door, and they're never notified. For a clear scammer, block *and* report. You'll feel lighter for it, and you'll be helping others they'd have targeted next.

Unfriending vs. blocking

There's a gentler step than blocking, for when someone isn't a scammer but you'd simply rather not stay connected: **unfriending**. It quietly removes the connection without blocking them outright — they're not notified, and it's a calm way to tidy your circle. Save **blocking** for strangers, scammers, and anyone who makes you uncomfortable; use **unfriending** for a simple, no-drama parting of ways.

GOOD TO KNOW

Reviewing who you're connected to

Once in a while it's worth glancing through your friends list and asking, "do I actually know and want to be connected to each of these people?" Scammers sometimes slip in among real friends. Removing anyone you don't recognize is good housekeeping — it shrinks the openings a scammer could use, and it costs you nothing. A tidy circle is a safer circle.

CHAPTER 23

Protecting Your Account

Keeping your own account secure protects not just you but everyone who trusts you — because a stolen account becomes a weapon against your friends. A few strong habits lock the door firmly.

The essentials

- **A strong, unique password** — not reused from other accounts, not your birthday or a pet's name. Write it in your password notebook at home.
- **Two-step verification (also called two-factor)** — the single best protection. It adds a one-time code (texted to your phone) to your login, so a thief with your password *still* can't get in. Turn this on.
- **Never share a login code** — if anyone asks you to read them a code that was texted to you, it's a scam to break into your account. Codes are for your eyes only.
- **Keep your recovery details current** — your phone number and email on the account, so you can get back in if ever locked out.

STAY SAFE

Turn on two-step verification — it's the big one

If you do one security thing after reading this book, make it turning on **two-step verification** for your Facebook/Messenger account. It means that even if a scammer somehow learns your password, they're stopped cold without the code that goes only to your phone. It's the sturdy deadbolt on your account. The setup lives in your account's Security settings — and if it feels fiddly, this is a perfect thing to set up together. Call me at (330) 200-8042.

Guard your codes above all

I'll repeat this because scammers prey on it constantly: **no legitimate person or company will ever ask you to share a verification code** that was texted to you. A common trick is someone posing as a friend or "support" saying they accidentally sent a code to your number and need you to read it back. That code is the key to your account — reading it to them hands them the key. Never, ever share it.

CHAPTER 24

If Your Account Gets Hacked

If the worst happens and a scammer gets into your account, act quickly but don't panic — there's a clear path to taking it back and limiting the harm.

Signs your account may be compromised

- Friends tell you they got odd messages from "you" that you didn't send.
- You find messages in your chats you didn't write, or you're suddenly logged out.
- Your password no longer works, or your name or photo changed.

What to do

1. **Change your password** immediately, if you still can — and make the new one strong and unique.
2. **Turn on two-step verification** (if it wasn't already) to lock the thief out.
3. Use Facebook's **"I think my account was hacked"** recovery tool (facebook.com/hacked) to reclaim it.
4. **Warn your friends and family** — by phone or in person — that your account was hacked and not to act on any money requests from it.
5. **Call me.** Recovering a hacked account is fiddly and upsetting, and it's exactly the kind of thing I help people through calmly.

FROM BILL

Being hacked is not your fault — and it's fixable

If your account is taken over, please don't be embarrassed or hard on yourself — it happens to careful people, and it can be undone. The important things are to act promptly, warn the people who might be targeted in your name, and get the account locked back down. Call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll work through it together, step by step, no judgment. You won't face it alone.

CHAPTER 25

Privacy Settings Worth Setting

A few privacy settings make you a harder target and give you more peace. You don't need to become a hermit — just close the easy doors. Here are the ones worth a few minutes.

Settings to consider

Setting	Why it helps
Who can message you / send requests	Limit who can reach you directly, so more strangers land in Message Requests instead of your main chats.
Who can see your friends list	Setting this to "Only me" makes it harder for scammers to clone you and target your friends.
Who can look you up	Limit searching by your phone number or email.
Active Status	Turn off if you'd rather not show when you're online (Chapter 11).
Story / post audience	Keep what you share to "Friends" rather than "Public," so strangers can't gather your photos and details.

