BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Google Maps

Directions, offline maps, saved places, Street View and family location sharing, one calm step at a time

A plain-English guide for iPhone and Android

Take your time — you can't break it

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For Google Maps on iPhone & Android · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your Google Maps manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Every feature comes with what it actually does *for you*, plus slow, step-by-step directions anyone can follow. It's written for the current Google Maps app on iPhone and Android phones in November 2026. Google updates the app often, so if a button looks a little different on yours, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What Google Maps is, how to get it on your phone, and how to let it know where you are. Ten calm minutes here make everything else easy.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you've ever pulled over to squint at a paper map, missed a turn because the directions on a sticky note didn't match the signs, or felt a little nervous driving somewhere new, this manual is for **you**. Google Maps is one of the most useful things a phone can do, and you don't need to be "good with technology" to use it well.

I'm Bill. For more than 30 years I've helped folks feel at home with their technology, and here in Portage County a lot of that help is about getting from here to there: the doctor's new office, a grandchild's game two towns over, or a trip out of state. I wrote this manual the way I'd explain Google Maps sitting beside you in the passenger seat: slowly, in plain English, one tap at a time. Whenever a new word comes up, I'll stop and explain it.

What Google Maps does, in one breath

Google Maps is a free map on your phone that knows where you are, finds almost any place you can name, and then **talks you there**, turn by turn, in a friendly voice. It watches traffic, warns you about slowdowns, and can even work when you lose your signal out in the country, if you plan ahead. It can also let family see that you got home safely, if you choose to share.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this manual does for you

By the end you'll be able to find a place, get directions, follow spoken turn-by-turn navigation, save your favorite spots, use maps without a signal, peek at a street before you go, share your location with family, and keep your privacy where you want it. Most of all, you'll feel confident heading somewhere new.

The big promise: you can't break it

Here's the most important thing in this manual. **You can't break Google Maps by tapping around.** The worst that happens is the map slides somewhere you didn't expect, or a menu opens that you didn't mean to open. There's always a way back: the back arrow at the top left, or simply closing the app and opening it again. So relax and explore. Curiosity is how everyone learns.

How to use this manual

- **Read in any order.** Each chapter stands on its own. If you only want directions today, jump to Chapter 9.
- **It works for iPhone and Android.** Google Maps looks almost the same on both. When a button is in a different spot, I'll tell you both ways.
- **Bold words** are the exact words you'll see on your screen. The sign **>** means "then tap." So **Profile picture > Settings** means tap your profile picture, then tap Settings.
- **Screens change a little over time.** Google updates the app often. If a button has moved, the idea is still the same, and the steps here will get you close.

STAY SAFE

One rule above all

Set up your trip **before** you start driving. Never type, search or fiddle with the map while the car is moving. Pull over somewhere safe, or hand the phone to a passenger. Google Maps is designed to talk to you so your eyes can stay on the road.

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, with no judgment. There's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Google Maps Is (and Isn't)

Before we tap anything, let's clear up a few things people often wonder about. Knowing what Google Maps is, and what it isn't, takes a lot of the worry out of using it.

It's free, and it's made by Google

Google Maps costs nothing to download or use. There's no subscription. It's made by Google, the same company behind Google Search, Gmail and Android phones. You'll sometimes see small ads or promoted businesses in search results; Google labels paid content in Maps, and you never have to tap them.

How it knows where you are

Your phone has a **GPS** receiver inside. GPS stands for Global Positioning System; it listens to satellites high overhead and works out where you are, usually to within a few feet. Your phone also uses nearby Wi-Fi and cell towers to help. On the map, **you are the blue dot**.

What it needs to work

What it needs	Why
Location turned on	Your phone has to let Google Maps use your location. Chapter 4 shows how.
An internet connection	For searching, traffic and live directions, Maps uses your cell data or Wi-Fi. A typical drive uses only a little data. If you know you'll lose signal, download an offline map first (Chapter 18).
Sound turned up	For spoken directions, your phone's volume needs to be up and Maps needs permission to use the speaker or your car's Bluetooth.
A charged phone	Navigation uses the screen, GPS and speaker, so it drains the battery faster than usual. A car charger is your friend (Chapter 19).

Google Maps vs. Apple Maps

If you have an iPhone, it already came with **Apple Maps**, Apple's own map app. Google Maps is a separate app that you add for free. Both are good. Many people like Google Maps because it has detailed business listings, Street View photos of nearly every road, and it works the same on iPhone and Android, which makes it easier for families to help each other. You can keep both on your phone; they don't interfere with each other.

On an Android phone, Google Maps is almost always already installed, because Google makes Android.

What it isn't

- **It isn't always right.** Roads close, businesses move, and construction pops up. When the signs on the road disagree with the map, **follow the signs**. Google says the same thing in its own help pages.
- **It isn't watching you for anyone else.** Nobody can see where you are unless you choose to share your location with them (Chapter 22).
- **It isn't a replacement for common sense.** If a route sends you down a farm lane in a snowstorm, you're allowed to say no and stay on the main road.

GOOD TO KNOW

A word about "AI"

In 2026 Google added its **Gemini** AI helper to Maps. You can ask questions in plain words, like "Where can I get lunch on the way?" It's handy, but it's optional, and everything else in Maps works exactly the same without it. Chapter 21 explains it.

