BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Google Drive

Keep, find, share and protect your files —
explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide to Google Drive on your computer and phone

Take your time — looking around can't hurt a thing

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For the Drive website, iPhone and Android apps, and Drive for desktop · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to Google Drive, the place where your Google Account keeps your documents, scans, PDFs and shared files. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind. Every chapter explains what a feature does *for you*, with slow, step-by-step directions for the website and the phone app. If a screen looks a little different on yours, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting to Know Google Drive

What Drive is, the handful of words worth knowing, and the three ways to open it: the website, the phone app and the program for your computer.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you have a Gmail address, you already have Google Drive, whether you've ever opened it or not. It's a safe place on Google's computers where you can keep documents, scanned papers, pictures and PDFs, and reach them from your phone, your tablet or any computer. Many people first meet Drive when a grandchild shares a file with them, or when an email arrives saying their Google storage is full. If that's how you got here, you're in very good company.

I'm Bill. For more than 30 years I've helped people feel at home with their technology. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain Drive sitting beside you at the kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, one click or tap at a time. When a new word comes up, I'll stop and explain it right there.

What this book covers

- **Finding your way around** Drive on a computer and on an iPhone or Android phone.
- **Putting things in**: uploading files and folders, and scanning paper documents with your phone.
- **Keeping things tidy** with folders, colors, stars and search.
- **Opening** Google Docs, Sheets, PDFs, pictures and Word or Excel files.
- **Sharing safely**, and taking sharing back when you're done.
- **Storage**: why Drive, Gmail and Google Photos share one 15 GB allowance, how to clear space, and what Google One and the Google AI plans cost.
- **Getting a deleted file back**, using files without internet, and planning for the long term.
- **Scams** that use Drive's name, and how to spot them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this book does for you

By the end you'll know where your files live, how to put new ones in, how to find any of them in seconds, and how to share with family without sharing with the whole world. You'll also understand that "storage full" message, and know which ones are real and which are scams.

An honest promise about what you can't break

Opening folders, looking at files, searching and scrolling can't hurt anything. Even deleting is forgiving: a deleted file waits in the Trash for 30 days so you can change your mind. Two things do deserve a moment's thought, and I'll flag them each time they come up: **sharing with "Anyone with the link"**, and **emptying the Trash**, which can't easily be undone.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **Written for November 2026**
>
> Google changes Drive's look from time to time. Everything here was checked against Google's own help pages in November 2026. If a button has moved a little on your screen, the idea is almost always the same.

And you're never stuck alone. If you'd like a hand, call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll sort it out together. There's no such thing as a silly question about your own files.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Google Drive Is, in Plain English

Google Drive is online storage. Think of it as a filing cabinet that lives in a very secure building owned by Google instead of in your den. You can put things in it from your phone or computer, and then open them from any of your devices, as long as you're signed in to your Google Account.

Drive is also the home of **Google Docs** (letters and documents), **Google Sheets** (spreadsheets and lists) and **Google Slides** (presentations). When you make one of those, it's saved in Drive automatically. My Word & Google Docs manual covers writing documents in detail; this guide is about Drive itself, the cabinet that holds everything.

Words worth knowing

Word	What it means
Google Account	The account you sign in with, usually your Gmail address. One account gives you Gmail, Drive, Google Photos and more. My Your Google Account manual covers it in depth.
File	One single thing: a letter, a PDF, a photo, a scanned receipt.
Folder	A container for files, just like a paper folder. Folders can hold other folders.
My Drive	Your own main area in Drive, where your files and folders live.
Upload	Copy a file from your phone or computer up into Drive.
Download	Copy a file from Drive down onto your phone or computer.
Share	Let another person see, comment on or change a file of yours.
Storage	How much room you have. Every Google Account comes with 15 GB, shared by Drive, Gmail and Google Photos.
GB / TB	Gigabyte and terabyte, measures of space. 1 TB is 1,000 GB. A typical phone photo is a few megabytes, so 1 GB holds hundreds of them.
Google One	Google's paid plans for more storage. The bigger plans are now called **Google AI** plans and include Gemini features.

What Drive is good for

- Keeping a safe copy of important papers: insurance cards, the will, the deed, medical lists.
- Getting a file from one device to another without emailing it to yourself.
- Sharing a large file or a folder of pictures with family, using one link.

- Opening a document a family member, a club or your church shared with you.
- Working on the same document as someone else, at the same time, from different houses.

HEADS UP

Drive is not the same as a backup

If you delete a file in Drive, it's deleted on every device you use with Drive. That's handy, but it means Drive alone isn't a true second copy. My Backing Up Everything manual explains how to keep one.

CHAPTER 3

Three Ways In: the Website, the Phone App and Drive for Desktop

You can reach the very same files in three ways. Most people use two of them. You don't need all three.

Way in	Where to get it	Best for
Drive website	Type **drive.google.com** in any web browser and sign in	Organizing, sharing, checking storage. Everything is here.
Drive phone app	"Google Drive" from the App Store (iPhone) or Play Store (Android), made by **Google LLC**	Scanning papers, quick looks, uploading phone photos and files
Google Drive for desktop	A free program for Windows or Mac, downloaded from Google's Drive page	Seeing Drive as a folder on your computer, like any other folder

Signing in

Whichever way you use, you sign in with your Google Account: your Gmail address and its password, or a passkey if you've set one up. On most Android phones you're already signed in. If you have more than one Google Account, the app lets you switch between them, and each account's files stay separate.