TIP

Hiding your friends list quietly foils cloners

One small, powerful step: set **who can see your friends list** to "Only me." Cloning scammers rely on seeing your friends to know whom to target as fake-you. Hide that list and you take away their map. It changes nothing about how you use Messenger, but it makes you a far harder target. A two-minute setting with real payoff.

Let me help you lock it down

Facebook and Messenger privacy settings are spread across several menus and change now and then, which makes them genuinely hard to find. Getting yours set sensibly — not paranoid, just prudent — is one of the most worthwhile things we can do together in a short call. I do this with folks all the time.

CHAPTER 26

Messenger's Own Scam Warnings

Meta, the company behind Messenger, has added some built-in protections that watch for scams and warn you. These are helpful — but they're a backup for your own good judgment, not a replacement for it.

What you might see

- **Safety notices** that pop up in a chat when something looks like a possible scam or impersonation — for instance, if a new contact is messaging from another country or has few connections in common.
- **Warnings on suspicious friend requests** flagging accounts that look fishy.
- **Alerts** if a message looks like a known scam pattern.

HEADS UP

Heed the warnings — but don't rely on them alone

If Messenger ever shows you a safety warning, take it seriously — it's flagging real risk. But the reverse isn't true: the *absence* of a warning does not mean a message is safe. Scammers constantly change their tricks to slip past these filters. So treat Messenger's warnings as a helpful extra pair of eyes, while keeping *your own* rules — pause, verify, never send money on an urgent message — firmly in charge.

Your judgment is the real protection

No automatic system can catch every scam, because the scammers are clever and always adapting. The protections in this book — your habits, your pauses, your safe word, your "let me check first" — are what truly keep you safe. The technology helps; *you* are the guard at the gate. That's not a burden — it's your power, and now you know how to use it.

CHAPTER 27

Your Messenger Safety Checklist

Let's gather all this safety wisdom onto one page you can return to whenever a message gives you pause. Keep it handy — it's the whole of Part 3 in a nutshell.

The safety habits

1. **Pause when you feel rushed.** Urgency is the scammer's signature.
2. **Never send money, gift cards, or codes** because of a message — no matter who it seems to be from.
3. **Verify through another channel.** Call the real person back on a known number before acting.
4. **Use a family safe word** for any "emergency" money request.
5. **Don't tap unexpected links** or share verification codes — ever.
6. **Ignore and delete** message requests from strangers; **block and report** scammers.
7. **Lock your account** with a strong password and two-step verification.
8. **When in doubt, ask** — a family member, or Bill.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Safe enough to enjoy every bit of it

All this care has one happy purpose: so you can relax and *enjoy* Messenger — the photos, the calls, the daily closeness with family — knowing you've shut the doors the scammers come through. A watchful heart and a warm one go together beautifully. You can be both close to your family and safe from the crooks. That's exactly what this book is for.

PART 4

A Few More Things & When to Call Bill

A couple of extra features worth knowing, and — always — an honest word on when a quick call will set your mind at ease.

CHAPTER 28

"Encrypted" & Secret Chats, Explained

You may see the word **encrypted** in Messenger, or hear about "secret" or "end-to-end encrypted" chats. It sounds technical, but the idea is simple and reassuring — let's demystify it.

What encryption means for you

Encryption is just a fancy word for scrambling your messages so that only you and the person you're talking to can read them — not even the company in between. "End-to-end encrypted" means the message is sealed from your phone all the way to theirs. Messenger has been making this the standard for private chats, which is good for your privacy.

GOOD TO KNOW

Encryption protects your privacy — not from scams

Here's the important distinction. Encryption keeps *outsiders* from snooping on your conversations — a genuine privacy benefit. But it does **not** protect you from the person you're *choosing* to chat with. If you're talking to a scammer, encryption just means your conversation with that scammer is private — it doesn't make them trustworthy. So privacy features are welcome, but your scam-safety habits from Part 3 still do the real protecting.