CHAPTER 3

Getting the App & Signing In

Let's get Google Maps onto your phone and connected to your Google Account. If it's already there, skim this chapter to be sure you're signed in; signing in is what lets Maps remember your home address and saved places.

On an iPhone

1. Open the **App Store** (a blue icon with a white "A").
2. Tap **Search** at the bottom and type **Google Maps**.
3. Find the one made by **Google**, with a colorful map-pin icon. Check the name under it says Google LLC.
4. Tap **Get**. You may need to confirm with Face ID, Touch ID or your Apple Account password. It's free.
5. When it finishes, tap **Open**.

On an Android phone

Look on your home screen or in your list of apps for **Maps**, with the colorful pin icon. It's usually already there. If not, open the **Play Store**, search for **Google Maps**, and tap **Install**. If it's there but old, the Play Store will show **Update**; tap it.

SCAM ALERT

Only the real app

Download Google Maps only from the App Store or Play Store, and only the one made by Google. Never install a "map" or "GPS" app from a link in a text message, email or pop-up ad. Some fake apps charge weekly subscriptions or show endless ads. Google Maps itself is always free.

Signing in to your Google Account

A **Google Account** is the same account you use for Gmail or YouTube. Signing in lets Maps save your places and share your location if you want. Android phones are usually signed in already.

1. Open Google Maps.
2. Look at the top right of the search bar. If you see a small round **profile picture** or your initial, you're signed in. You're done.

3. If you see a gray person shape or a **Sign in** button, tap it.
4. Choose your Google Account, or enter your Gmail address and password.
5. Follow the prompts. If you don't have a Google Account, you can create one for free right there.

> **TIP**
>
> **Not signed in? Maps still works**
>
> You can search and get directions without signing in. You just won't be able to save places, set a home address in your account, or share your location. Many people sign in later, once they're comfortable.

Keeping the app up to date

Google improves Maps often. New features only show up in newer versions, and updates also fix problems. Most phones update apps automatically. To check by hand, open the App Store (tap your picture at the top right to see pending updates) or the Play Store (tap your picture > **Manage apps & device**), and update Google Maps if it's listed.

CHAPTER 4

Letting Maps Know Where You Are

Google Maps needs to know where you are to give directions from your spot. The first time you open it, your phone asks permission. Here's what to choose, and how to fix it if you said no by accident.

The permission question

When Maps first asks to use your location, you'll see a few choices. Here's what they mean in plain words:

Choice	What it means
While Using the App	Maps sees your location only while it's open on the screen or navigating. **This is the right choice for most people.**
Allow Once	Maps can see your location this one time. It will ask again next time, which gets tiresome.
Always	Maps can see your location even when it's closed. Only needed for a few extras, like some location-sharing and Timeline features. You can switch later if you need them.
Don't Allow	Maps can't find you. It still shows maps, but it can't give directions from where you are.

Precise location

Both iPhone and Android also have a **Precise** (or **Use precise location**) switch. Leave it **on** for Maps. Without it, Maps only knows your rough area, which isn't good enough to tell you which street to turn onto.

If you said "Don't Allow" by mistake

On an iPhone

1. Open the **Settings** app (the gray gear).
2. Scroll down and tap **Apps**, then **Google Maps**. (On some versions, Google Maps is listed directly in Settings near the bottom.)
3. Tap **Location**.
4. Choose **While Using the App**, and make sure **Precise Location** is on (green).

On an Android phone

1. Open the **Settings** app.

2. Tap **Location** and make sure **Use location** is on.
3. Tap **App location permissions** (on some phones, **App permissions**), then **Maps**.
4. Choose **Allow only while using the app** and turn on **Use precise location**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menus vary a little

Phone makers word these settings slightly differently, and they move between software versions. If you can't find them, open Settings and type **location** into the search box at the top.

The blue dot and the beam

Once Maps can find you, you'll see a **blue dot** on the map. That's you. A lighter blue **beam**, like a flashlight, shows which way your phone is pointing. A pale blue circle around the dot means Maps isn't completely sure; the bigger the circle, the less sure it is.

- **To jump back to yourself** after moving the map around, tap the round **my location** button (it looks like a target or arrow) near the bottom right.
- **If the beam is wide or pointing the wrong way,** tap the blue dot. Maps may offer **Calibrate**; follow the steps, which usually involve pointing your phone at buildings and signs or gently moving the phone. Calibrating helps the beam point the right way.
- **Indoors, the dot can wander.** GPS works best outside with a view of the sky.

TIP

Turn on Wi-Fi, even away from home

Leaving Wi-Fi switched on (even when you're not connected to a network) helps your phone find its location faster and more accurately, especially in town. It doesn't cost anything.

PART 2

Finding Your Way Around

The main screen, searching for a place, reading a place's page, and changing how the map looks. This is where Google Maps starts to feel friendly.

CHAPTER 5

The Main Screen, Piece by Piece

When you open Google Maps, you see a map centered on your blue dot, a search bar at the top, and a row of tabs along the bottom. Let's take a slow tour.