TIP

Keep your apps up to date

Google supports the Drive app on the three most recent major versions of iOS. If the app asks you to update, that's normal. On an iPhone, check your version under **Settings** > **General** > **About**.

SCAM ALERT

Only the real app

In the app stores, the genuine Drive app is called **Google Drive** and is made by **Google LLC**. Skip look-alikes that promise "free unlimited storage" or ask you to pay before you've done anything.

PART 2

Finding Your Way Around

The left-hand list on the Drive website, the buttons along the bottom of the phone app, and the search bar that finds almost anything.

CHAPTER 4

The Drive Website: Home, My Drive, Shared with Me and More

Open a web browser on your computer, type **drive.google.com** and sign in. Down the left side of the screen is a short list. Learn these few words and you'll never be lost in Drive.

Item	What's there
New	The button at the top left. Use it to upload files and folders or make a new folder or document.
Home	Where Drive opens. It shows suggested folders and files: things you've opened, shared or edited lately.
My Drive	All of your own files and folders, arranged the way you arranged them.
Computers	Shows up only if you use Google Drive for desktop to copy folders from a computer.
Shared with me	Files and folders other people have shared with you.
Recent	Files you've opened or changed lately, newest first.
Starred	Files and folders you've marked as important with a star.
Spam	Unwanted files people shared with you. Drive puts some there by itself; you can send others there too.
Trash	Files you deleted. They wait here 30 days, then they're gone for good. (Some countries call it Bin.)
Storage	How much of your space you've used, and a list of your biggest files.

TIP

Prefer to start in My Drive?

Home is the starting screen for most people. If you'd rather Drive always opened on your own folders, open **Settings** (the gear at the top right) and choose My Drive as your start page.

Grid or list?

Near the top right is a small switch that changes between a **list** (names in rows, with dates and sizes) and a **grid** (little pictures of each file). Neither is better. Many people find the list easier to read.

Your "get me home" move

Lost deep inside folders? Click **My Drive** or **Home** in the left-hand list and you're back at the start. The row of folder names above your files (called the *breadcrumb*) also lets you click back one level at a time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Make the words bigger

If Drive's text looks small, hold down the **Ctrl** key (or **Command** on a Mac) and tap the **+** key a few times. Every website gets bigger the same way. **Ctrl** and **0** puts it back to normal.

CHAPTER 5

The Drive App on Your Phone

The Drive app on an iPhone or Android phone holds the same files as the website. It's smaller, so Google tucks things into a bottom row of buttons and a menu.

Button	What it does
Home	Suggested files and recent activity, much like Home on the website.
Starred	Your starred files and folders.
Shared	Files and folders other people shared with you, and things you shared.
Files	All of your files. On iPhone you can switch between My Drive and Computers here.
Add button (+)	The colorful plus button at the bottom right. Upload, scan or make a new folder.
Menu (three lines)	At the top left. Leads to Trash, Spam, Offline files, Storage and Settings.
More (three dots)	Next to every file and folder. Share, star, move, rename, download and more.

GOOD TO KNOW

iPhone and Android look nearly the same

The two apps use the same names for almost everything. Where a button is different, I'll say so. If a word on your screen doesn't quite match, look for the **More** button (three dots) next to the file; nearly every action lives there.

A first look, step by step

1. Open the **Drive** app (a triangle in green, yellow and blue).
2. Tap **Files** at the bottom to see everything in My Drive.
3. Tap a folder to open it. Tap the back arrow at the top left to go back.
4. Tap any file to open it. Tap the back arrow or **X** to close it again.

CHAPTER 6

Finding Any File with Search

Drive's search bar is the fastest way to find anything. It looks at file names, and also at the words inside documents and PDFs, so you can search for a word you remember from the letter itself.

On the website

1. Click the search bar at the top that says **Search in Drive**.
2. Type a word or two, such as **insurance** or **tax 2025**, and press **Enter**.
3. To narrow it down, click a **filter chip** under the search bar: **Type** (PDF, document, photo), **People** (who owns or shared it) or **Modified** (when it was last changed).
4. Click the **X** on a chip to remove it, or clear them all and start over.

On your phone

Tap the search bar at the top of the Drive app, type your word and tap the search key. Chips for type and date appear here too, so you can narrow the list the same way.

Search tricks worth knowing

To find	Try this
A whole phrase	Put it in quotation marks: **"Smith family reunion"**
Only starred files	Type **is:starred** and a word
Only PDFs	Type **type:pdf** and a word, or use the Type chip
Something a person sent	Type the person's email address, or use the People chip

TIP

Can't find a file you know was there?

Check three places before you worry: **Shared with me** (maybe someone else owns it), **Trash** (maybe it was deleted in the last 30 days), and **Recent**. Google also has a help page called "Find lost files in Google Drive" with more ideas.

PART 3

Putting Things In

Uploading files and whole folders from a computer or phone, turning paper into a tidy PDF with your phone's camera, and the Drive for desktop program.

CHAPTER 7

Uploading Files and Folders from a Computer

"Uploading" just means copying a file from your computer up into Drive. The original stays on your computer; Drive gets its own copy.

Upload with the New button

1. Go to **drive.google.com** and open the folder you want the file to go into (or stay in My Drive).
2. Click **New** at the top left.
3. Click **File upload** to pick one or more files, or **Folder upload** to send a whole folder with everything inside it.
4. Find the file or folder on your computer, click it, then click **Open** (or **Upload**).
5. A small box at the bottom right shows the progress. When each file has a check mark, it's done.