Nothing you need to do

For everyday use, you don't need to set anything up or worry about encryption — Messenger handles it. Just know that your private chats are reasonably private, and carry on using the safety habits that matter. If you ever see a prompt about a "PIN" to restore encrypted chats, that's worth writing down and keeping safe — and a fine thing to ask me about.

CHAPTER 29

Handy Extras & Everyday Tips

A few more small features can make Messenger more pleasant. None are essential, but they're nice to know.

Little conveniences

- **Make the text bigger** — if messages are hard to read, your *phone's* own settings can enlarge text across all apps, Messenger included. Ask me and we'll set a comfortable size.
- **Search a conversation** — tap the person's name, then search, to find an old message or photo in a long chat.
- **Save a photo someone sent** — tap and hold the photo, then choose Save, to keep it in your own photos.
- **Pin a favorite chat** — keep your most important people at the very top of your list for easy reach.
- **Themes and colors** — you can change a chat's color just for fun; purely decoration.

TIP

Make it comfortable for your eyes and hands

Messenger should be a pleasure, not a strain. If the text is too small, the sounds too loud, or the typing too fiddly, nearly all of that can be adjusted — bigger text, voice messages instead of typing, gentler notifications. Don't put up with discomfort; a few tweaks (which I'm glad to help with) can make it fit you like a comfortable chair.

CHAPTER 30

When to Call Bill

This book is meant to make you confident and safe with Messenger, and most days it will. But you should never feel you must face a worry alone. Calling for help is the smart, sensible move — here's when it makes especially good sense.

Good reasons to call

- You got a message that alarmed you — a "grandchild" in trouble, an urgent money request, a "you've won" — and want a calm second opinion *before* you do anything.
- You're not sure whether a friend request, a message, or a link is genuine or a scam.
- You'd like help turning on two-step verification and setting sensible privacy settings.
- You think your account may have been hacked, or a friend's has been.
- You'd simply like a patient, friendly lesson getting comfortable with messaging, photos, or video calls.
- You've sent money or shared something and now feel uneasy — the sooner we talk, the more we can do.

SCAM ALERT

A two-minute call beats a lifetime of regret

Please — if any message ever pressures you to send money, share a code, or act urgently and in secret, stop and call me *first* at **(330) 200-8042**. There is never a cost to being careful, and I would far rather spend two minutes reassuring you that something's a scam than help pick up the pieces afterward. You will never get a lecture from me — only calm, kind help. No question is too small.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and I help folks right here in **Portage County, Ohio** stay connected and stay safe. Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a visit online at **billshometech.com/book**. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. With 30+ years of professional experience helping people with exactly this, I promise you there's no question too basic and no worry too small to bring to me.

— Bill

CHAPTER 31

Your Messenger Cheat-Sheet

Tear this out or fold the corner, and keep it handy. It's the whole book boiled down to what you'll reach for most.

Everyday Messenger

I want to…	Do this
Send a message	Tap a name → type in the box → tap the send arrow.
Send a photo	Open a chat → tap the photo icon → pick a photo → Send.
Send a voice message	Hold the microphone icon, speak, let go.
Make a video call	Open a chat → tap the video-camera icon at the top.
React to a message	Press and hold it → tap a heart or thumbs-up.
Mute a busy chat	Tap the name at top → Mute.
Block/report someone	Tap the name at top → Block or Report.

The safety rules — never forget these

1. Pause when a message makes you feel rushed.
2. Never send money, gift cards, or codes because of a message.
3. Call the real person back on a known number to verify.
4. Use your family safe word for any 'emergency.'
5. Don't tap unexpected links; never share a login code.
6. Block and report scammers; ignore stranger requests.
7. When in doubt, call Bill before you act.

Keep these handy

Keep handy	Fill in
Our family 'safe word'	_____
Two-step verification is ON	yes / not yet (call Bill to set up)
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

FROM BILL

Stay close, stay safe

You've learned to chat, share, and call with ease — and, just as important, to spot the tricks and keep yourself safe. That's everything you need to enjoy Messenger with confidence. Keep this book handy, trust your instincts, pause when something feels off, and remember I'm one phone call away. Stay close to the people you love, and stay safe. — Bill, (330) 200-8042