Across the top

What you see	What it's for
The search bar	Says something like **Search here**. Tap it to type or speak a place, an address or a kind of business.
The microphone	Inside the search bar. Tap it and say what you're looking for instead of typing.
Your profile picture	At the right end of the search bar. This opens your settings, offline maps, location sharing, Timeline and Incognito mode. You'll tap it often.
Ask Maps	On newer versions, a button under the search bar for asking questions in plain words (Chapter 21). If you don't see it yet, that's fine.
Shortcut chips	A row of small buttons such as **Restaurants**, **Gas** or **Groceries**. Tap one to see those places nearby. Swipe the row sideways for more.

On the map itself

- **Layers button** (a small stack of squares, near the top right): changes the map style and adds traffic or other details. See Chapter 8.
- **Compass**: appears when you've turned the map. Tap it to point north up again.
- **My location button** (bottom right): brings the map back to your blue dot.
- **Directions button** (a blue diamond with an arrow, or a **Go** button): starts directions.

Along the bottom: the tabs

Google rearranges these tabs from time to time, and iPhone and Android can differ. On most phones in late 2026 you'll find tabs like these:

Tab	What's there
Explore	The main map, with ideas for things nearby.
You (or Saved)	Your saved places and lists, such as Favorites and Want to go. Android calls this **You**; on iPhone it may say **Saved**.
Contribute	Where you can add reviews and photos. Completely optional.

Moving the map with your fingers

To do this	Do this
Slide the map	Put one finger on the map and drag.
Zoom in (closer)	Spread two fingers apart on the screen, or double-tap with one finger.
Zoom out (farther)	Pinch two fingers together.
Turn the map	Put two fingers down and twist. Tap the compass to straighten it.
Tilt for a 3D look	Slide two fingers up the screen together.
Learn about a spot	Tap a place name or pin. A card slides up from the bottom.
Drop a pin anywhere	Touch and hold an empty spot on the map until a red pin appears.

TIP

Lost on the map? Tap the target

If you've slid the map so far you can't find your way back, just tap the **my location** button at the bottom right. The map snaps right back to your blue dot. It's your "home" button.

CHAPTER 6

Searching for a Place

Almost everything in Google Maps begins with a search. The good news: you can type it any way you like. Google is very forgiving about spelling and wording.

Search by name, address or kind of place

1. Tap the **search bar** at the top.
2. Type what you want. Any of these work: a business name (**Giant Eagle**), a full address (**123 Main St, Ravenna OH**), a kind of place (**pharmacy**), or a landmark (**Kent State University**).
3. As you type, suggestions appear below. Tap the one you mean.
4. If you searched for a kind of place, you'll see a list and red pins on the map. Tap one to learn more.

Search with your voice

1. Tap the **microphone** in the search bar.
2. The first time, allow Maps to use the microphone.
3. Speak normally: "Post office near me" or "Cleveland Clinic Akron General."
4. Tap the result you want.

Helpful ways to word a search

- **"near me"** — "coffee near me" shows the closest ones first.
- **"open now"** — "hardware store open now" leaves out places that are closed.
- **A town name** — "library Hudson Ohio" when you're planning a trip somewhere else.
- **A phone number** — you can even search for a business by its phone number.

Narrowing the list with filters

When a list of places appears, look just under the search bar for small filter buttons such as **Open now**, **Top rated** or **Distance**. Tap one to narrow the list. Tap it again to remove the filter. Which filters appear depends on what you searched for.

Your recent searches

When you tap the search bar, Maps shows places you've searched for recently. Tap one to go there again without retyping. To clear your search history, see Chapter 26.

STAY SAFE

Searching for a phone number? Be careful

When you need a company's customer service line (an airline, a bank, a computer company), don't just call the first number that appears in a map listing. Scammers sometimes plant fake numbers. Get the number from the company's own website, your statement or the back of your card. Chapter 27 explains why.

CHAPTER 7

Reading a Place's Page

When you tap a place, a card slides up from the bottom. Swipe it up to see the full page. This page is a little treasure chest of useful information.

What's on a place's page

Item	What it tells you
Name, type and rating	For example "Hardware store · 4.6 stars (312)." The number in parentheses is how many reviews there are.
Open or closed	Shows today's hours, like **Open · Closes 8 PM**. Tap it to see the whole week.
Directions	The big button that starts directions (Chapter 9).
Call	Tap to phone the place. Fine for an ordinary store; for banks or customer service, see the safety note below.
Save	Adds the place to one of your lists (Chapter 16).
Share	Sends the place to someone by text or email.
Website	Opens the business's website, if it has one.
Photos	Pictures from the business and from visitors.
Popular times	A little bar chart of how busy the place usually is by hour. Handy for avoiding crowds.
Reviews	What visitors wrote, with star ratings.

Using the hours wisely

Hours on Google Maps are usually right, but not always. Holidays, bad weather and family emergencies can change things. For anything important (a pharmacy pickup, an office visit) it's worth a quick call, or a look at the business's own website.

Reading reviews with a grain of salt

- **Look at the number of reviews,** not just the stars. A 4.5 from 800 people means more than a 5.0 from three.
- **Read a few of the newest ones.** A restaurant can change owners.
- **Be wary of a flood of perfect reviews** all written the same week in the same style.
- **Never pay or share personal details** because a review or a reply to a review told you to.