Or simply drag it in

Open Drive in your browser and open the folder you want. Then drag a file or folder from your desktop or File Explorer (Finder on a Mac) and drop it onto the Drive window. That's all.

GOOD TO KNOW

Same name, new version

If you upload a file with exactly the same name as one already in that folder, Drive normally saves it as a newer **version** of the old file instead of making a second copy. If you want to keep both, choose the option to keep both files when Drive asks.

HEADS UP

Uploads use your storage

Everything you upload counts toward your 15 GB (or your paid plan). Big video files fill it quickly. Chapter 20 explains how storage works.

CHAPTER 8

Uploading from Your Phone

The Drive app can upload a file, a photo or a video straight from your phone. It's a handy way to get something from your phone onto your computer: upload it on the phone, then open Drive on the computer.

On an iPhone

1. Open the **Drive** app.
2. Tap the **Add** button (+) at the bottom right.
3. Tap **Upload**.
4. Choose where the file is: your photos, or your iPhone's Files. Tap the items you want.
5. Tap **Upload**. The files appear in My Drive, or in the folder you had open.

On an Android phone

1. Open the **Drive** app.
2. Tap the **New** or **Add** button (+) at the bottom right.
3. Tap **Upload**.
4. Find and tap the files you want. They appear in My Drive.

> TIP
>
> **Photos have a better home**
>
> If what you really want is to keep *all* your phone pictures safe, use Google Photos backup rather than uploading them to Drive one by one. My Google Photos manual walks through it. Drive is best for a few pictures you want to file with documents, or share as a folder.

Sending a file to Drive from another app

In many apps (Mail, Gmail, Files, Photos) the **Share** button lists **Drive** as a choice. Tap it, pick a folder and tap **Upload** or **Save**. It's a quick way to file an email attachment.

CHAPTER 9

Scanning Paper Documents with Your Phone

This is one of the most useful things Drive does. Your phone's camera can turn a paper document (a receipt, a prescription list, a Medicare card, a letter) into a clean, flat PDF saved in Drive. No scanner needed. Scanning is in the phone app; the Drive website can't do it.

Scan a document

1. Lay the paper flat on a table with good light. A dark tabletop helps the edges show up.
2. Open the **Drive** app and tap the **Add** button (+) at the bottom right.
3. Tap **Scan**. (On some phones the button shows a camera, or is labeled **Camera**.)
4. Point the phone at the page. A blue outline shows the edges Drive has found. Take the picture.
5. Crop or rotate if needed, and choose a filter if you like. For more pages, add another scan.
6. Give it a name you'll recognize, such as **Home insurance card 2026**, choose a folder and tap **Save**.

GOOD TO KNOW

PDF or picture

Scans are saved as a **PDF**, which is what doctors' offices and insurance companies usually want. On Android you can choose PDF or JPG before saving.

TIP

A shortcut on Android

Android phones can add a **Drive scan** widget to the Home screen, so scanning is one tap away. Touch and hold an empty spot on the Home screen, tap **Widgets**, and look under Drive.

STAY SAFE

Scanning private papers

A scanned Social Security card or bank statement is as sensitive as the paper itself. Keep such scans in a folder you **don't** share, and make sure your Google Account has 2-Step Verification turned on. My Your Google Account manual shows how.

CHAPTER 10

Google Drive for Desktop on Windows or Mac

Google Drive for desktop is a free program that makes Drive show up on your computer like an ordinary drive or folder. You can open, save and drag files there, and they appear on drive.google.com and in the phone app too. It's optional: plenty of people use only the website.

Install it on Windows

1. In your browser, search for **Google Drive for desktop** and open Google's own download page (on google.com), or go there from Google's help page.
2. Click **Download for Windows**.
3. Open the file you downloaded, **GoogleDriveSetup.exe**, and follow the steps on screen.
4. When the program opens, click **Get started**, then **Sign in**, and sign in with your Google Account.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **What you need**
> Windows 10 or later in the 64-bit version, or Windows 11 (including the newer ARM computers). On a Mac, you download **GoogleDrive.dmg** instead, open it and follow the steps.

Stream or mirror: the one choice that matters

Setting	What happens	Good for
Stream files (the normal setting)	Files stay in the cloud and download only when you open them, so they use very little room on your computer	Most people, and laptops with small drives
Mirror files	A full copy of everything in My Drive is kept on your computer, so it all works without internet	People who often work offline and have plenty of disk space

To change it, click the Drive icon near the clock (top of the screen on a Mac), click the gear for **Settings**, then **Preferences**, and look under the Google Drive or **Folders from Drive** section. Mirroring uses space on your computer, but it doesn't use any more of your Google storage.

HEADS UP

Switching from mirror back to stream

Let everything finish syncing first. Google warns that changes which haven't reached the cloud yet are lost if you delete the old mirrored folder too soon. This is a good one to do with help.

HEADS UP

Deleting is everywhere

A file you delete from the Google Drive folder on your computer is deleted from Drive on every device (it goes to Drive's Trash for 30 days). Treat that folder with the same care as the website.

PART 4

Organizing and Opening Files

Folders, colors and stars to keep things tidy; opening Google Docs, PDFs, pictures and Word or Excel files; downloading a copy; and using files without the internet.

CHAPTER 11

Folders: Make Them, Move Things In, Give Them Colors

A few well-named folders make Drive as easy as a good filing cabinet. You don't need many. Something like **Medical**, **House**, **Taxes**, **Insurance** and **Family pictures** covers most households.

Make a new folder

On the website	In the phone app
Click **New** > **New folder** (or **Folder**), type a name, click **Create**.	Tap **Add** (+) > **Folder**, type a name, tap **Create**.

Move a file into a folder

- **Website, by dragging:** drag the file onto the folder and let go.
- **Website, by menu:** right-click the file, point to **Organize**, click **Move**, pick the folder and click **Move**.
- **Phone:** tap **More** (three dots) next to the file, tap **Move**, choose the folder and tap **Move here**.

HEADS UP

Moving can change who sees it

A file in a shared folder can be seen by everyone that folder is shared with. Move a private file *into* a shared folder and those people can see it; move a file *out* and they may lose access. Take a second look before moving things in or out of shared folders.

Give a folder a color

Colors help your eye find the right folder. On the website, right-click a folder, point to **Organize**, then choose a **Folder color**. In the phone app, tap **More** next to the folder and tap **Change color**. Only you see your colors; they don't change anyone else's Drive.

Rename a file or folder

Right-click it on the website and choose **Rename**, or tap **More** > **Rename** in the app. A clear name like **Roof estimate - Smith Roofing - 2026** is worth a dozen folders.

TIP

Gemini can suggest folders

On the Drive website, Gemini can suggest folders for loose files, in English. It won't move anything until you say yes, and you can click **Undo** if you change your mind. Chapter 25 says more about Gemini in Drive.

CHAPTER 12

Stars, Recent and Home: Quick Ways Back to a File

You don't have to remember where you filed something if you've given yourself a shortcut back to it.

Shortcut	How it works
Star it	Website: right-click > **Organize** > **Add to starred**. Phone: **More** > **Add to starred**. Find it later under **Starred**.
Recent	Lists what you opened or changed lately. Perfect for "that thing I had open yesterday."
Home	Drive's own suggestions, chosen from what you've opened, shared or edited, and documents attached to upcoming Calendar events.

TIP

Star the five things you need most

The list of medicines, the insurance card scan, the emergency contacts: star them now, and they're two taps away at the doctor's office.

CHAPTER 13

Opening Docs, Sheets, PDFs and Pictures

To open almost anything in Drive, just double-click it on the website or tap it in the phone app. What happens next depends on the kind of file.

Kind of file	What happens
Google Docs, Sheets, Slides	Opens in Google's own editor in your browser. Changes save by themselves; there's no Save button.
PDF	Opens in Drive's viewer, where you can read, zoom, print or download it.
Pictures and videos	Open in a viewer. Use the arrows to see the next one.
Word, Excel, PowerPoint	Open in Google Docs, Sheets or Slides, and can be edited there. See Chapter 14.

GOOD TO KNOW

On a phone, Docs and Sheets have their own apps

On a phone, the Drive app can show you a preview of a Google Doc or Sheet. To **edit** it, the phone will offer to open the free **Google Docs** or **Google Sheets** app.

Printing

With a file open on the website, click the **printer** button at the top, or in a Google Doc choose **File** > **Print**. Your computer's normal print window opens. On a phone, look under **More** for **Print**, or open the file and use the share button.

CHAPTER 14

Word and Excel Files in Drive

Lots of documents still arrive as Microsoft Word (.docx) or Excel (.xlsx) files. Drive handles them well, and you don't need to buy Microsoft Office to read or edit them.

Three ways to work with them

Way	What happens
Edit as it is	Open it in Drive (for example, right-click > **Open with** > **Google Docs**) and edit. Google keeps it as a Word or Excel file and saves your changes in that same format, which is handy if you'll send it back to someone who uses Word.
Convert to Google	Make a Google Docs or Sheets copy of it. Converting always makes a **copy**; the original Office file stays as it was. Most people only need this for special features.
Use Word or Excel itself	With Google Drive for desktop, open the file from the Google Drive folder in Word or Excel and save as usual. The changes go back to Drive.

TIP

Which should I pick?

If you're only reading, just open it. If you're editing a letter to send back, editing it as it is is simplest. My Word & Google Docs manual goes into writing and formatting documents.

CHAPTER 15

Downloading a Copy, and Files Without Internet

Download a copy to your computer

1. Go to **drive.google.com**.
2. Right-click the file and click **Download**.
3. The file goes to your computer's **Downloads** folder.

For a Google Doc or Sheet, open it and choose **File** > **Download**, then pick a format such as Word or PDF.

Download to your phone

- **iPhone:** tap **More** next to the file, then **Open in** > **Save to Files**, pick a place and tap **Save**. For a photo or video, use **Send a copy** to save it to your Photos.
- **Android:** tap **More** next to the file, then **Download**.

Make files available offline

Traveling, or visiting somewhere without good Wi-Fi? Mark the files you'll need as **available offline** before you go, and they'll open with no internet at all.

Where	How
Phone (Android)	Tap **More** next to the file > **Make available offline**. Find them later under **Menu** > **Offline**.
Phone (iPhone)	Tap **More** next to the file and turn on **Available offline**. To edit a Doc or Sheet offline, use the Google Docs or Sheets app.
Computer (website)	Use Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge. Turn on **Offline** in Drive's **Settings** (gear), then right-click a Doc, Sheet or Slides file > **Make available offline**.
Computer (Drive for desktop)	Right-click the file or folder > **Offline access** > **Available offline**. With Mirror, everything is offline already.