Fixing wrong information

If you notice a wrong phone number, wrong hours or a business that has closed, you can tell Google. On the place's page, scroll down and tap **Suggest an edit**, then pick what's wrong (for example, the phone number or hours) and follow the steps. Google reviews suggestions before changing anything.

STAY SAFE

For banks and big companies, use the number you already trust

A place's page is a great way to call the local pizza shop. For your bank, credit card, Medicare, an airline or a tech company, use the number on your card, your statement or the company's own website. That one habit protects you from the fake-number scams in Chapter 27.

CHAPTER 8

Layers: Satellite, Traffic & More

Google Maps can show you the same place in different ways. These are called **layers**, and they're like laying a clear sheet with extra information over the map.

Opening the Layers menu

1. On the main map, tap the **Layers** button (a small stack of squares near the top right).
2. Under **Map type**, choose **Default**, **Satellite** or **Terrain**.
3. Under **Map details**, tap any extra you'd like to see, such as **Traffic**, **Transit**, **Biking** or **Street View**.
4. Tap the **X** or tap the map to close the menu.

What each one is good for

Layer	Good for
Default	The everyday drawn map. Clearest for directions.
Satellite	Real photographs taken from above. Wonderful for spotting a parking lot, the shape of a building, or what a neighborhood looks like. Photos may be a year or more old.
Terrain	Shows hills and valleys. Useful for walks and country drives.
Traffic	Colors the roads: **green** moving well, **orange** slower, **red** slow, dark red very slow. Small icons mark crashes and construction.
Transit	Shows bus and train lines where local agencies share their routes with Google.
Street View	Turns roads with street-level photos blue. Tap a blue line to look around (Chapter 20).

TIP

Check traffic before you leave

Before heading out at a busy time, turn on the **Traffic** layer and glance at your route. If Interstate 76 or Route 14 is red, you'll know to leave a little early or ask Maps for another way.

GOOD TO KNOW

Layers stay on

A layer you turn on usually stays on the next time you open Maps. If the map ever looks cluttered or strange, open Layers and switch back to **Default** with no extras.

PART 3

Getting There

Directions, spoken turn-by-turn navigation, choosing your route, adding stops, and making the voice and screen easy to follow. The heart of Google Maps.

CHAPTER 9

Directions in a Few Taps

Getting directions is the thing you'll do most. It takes only a few taps, and you can look the route over calmly before you ever start the car.

Getting directions

1. Open Google Maps.
2. Search for where you want to go, or tap the place on the map.
3. Tap **Directions** (bottom left of the place's card).
4. Choose how you're traveling with the small icons along the top: **Driving** (a car), **Transit** (a bus), **Walking** (a person), **Ride** (a person waving for a car), or **Cycling** (a bicycle).
5. Look at the map. The best route is **blue**; other choices are **gray**. Each shows how long it should take.
6. To pick a gray route instead, tap it.

Reading the route before you go

- **The time** (for example, 24 min) already includes today's traffic.
- **The distance** (for example, 15 mi) is shown next to it.
- **Swipe up on the bottom card** to see a written list of every turn. Many people like to read it over once before leaving.
- Tap **Preview** to step through the turns one at a time.
- Small notes may say things like **Has tolls** or **This route has restricted usage**.

Starting from somewhere other than here

Directions normally start from your blue dot. To plan from somewhere else, such as from your sister's house, tap **Your location** at the top of the directions screen and type a different starting point. You'll get a preview of the route, but spoken navigation only starts when the trip begins where you actually are.

Ride and Flight buttons

In some areas you'll see a **Ride** button that compares rideshare or taxi options, and sometimes a **Flight** button for longer trips. These only show you choices; nothing is booked or charged unless you go on to order in that company's own app.

TIP

Read it over at the kitchen table

For an important appointment somewhere new, look up the route the night before. Read the list of turns, check the parking on the Satellite layer (Chapter 8), and maybe peek at the entrance in Street View (Chapter 20). You'll feel calm and ready in the morning.

CHAPTER 10

Turn-by-Turn Navigation

Navigation is when Google Maps talks you through the trip: "In a quarter mile, turn right onto Main Street." It follows along as you drive, and if you miss a turn, it calmly finds a new way.

Starting navigation

1. Get directions to your destination (Chapter 9).
2. Make sure **Driving** is selected and the route you want is blue.
3. Tap **Start**.
4. Put the phone in a holder where you can glance at it, and drive. Listen for the voice.

> TIP
> **A shortcut for familiar trips**
> On Android, after searching for a place, you can **touch and hold** the Directions button to start navigation straight away, skipping the route-choice screen.

What you see while driving

Part of the screen	What it shows
The green banner (top)	Your next turn, the street name and how far away it is.
Lane arrows	On some roads, arrows show which lane to be in for the next turn.
The map	Your car is the blue arrow. The blue line is your route.
The bottom card	Time left, distance left and your arrival time.
Sound button	On the right side. Lets you mute or unmute the voice (Chapter 13).
Report button	Lets a passenger report a crash, slowdown or other problem.

More options during the trip

Swipe up on the bottom card while navigating to see extra choices. On Android Google lists these: **Share trip progress** (Chapter 23), **Search along route** (Chapter 12), **Directions** (the full list of turns), **Show traffic on map**, **Show satellite map** and **Settings**. iPhone has a very similar list.

If you miss a turn

Don't worry. Just keep driving safely. Google Maps notices within a few seconds and announces a new route, usually starting with "Rerouting." There's no need to touch the phone.

Ending navigation

When you arrive, Maps says so and stops by itself. To stop early, tap the **X** (Close) at the bottom left.

When it says "Searching for GPS"

That means your phone can't hear the satellites for a moment, such as in a parking garage or tunnel. Drive on; it usually catches up within a minute once you're back under open sky.

STAY SAFE

Mount it, don't hold it

Ohio's hands-free law, in effect since April 2023, makes it illegal to hold or use a phone while driving in most situations. Navigation is allowed when you start it before you drive and the phone sits in a mount. A simple dashboard or vent mount puts the map where you can glance at it, and the voice does the rest. Let a passenger handle any tapping, or pull over first.

CHAPTER 11

Choosing Your Route: Tolls, Highways & More

Some folks would rather stay off the interstate. Others want to skip the Ohio Turnpike's tolls. Google Maps lets you tell it your preferences.

Avoiding highways, tolls or ferries

1. Get directions to your destination (Chapter 9), with **Driving** selected.
2. At the top right, tap **More** (three dots).
3. Tap **Options** (on some Android phones, **Route options**).
4. Turn on **Avoid highways**, **Avoid tolls** and/or **Avoid ferries**.
5. Go back to the map. The routes redraw to follow your choices.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Do the choices stick?**
> On many phones Maps remembers these choices for later trips, but this varies by version. If a route suddenly uses the highway again, check **Options** once more. You can also ask Maps out loud during navigation, "Avoid tolls" (Chapter 21).

Why avoid highways?

- You're more comfortable at lower speeds.
- You'd like a scenic drive through small towns.
- Night driving on busy interstates is tiring for your eyes.

The trade-off: back-road routes usually take longer. The time shown on each route tells you how much longer, so you can decide.

Choosing the carpool lane

In some cities there are carpool (HOV) lanes. On iPhone, Google's help describes a **Prefer HOV** switch in the same **Options** menu. Most of Northeast Ohio doesn't have these lanes, so you can leave it off.

Miles or kilometers

If distances ever show in kilometers, tap your **profile picture > Settings > Navigation**, and under **Distance units** choose **Miles**.

CHAPTER 12

Adding Stops Along the Way

Errand days are easier when Maps plans the whole loop: the bank, the pharmacy, then lunch. You can also find gas or a restroom along your route without leaving navigation.

Planning a trip with several stops

1. Get directions to your first stop (Chapter 9).
2. At the top right, tap **More** (three dots) > **Edit stops** (on Android you may see **Add stop**).
3. Type your next stop and choose it.
4. Repeat for each stop. You can have up to 9 stops, counting the final destination.
5. To change the order, touch and hold the small lines beside a stop and drag it up or down.
6. Tap **Done**, then **Start**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not for buses

Several stops work for driving, walking and cycling, but not for public transit or flights.

Finding gas, food or a restroom on the way

1. While navigating, swipe up on the bottom card.
2. Tap **Search along route** (or the magnifying glass).
3. Pick a category such as **Gas stations** or **Restaurants**, or type what you need.
4. Pins appear along your route showing how many minutes each adds. Tap one, then tap **Add stop**.
5. Maps goes to that stop first, then continues to your destination.

Better yet, ask a passenger to do this. Or ask out loud, as in Chapter 21: "Find a gas station on my route."

TIP

Plan the restroom stops for long drives

For a long trip, add a rest area or a familiar restaurant as a stop before you leave home. That way you don't have to search while driving at all.

CHAPTER 13

Hearing & Seeing Directions Clearly

The spoken voice is what makes Google Maps safe to use while driving, so it's worth getting it just right for your ears. Here's how to make the voice louder, quieter or silent, and how to add a speedometer.

Making the voice louder or softer

1. Tap your **profile picture > Settings > Navigation**.
2. Tap **Guidance volume** (on some versions it's a row of choices).
3. Choose **Softer**, **Normal** or **Louder**.

Also turn up your phone's own volume with the side buttons **while the voice is speaking**; that adjusts the right volume. If you're connected to the car's Bluetooth, turn up the car radio volume too.

Mute, alerts only, or full voice

While navigating, tap the **speaker** button on the right side of the screen. You'll see three choices:

Choice	What you hear
Sound on	You hear every turn, plus traffic alerts. Best for most drives.
Alerts only	You hear only warnings about traffic, construction and crashes, not every turn. Good on a familiar road.
Mute	No voice at all. You'll have to watch the screen, so use this sparingly.

Voice during phone calls

If a call comes in while you're navigating, the directions keep talking over your call unless you change it. In **Settings > Navigation**, look for **Play voice during phone calls** and turn it on or off to suit you.

Changing the voice or language

In **Settings > Navigation**, tap **Voice selection** to pick a language or accent. On Android you can sometimes choose a different-sounding voice in the phone's own text-to-speech settings.