GOOD TO KNOW

Offline files take room on the device

An offline file is a real copy kept on your phone or computer, so it uses some of that device's space. When the trip is over, you can turn offline off again.

PART 5

Sharing Safely

How sharing really works, step-by-step sharing on a computer and a phone, checking who can see your files, taking sharing back, and handling files other people share with you.

CHAPTER 16

How Sharing Works: People, Links and Roles

Sharing is Drive's superpower. Instead of emailing a big attachment, you give someone permission to open the file where it already lives. You decide two things each time: **who** can open it, and **what** they're allowed to do.

Who: specific people, or anyone with the link

General access setting	Who can open the file	When to use it
Restricted (the normal setting)	Only the people you've added by email address, signed in to their Google Account	Almost always. Private papers, family documents.
Anyone with the link	Anyone on the internet who has the link, without signing in. If the link is forwarded, the new person can open it too.	Things you'd be comfortable seeing on a bulletin board, like a club flyer or party photos.

What: the three roles

Role	What they can do
Viewer	Can open and read it, but can't change it, comment on it or share it with anyone else.
Commenter	Can read it and leave comments or suggestions, but can't change the file itself.
Editor	Can change, move and delete things, and normally can share it with other people too.

STAY SAFE

Bill's rule of thumb

Share with **specific people**, as **Viewer**, unless there's a real reason to do otherwise. Give Editor only to people you'd hand the original paper to. And never use "Anyone with the link" for anything with account numbers, medical details or your address.

Sharing a folder shares everything in it

When you share a folder, people get the same access to every file inside it, including files you add later. That's perfect for a **Family pictures** folder, and a reason to keep private papers in a different, unshared folder.

GOOD TO KNOW

Editors can reshare

By default, an Editor can add other people. To stop that, open the **Share** box, click the **Settings** gear in it, and turn off the option that lets editors change permissions and share.

CHAPTER 17

Share a File or Folder, Step by Step

On the website

1. Go to **drive.google.com** and click once on the file or folder.
2. Click **Share** (a person with a plus sign), or right-click and choose **Share**.
3. Type the person's email address. Pick a role next to it: **Viewer**, **Commenter** or **Editor**.
4. Leave **Notify people** checked so they get an email, and add a short message if you like.
5. Click **Send** (or **Share**).

On your phone

1. In the Drive app, tap **More** (three dots) next to the file or folder.
2. Tap **Share**.
3. Type an email address, choose the role, and tap **Send**.

Sharing with a link instead

1. Open the **Share** box as above. (On a phone, tap **More** > **Manage access**.)
2. Under **General access**, choose **Anyone with the link**, and choose **Viewer**.
3. Click or tap **Copy link**, then **Done**.
4. Paste the link into a text or an email to the people you want.

HEADS UP

A link travels

A link can be forwarded, posted or copied, and anyone who gets it can open the file. Use it only for things that wouldn't matter if a stranger saw them, and switch it back to **Restricted** when the event is over (Chapter 18).

GOOD TO KNOW

Expiration dates

Google lets work and school accounts set an expiration date so someone's access ends automatically. Google's help says this is only for eligible work or school accounts, so on a personal Gmail account you'll usually need to remove access yourself when you're done.

CHAPTER 18

Check Who Has Access, and Stop Sharing

It's good housekeeping to look now and then at who can see your important files. Taking sharing back takes less than a minute.

See who has access

Click the file once and click **Share**. The box lists every person who has access and their role, and under **General access** says whether a link works for anyone. On a phone, tap **More** > **Manage access**.

Remove one person

1. Open the **Share** box for the file or folder.
2. Next to the person's name, click the arrow by their role.
3. Click **Remove access**, then **Save**.

On Android, tap **More** > **Manage access**, tap the person, then **Remove**.

Turn off a link

1. Open the **Share** box.
2. Under **General access**, click the arrow and choose **Restricted**.
3. Click **Done**. The old link stops working for anyone you didn't add by name.

HEADS UP

Shared through a folder?

If someone has access because the whole *folder* is shared with them, removing them from one file inside may not be enough. Remove them from the folder itself.

TIP

Deleting isn't unsharing

Removing a file you own from your Drive moves it to your Trash, and after that people lose it. But removing a file someone else owns only takes it out of *your* view; everyone else still has it.

CHAPTER 19

Files Other People Share with You

When someone shares a file with you, Google usually sends an email that says something like "*Name* shared a document with you," with an **Open** button. The file also appears in Drive under **Shared with me** (or **Shared** in the phone app).

Find it again later

Open Drive and click **Shared with me**. Use the **People** chip at the top to see only files from one person, such as your daughter.

Tidy up the list

In the Android app, tap **Shared**, tap **More** next to a file, and tap **Remove**. On other devices, look for **Remove** in the same right-click or More menu. This only clears it from your list; if you open the file again later, it comes back into Shared with me.

GOOD TO KNOW

Shared files don't use your storage

Files other people own and share with you count only toward *their* storage, not yours.

SCAM ALERT

A share from a stranger

Anyone who knows your email address can share a file with you. A share from someone you don't know, especially one that urges you to click a link inside it, is almost always spam or a scam. Chapter 27 shows how to report and block it.

PART 6

Storage, Google One and Your Plan

Why Drive, Gmail and Google Photos share one 15 GB allowance, how to see what's using it, how to clear space safely, what the paid plans cost, and sharing a plan with family.