Showing a speedometer and speed limits

1. Tap your **profile picture > Settings > Navigation** (on Android, **Navigation settings**).
2. Scroll to **Driving options**.
3. Turn on **Speedometer**. Where available, speed limits show too.

During navigation, a small speed bubble appears. Where Google knows the speed limit, the number changes color if you go over it.

HEADS UP

Trust your car, not your phone

Google says its speedometer is for information only. Always use your car's own speedometer and the posted signs to know your real speed and the limit. Speed limits on the map can be out of date, especially in work zones.

Making the screen easier to see

- **Turn the screen brightness up** while driving in daylight.
- **Dark map at night:** Maps switches to darker colors after sunset on its own, which is easier on your eyes.
- **Bigger text:** Maps follows your phone's overall text-size setting. If labels look tiny, increase the text size in your phone's Settings under Display.
- **Mount the phone** at eye level, close to the windshield, so a quick glance is all you need.

CHAPTER 14

Walking, Transit & Live View

Google Maps isn't just for driving. It's wonderful for finding your way on foot in a new city, catching a bus, or finding the right entrance across a big parking lot.

Walking directions

1. Search for your destination and tap **Directions**.
2. Tap **Walking** (the little person).
3. Tap **Start**. Maps shows a dotted blue line and speaks the turns.
4. Hold the phone flat and watch the blue beam (Chapter 4) to see which way you're facing.

Live View: arrows through your camera

In many cities, walking directions include **Live View**. You hold your phone up, and the camera shows the street in front of you with directions drawn right on top. It's a real help when you come out of a building and don't know which way to turn. Google's newer help pages call the camera features **Lens in Maps**; the idea is the same.

1. Get **Walking** directions to your destination.
2. Tap **Live View** at the bottom of the screen.
3. The first time, allow Maps to use the camera.
4. Point the camera at buildings and street signs across the road (not at the ground, trees or people) until Maps recognizes where you are.
5. Follow the directions on the screen. Your phone may vibrate when you reach a turn or your destination.
6. Lower the phone to see the regular map again.

> STAY SAFE
>
> **Look up, not just at the phone**
>
> Live View is for standing still and getting your bearings, then walking. Don't walk across streets while staring at the screen, and never use Live View in a moving car. Google says the same.

Bus and train directions

Tap **Transit** to see buses and trains, with departure times and walking between stops. This only works where the local transit agency shares its schedules with Google. In bigger cities it's excellent. In rural areas, it may show no options at all; that's normal.

Rideshare and taxis

The **Ride** tab can compare rideshare prices and times where they're offered. It just shows choices. Booking happens in the rideshare company's own app, and that's where any charges come from.

TIP

Find the right door

Big places like hospitals and malls have many entrances. Before you go, search for the exact building or department (for example, the hospital name plus "emergency" or "outpatient entrance"), then look at the Satellite layer or Street View to spot the entrance and nearest parking.

PART 4

Saving Your Places

Teach Maps where home is, keep lists of favorite spots, and never wander a parking lot looking for your car again.

CHAPTER 15

Home & Work: Directions with One Tap

Once Google Maps knows where home is, getting back is as simple as saying "Navigate home" or tapping **Home**. It's one of the most comforting things you can set up, especially if you sometimes feel turned around on the way back from somewhere new.

Setting your home address in Google Maps

1. Open Google Maps and make sure you're signed in (Chapter 3).
2. Tap the **You** tab (on iPhone it may say **Saved**) at the bottom.
3. Tap **Labeled**.
4. Tap **Home**.
5. Type your home address and choose it from the suggestions.
6. Tap **Save** or **Done**. Do the same for **Work** if you like, or skip it.

Or set it in your Google Account

Your home and work addresses actually live in your Google Account, so you can also set them there. Google's help page gives these steps:

1. Go to **myaccount.google.com** in your phone's web browser.
2. Tap your profile picture > **Manage your Google Account**.
3. At the top, tap **Personal info**.
4. Tap **Home address** (or **Work address**).
5. Enter the address and tap **Save**.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Who can see your home address?**
>
> Google says only you can see the home and work addresses saved this way. They aren't shown on your public profile. Google also says it uses them to personalize things such as search results and ads; you can remove them at any time from the same **Personal info** page.

Using it

- Type **home** in the search bar and tap the result.
- Or, during navigation, say "Navigate home" (Chapter 21).

- Some phones show a **Home** shortcut just below the search bar. Tap it, then **Start**.

> **TIP**
>
> **A shortcut on your phone's home screen (Android)**
>
> On many Android phones you can touch and hold the Maps icon on your home screen to see shortcuts such as **Home** or **Work**. Drag one onto your home screen for a one-tap "take me home" button.

Other labels

You can give private labels to other places too, such as "Doctor," "Mom's house" or "Church." Open a place, tap **Save** or **More**, and look for **Add label**, or add it from **You > Labeled**. Only you see these labels. Then you can simply search for the label's name.

CHAPTER 16

Saved Lists: Favorites, Want to Go & Your Own

Saved lists are like a little notebook of places. Keep your favorite restaurants together, make a list of places you'd like to visit someday, or build a list for a family trip.