CHAPTER 20

Your 15 GB: Shared with Gmail and Google Photos

Here's the single most important thing to understand about Google storage. Every Google Account comes with **15 GB** of free space, and that one allowance is **shared by three services**: Google Drive, Gmail and Google Photos. A big pile of emails with attachments, or years of phone pictures, can fill up Drive even if you've never put a single file in it.

What counts, and what doesn't

Counts toward your 15 GB	Doesn't count
Files you upload or own in Drive, including Docs and Sheets made or changed since June 1, 2021	Files other people own and shared with you
Gmail messages and attachments, **including Spam and Trash**	Files in a shared folder that belong to someone else
Photos and videos backed up to Google Photos	Google Keep notes and YouTube videos
Files sitting in Drive's **Trash**, until it's emptied	

See how much you've used

- **Website:** in Drive, click **Storage** in the left-hand list. It shows how much of your space is used. For the full picture across Drive, Gmail and Photos, go to **one.google.com/storage**.
- **iPhone:** in the Drive app, tap **Menu** (three lines) > **Storage**.
- **Android:** in the Drive app, tap **Menu** > **Settings**, where you'll find your storage and **Upgrade storage**. Or use one.google.com/storage in the phone's browser.

What happens when it's full

Google says that if you go over your limit, new photos and videos **stop backing up** to Google Photos, you may not be able to **send or receive Gmail** (messages can bounce back to the sender), and you can't upload or make new files in Drive. Nothing you already have is deleted right away. But if you stay over the limit for **two years**, Google may delete your content, after warning you.

HEADS UP

A full account can cost you email

The part that catches people out is Gmail. If your storage is full, important messages from your doctor or bank may not arrive. If Google says you're full, deal with it within a few days.

SCAM ALERT

Real warnings show inside Google

A real "storage full" warning also shows up inside Drive, Gmail or Google One when you open them yourself. If an email or text says your Google storage is full and pushes you to click a link and pay, don't click. Open Drive yourself and check. Chapter 27 has more.

CHAPTER 21

Clearing Space Safely

Before paying for more space, it's worth a short tidy-up. A few large files usually make most of the difference. Go slowly: anything you *permanently* delete is gone.

Step 1: Find the biggest files in Drive

1. Go to **drive.google.com** and click **Storage** on the left (or go straight to **drive.google.com/drive/quota**).
2. Your files are listed from largest to smallest. Click **Storage used** to flip the order.
3. Right-click anything you truly don't need and click **Move to trash**.

Step 2: Use Google One's cleanup tool

1. On a computer, go to **one.google.com/storage**.
2. Look for the cleanup option (Google labels it **Clean up space** or **Free up account storage**).
3. Review each group it suggests: large files in Drive, emails with big attachments, deleted items, spam, large photos and videos.
4. Tick only what you're sure about, then delete. You'll be asked to confirm.

Step 3: Empty the bins

Drive's Trash and Gmail's Trash and Spam all still count against your space. Empty them once you're sure nothing in them is needed. (They also empty themselves after 30 days.)

GOOD TO KNOW

Be patient

After a big clean-up, Google says it can take **48 to 72 hours** for the storage number to catch up. Don't keep deleting more because the number hasn't moved yet.

TIP

Gmail is often the culprit

In Gmail, searching for **has:attachment larger:10M** finds emails with attachments over 10 MB. My Gmail manual covers cleaning up the inbox, and my Google Photos manual covers photo storage.

STAY SAFE

Download before you delete

If a video or a folder of pictures matters to you but you need the space, download a copy to your computer or an external drive first. My Backing Up Everything manual explains good places to keep it.

CHAPTER 22

Google One and Google AI Plans: What They Cost

If tidying up isn't enough, you can buy more space. Google's paid storage plans are sold under the **Google One** name, and the larger ones are now called **Google AI** plans because they also include extra Gemini features. You pay monthly (some plans offer a yearly discount), and you can cancel.

U.S. plans, November 2026

Plan	Storage	About per month
Free	15 GB	$0.00
Google One Basic	100 GB	$1.99
Google AI Plus	400 GB	about $4.99
Google AI Plus (2 TB)	2 TB	about $9.99
Google AI Pro	5 TB	$19.99
Google AI Ultra	20 TB or more	from about $99.99

Google's own pages didn't all agree on the Google AI Plus prices in November 2026, after Google changed that plan in mid-2026, so **check the current price** at **one.google.com/about/plans** before you buy. Prices outside the U.S. are different. A smaller **Lite** plan (30 GB) is offered only in some countries.

TIP

Bill's honest advice

For most households that only need room for email, documents and photos, the **100 GB plan** or the **400 GB Google AI Plus** plan is plenty. You don't need a Pro or Ultra plan just for storage. Clean up first (Chapter 21); you may not need to buy anything.

How to buy more storage

- **Computer:** go to **one.google.com**, choose a plan and follow the steps.
- **iPhone:** in the Drive app, tap **Menu** > **Storage**, then **Buy storage**. If you buy through the App Store, Apple bills you and you manage it in your iPhone's subscriptions.
- **Android:** in the Drive app, tap **Menu** > **Settings** > **Upgrade storage**, pick a plan and tap **Subscribe**.

GOOD TO KNOW

It can take a little while

Google says new storage can take up to 24 hours to show up after you buy it.

SCAM ALERT

Google won't call you to sell storage

Buy storage only from inside Drive, the Google One app or one.google.com. A phone call, pop-up or email offering a storage "upgrade" or "renewal" with a link or a phone number is a scam.

CHAPTER 23

Sharing Your Storage with Family

One paid plan can be shared with your **family group**: you and up to **five** other people. It's often cheaper than everyone buying their own plan.

How family sharing works

- Each person keeps their own free 15 GB, then draws from the shared pool when they need more.
- **Nobody can see anyone else's files, emails or photos.** You share the space, not the contents.
- The person who buys the plan is the **family manager**. Members must live in the same country.
- Google's help page says storage sharing is offered on **Google AI Plus (2 TB)** and larger plans. It isn't offered on the Lite plan. If you have a smaller plan, check in Google One whether sharing is available to you.

Turning it on

First, the family manager sets up a **family group** on Google (at **families.google.com**) and invites each member by email; they accept the invitation. Then, in Google One (the app or **one.google.com**), open **Settings** and look for the option to share Google One with your family, and turn it on.

HEADS UP

One family group at a time

A person can be in only one Google family group. Google also limits how often someone can switch groups, so think it through before you leave one family group to join another.

TIP

A good job for a visit

Setting up a family group across several phones and accounts is fiddly. If you'd like, I can do it with you, on the phone or in person.

PART 7

Deleted Files, Gemini and Planning Ahead

Getting a deleted file back from the Trash, a short and honest look at Gemini in Drive, and what happens to your files if your account goes unused.

CHAPTER 24

Trash: Getting a Deleted File Back

Deleted something by mistake? Take a breath. In Drive, a deleted file isn't gone yet. It goes to the **Trash** and waits there for **30 days**. After 30 days, it's deleted forever.

Get it back on a computer

1. Go to **drive.google.com**.
2. Click **Trash** on the left.
3. Right-click the file you want and click **Restore**.
4. It goes back to the folder it came from. If that folder is gone, look in **My Drive**.

Get it back on a phone

1. Open the **Drive** app.
2. Tap **Menu** (three lines) at the top left, then tap **Trash**.
3. Tap **More** (three dots) next to the file, then tap **Restore**.

> HEADS UP
> **"Empty trash" means gone**
> The **Empty trash** button deletes everything in the Trash forever, right away, and so does **Delete forever** on a single file. Only use them when you're certain.

If it's no longer in the Trash

- **Search first.** The file may have been moved, not deleted. Search for a word in its name.
- **Check Shared with me.** If someone else owned it and removed it, it's their Trash, not yours. Ask them to restore it.
- **Ask Google.** Google's "Recover a deleted file" help page says you may be able to get back some recently deleted-forever files, and offers a way to request help. Act quickly; there's no guarantee.
- **Check your own copies**: a computer, an external drive or an email you sent with it attached.

TIP

Work or school account?

If your Drive belongs to an employer or school, their administrator may be able to recover a file for a short time after the Trash is emptied. Contact them rather than Google.

CHAPTER 25

Gemini in Drive, Briefly

Gemini is Google's AI assistant. In Drive it can summarize a long document or PDF in a few sentences, answer questions about your files, and suggest folders for loose files. My Google Gemini manual covers Gemini in full; here's what matters for Drive.

Who gets it

For personal Google Accounts, Google says the AI features in Drive come with a paid **Google AI Plus**, **Google AI Pro** or **Google AI Ultra** plan. Some newer features are offered first to people who sign up for Google's test programs, and not everything is in every language.

Try a summary

1. On **drive.google.com**, click once on a document or PDF.
2. Click **Summarize** in the bar that appears at the top, or click **Ask Gemini** at the top right to open the Gemini panel.
3. Read the summary. Click **See more** for a longer one, or type a question such as "When is the payment due?"

On an Android phone, tap **More** next to a file and tap **Summarize**.

HEADS UP

Double-check what matters

Gemini can get things wrong. Use a summary to decide what to read, not instead of reading. For a bill, a contract or anything medical, check the original document yourself.

GOOD TO KNOW

No plan? Drive still works

Everything else in this guide works without any Gemini features. If you don't pay for a Google AI plan, you simply won't see these buttons, and that's fine.

CHAPTER 26

Inactive Accounts and Planning Ahead

Two things are worth knowing for the long term: Google's rule about unused accounts, and a tool that lets you decide who gets your files if you can no longer use your account.

Google's inactive account policy

Google may delete a personal Google Account, and everything in it, including Drive, Gmail and Photos, if it hasn't been used for **two years**. Before that, Google sends warning emails to the account and to its recovery email. Signing in, reading Gmail or using Drive now and then keeps an account active.

> TIP
> **An account you look after for someone**
> If you keep an older relative's Google Account going, or an account with family pictures in it, sign in to it at least once a year.

Inactive Account Manager

Inactive Account Manager is a free Google tool for your own plan. You choose how long Google should wait after you stop using your account, and then whom to tell and what they can download, such as your Drive files and photos.

1. On a computer or phone, go to **myaccount.google.com/inactive** and sign in.
2. Choose how long Google should wait before it acts.
3. Add up to **10** trusted people, and choose what each one can download.
4. Optionally, tell Google to delete the account afterward.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Your contacts aren't told now**
> The people you choose aren't notified when you set this up. They only hear from Google if your account has been inactive for the time you picked. It's kind to tell them yourself.

STAY SAFE

When a loved one has passed

Families can ask Google about a deceased person's account through Google's "Submit a request regarding a deceased user's account" form. My Your Google Account manual covers this gently and in more detail.