The lists that come ready-made

List	What it's for
Favorites	Places you love and go back to.
Want to go	Places you'd like to try: a new restaurant, a park, a museum.
Starred places	An older, simple list. It can't be shared with others.
Labeled	Home, Work and any private labels you've added (Chapter 15).
Travel plans	Places for upcoming trips.

Saving a place

1. Search for a place or tap it on the map.
2. On its card, tap **Save**.
3. Tap the list you want, such as **Favorites**. You can choose more than one.
4. Tap **Done**. A small icon now marks the place on your map.

Making your own list

1. Tap the **You** (or **Saved**) tab at the bottom.
2. Tap **New list** (or the **+**).
3. Give it a name, such as "Doctors & Dentists" or "Summer Day Trips." You can add a short description.
4. Choose an icon if you like, then tap **Save** or **Create**.
5. Now when you save any place, your new list shows up as a choice.

Finding your saved places

Tap the **You** (or **Saved**) tab and tap a list to open it. Tap any place in the list to see it, call it or get directions. Your saved places also appear as small icons on the map itself.

Sharing a list with family

1. Open the list from the **You** (or **Saved**) tab.
2. Tap **Share** (or **More > Share list**).
3. Choose how to send the link, such as by text message.
4. The people you send it to can open the list. Only share lists you don't mind others seeing.

> **TIP**
> **Great list ideas**
> "Doctors & pharmacies" so you can get directions to any appointment with two taps. "Places the grandkids love." "Restaurants to try." "Our vacation" for a trip, shared with everyone going.

Removing a place from a list

Open the place, tap **Saved** (the button now shows it's saved), and untick the list. Or open the list, tap the three dots beside the place, and choose **Remove**.

CHAPTER 17

Remembering Where You Parked

Big parking lots, stadium garages and fairgrounds all look the same once you've been inside for a few hours. Google Maps can drop a marker where you parked so you can walk straight back.

Saving your parking spot by hand

1. After you park, open Google Maps.
2. Tap the **blue dot** that shows your location.
3. Tap **Save your parking** (on some versions it says **Save parking**).
4. A parking marker appears on the map.

Finding the car later

1. Open Google Maps. You'll see the parking marker (a P icon).
2. Tap it, then tap **Directions** and choose **Walking**.
3. When you're back at the car, tap the marker and choose **Clear** so it doesn't confuse you next time.

Automatic parking on iPhone

In late 2025 Google added automatic parking saves for iPhone. When it's on, Maps notices when you've stopped driving and marks where you parked, labeled **You parked here**. Connecting your iPhone to the car by Bluetooth, CarPlay or cable makes it more accurate. Look for **Automatically save parking** in **Profile picture > Settings > Navigation**.

On Android, saving your spot is still done by hand, as above.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **This came from news reports**
>
> The automatic iPhone parking feature was reported by technology news sites in December 2025; I couldn't open Google's own help page for it. If you don't see the switch, use the by-hand steps above. They work on every phone.

TIP

Add a note or photo

Garages have level numbers and pillar letters. After saving your parking, tap the marker to see if you can add a note like "Level 3, near elevator B." Or simply take a photo of the sign with your camera. It's low-tech and it always works.

PART 5

When the Signal Drops

Offline maps for the back roads and long trips, plus simple ways to save your battery and your data plan.

CHAPTER 18

Offline Maps: Directions Without a Signal

Cell signal can be patchy on country roads, in state parks and on long trips. An **offline map** is a piece of the map that you save onto your phone ahead of time, while you have Wi-Fi. Then Maps can still guide you even when the signal bars drop to nothing.

Downloading an area (the easy way)

1. At home on Wi-Fi, open Google Maps. Make sure Incognito mode is off (Chapter 26).
2. Search for the town or area you'll be visiting, for example **Hocking Hills**.
3. At the bottom, tap the place's name.
4. Tap **More** (three dots) > **Download offline map** > **Download**.

Choosing your own area

1. Tap your **profile picture > Offline maps**.
2. Tap **Select your own map**.
3. Move and zoom the map so the blue box covers everywhere you'll go. Include your route there.
4. Tap **Download**.

Using it

You don't have to do anything special. Use Maps normally. When the signal is slow or gone, Maps quietly uses your offline map instead.

Works offline	Driving directions and turn-by-turn voice, **as long as the whole route is inside your downloaded area**. Searching for places in the area.
Doesn't work offline	Live traffic and alternate routes. Transit, walking and cycling directions.

Keeping offline maps fresh

Offline maps **expire** after a while, because roads and businesses change. Google says that when an offline map has 15 days or less left and you're on Wi-Fi, Maps tries to update it by itself.

- **Turn on automatic updates: Profile picture > Offline maps**, tap the **Settings** gear at the top right, and turn on **Auto-update offline maps**.
- **Update by hand:** in **Offline maps**, tap an expiring map and tap **Update**.

- **Rename one:** tap the map, tap **Edit** (the pencil) at the top right, type a name like "Lake cottage," and tap **Save**.
- **Delete one you don't need:** tap it, then tap **Delete**. This frees space on your phone.

TIP

Before every road trip

A day or two before a long drive, download offline maps for your destination and any rural stretch on the way. It takes a minute on home Wi-Fi and can save a lot of worry. Google may also suggest **Recommended maps** for trips it finds in your Gmail.