PART 8

Scams, Help and Your Cheat-Sheet

The tricks that use Drive's name, how to report and block unwanted shares, an honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary.

CHAPTER 27

Drive Scams: Fake Shares, Storage-Full Emails and Spam

Because so many people trust Google, scammers borrow Drive's name. Three tricks come up again and again. Each one is easy to beat once you know it.

1. The fake "shared a document with you"

Google itself warns that scammers share Drive files containing harmful links that ask you to type in information. Because Drive's sharing emails really are sent by Google, they can look completely genuine. The danger is what's *inside* the shared file: a button saying "View invoice," "Claim your refund" or "Sign in to see the document."

SCAM ALERT

"Someone you don't know shared a file with you"

If you don't know the sender, or you weren't expecting the file, don't open it, and never click a link inside it. If a page asks for your Google password after you click something, close it. Google says to go straight to the website you want instead of entering your password from a link.

2. The "your storage is full" email or text

These messages say your Google or "cloud" storage is full and that your photos or account will be deleted within hours unless you click and pay. The link leads to a fake page that wants your card number or password. Consumer-security writers have reported waves of these in 2025 and 2026.

SCAM ALERT

"Your photos will be deleted in 24 hours"

Don't click. Open Drive or **one.google.com/storage** yourself, by typing it in or using the app. If you really are full, you'll see it there. If everything looks fine, the message was a scam. Google doesn't threaten to delete your photos overnight.

3. Spam shares

Anyone who knows your email address can share a file with you, and there's no setting to stop that entirely. Drive moves many of these into the **Spam** section by itself. For the rest,

you can report and block.

Report a spam share and block the sender

1. On **drive.google.com**, open **Shared with me** and right-click the unwanted file.
2. Click **Block or report**, then **Report**. Choose what kind of content it is, and tick the box to block the person if you like.
3. The file moves to **Spam** and is deleted after 30 days.

On a phone, tap **More** next to the file and tap **Report**. You can also block a sender straight from a Drive sharing email: click **Block the sender** at the bottom of that email.

GOOD TO KNOW

What blocking does

A blocked person can't share files with you, and you can't see each other's files. To undo a block, go to **Manage your Google Account** > **People & sharing** > **Blocked**.

Report the email too

In Gmail on a computer, open the suspicious message, click **More** (three dots) next to **Reply**, and click **Report phishing**. In the Gmail phone app, use **Report spam**. You can also report scams to the Federal Trade Commission at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

TIP

Already clicked or typed your password?

Don't panic. Change your Google password right away from **myaccount.google.com**, then check **myaccount.google.com/notifications** for recent security activity. If you typed a card number, call the number on the back of the card. And call me if you'd like help checking everything over.

CHAPTER 28

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can handle most of Drive on your own. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time, worry or money, so here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **"Storage full"** and you're not sure what's using it. We'll find the real culprits across Drive, Gmail and Photos, and choose between cleaning up and a plan, without deleting anything you care about.
- **Organizing years of files** into a few sensible folders, and scanning the important papers.
- **Setting up sharing** with your family, or a family storage plan across several phones.
- **Checking what you've shared**, and with whom, and closing any open links.
- **Installing Google Drive for desktop** and choosing stream or mirror.
- **Inactive Account Manager** and a plan so your files reach the right people.
- **An email, share or pop-up you're not sure about.** Ask before you click.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace: no rushing, no talking down, and no jargon. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I'll tell you honestly when a storage plan isn't worth your money. I serve Portage County, Ohio, and I bring more than 30 years of professional experience to every visit.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. Help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. If I'm with another customer, my AI receptionist, Sophie, will answer and make sure I get back to you. No question is too small.

Thank you for letting me help you with Google Drive. Your papers and pictures are precious, and now you know how to keep them tidy, share them safely and get them back if something goes wrong.

— Bill

CHAPTER 29

Your Google Drive Cheat-Sheet

Print just this page and keep it by your computer. The whole guide, boiled down.

Where things are

I want	Go here
Drive on a computer	**drive.google.com**
My own files	**My Drive** (website) or **Files** (phone app)
Files people sent me	**Shared with me** (website) or **Shared** (phone app)
Things I deleted	**Trash**, kept 30 days. Phone: **Menu** > **Trash**
How full am I?	**Storage** on the left, or **one.google.com/storage**
Plans and prices	**one.google.com/about/plans**
Planning ahead	**myaccount.google.com/inactive**

Everyday moves

To do this	Do this
Upload a file	Website: **New** > **File upload**. Phone: **+** > **Upload**.
Scan a paper	Phone app: **+** > **Scan**, then **Save**.
New folder	Website: **New** > folder. Phone: **+** > **Folder**.
Share with one person	**Share**, type their email, choose **Viewer**, **Send**.
Stop sharing	**Share** > arrow by their name > **Remove access** > **Save**.
Turn off a link	**Share** > General access > **Restricted** > **Done**.
Get a file back	**Trash** > right-click > **Restore**.

Keep handy

Item	
My Google Account email	_____
My storage plan (if any)	_____
Family members sharing my plan	_____

Item	
My Inactive Account Manager contacts	_____

Safety, in three lines

- Never click a link inside a file shared by someone you don't know.
- Never click a "storage full" link. Open Drive or one.google.com yourself to check.
- Share with specific people as Viewer; use "Anyone with the link" only for things anyone could see.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

You've got this

You can now put files into Drive, find them in seconds, share them safely and get them back if they go missing. When you'd like a hand, call (330) 200-8042.