GOOD TO KNOW

How much space?

A small town takes little room; a big region can take a few hundred megabytes. Maps shows the size before you tap Download. If your phone is nearly full, choose a smaller area.

CHAPTER 19

Saving Battery & Data on the Road

Navigation keeps the screen on, the GPS busy and the speaker talking, so the battery drops faster than usual. A few easy habits keep you from arriving with a dead phone.

Battery tips Google itself recommends

- **Plug in on longer drives.** Google suggests a charger especially for trips longer than 30 minutes. A car charger that plugs into the 12-volt socket or USB port is inexpensive and well worth having.
- **Turn off the screen** on a familiar route. Press the side (power) button once; you'll still hear the spoken directions.

More ways to stretch the battery

- Lower the screen brightness a little when it's not bright out.
- Close navigation (tap the **X**) when you arrive, rather than leaving it running.
- Use your phone's battery-saver mode on long days (Low Power Mode on iPhone, Power saving on many Android phones).
- Keep the phone out of direct sun on the dashboard; heat drains batteries and can make phones shut down.

Using less of your data plan

Navigation uses a modest amount of cell data. If your plan is small, these help:

- **Download offline maps** at home on Wi-Fi (Chapter 18). Maps then needs very little data.
- **Avoid switching to Satellite view** while driving. Photos use much more data than the plain map.
- **Update apps on Wi-Fi only.** Both app stores have a setting for this.

TIP

Bring a backup

For a big trip, a small portable battery pack (sometimes called a power bank) and a spare cable in the glove box are cheap peace of mind. If the car charger stops working, you're still covered.

PART 6

Seeing Before You Go

Look at a street, a house or a store entrance before you leave home, and ask Google's Gemini AI helper questions in plain words.

CHAPTER 20

Street View: Look Before You Go

Street View lets you see real photos taken from the road, as if you were standing there. You can turn around, look up and down the street, and "walk" forward. It's a wonderful way to recognize a building, see where the driveway is, or take a trip down memory lane to the street where you grew up.

Two ways to open Street View on your phone

From a place you search for

1. Search for an address or a place, or touch and hold the map to drop a pin.
2. Tap the place's name at the bottom (on iPhone).
3. Tap the photo marked with a small **360** or Street View icon.

From the Layers menu

1. Tap the **Layers** button > **Street View**.
2. Roads with photos turn **blue**.
3. Tap any blue line to step into Street View at that spot.

Looking around

To do this	Do this
Look around	Drag your finger left, right, up or down.
Move along the street	Tap the arrows on the road, or double-tap farther down the street.
Zoom in on a sign	Spread two fingers apart.
Go back to the map	Tap the back arrow at the top left.

Seeing older photos

In some places Street View has photos from different years. Open Street View, then look for **See more dates**. It's lovely for seeing how a neighborhood has changed. Not every spot has it.

Previewing a tricky turn

When you have directions open, swipe up for the list of turns. If a turn has a small photo next to it, tap the photo to see that intersection in Street View. Swipe to step through the turns.

Then you'll recognize it when you get there.

Immersive View for routes

In some big cities, Google offers an **Immersive View** preview of a route: a 3D, bird's-eye fly-through you can play, pause and even view at different times of day or weather. If you see a 3D photo when you get directions, tap it to try it. It isn't available in most small towns yet.

GOOD TO KNOW

Photos aren't live

Street View photos can be several years old. They show what a place looked like on the day the camera car passed, not what's happening now. Nobody can watch you through Street View.

CHAPTER 21

Talking to Maps: Gemini While You Drive

In 2026 Google built its **Gemini** AI helper into Google Maps. You can talk to it during navigation, in ordinary words, and it can change your route, find a stop or answer questions, so your hands stay on the wheel.

Starting a conversation while navigating

1. Start navigation as usual (Chapter 10).
2. Say **"Hey Google"**, or tap the **Gemini** button on the navigation screen.
3. Ask your question or give a request in plain words.
4. Listen to the answer. Maps carries on navigating the whole time.

> **TIP**
>
> **Hands-free**
>
> For true hands-free use, look in the navigation settings for an option like **Access your Assistant with "Ok Google"** and turn it on. Then you never have to touch the screen.

Things you can say

What you want	Examples Google gives
Control the trip	"Navigate home." "Stop navigating." "Add a stop." "Mute guidance." "Avoid tolls." "Show alternative routes."
Ask about the route	"What's my next turn?" "When will I arrive?" "What's the weather at my destination?"
Find places	"Find a gas station on my route." "Find a cafe near my destination." "When does the library close?"
Report problems	"There's construction up ahead." "There's traffic on the road."

What you need

- A recent version of Google Maps, signed in to your Google Account.
- Gemini available in your country and language (it is in the U.S.).
- Location permission turned on.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not on CarPlay yet, says Google

Google's help page says Gemini isn't currently available in Google Maps on Apple CarPlay. Some news sites have reported a CarPlay rollout starting in fall 2026, so it may appear on your car screen soon. On CarPlay you can still use Siri to start directions. On Android Auto, Google says Gemini is coming or already there, depending on your car and phone.

Ask Maps and the new 3D driving view

Google also added **Ask Maps**, a way to ask questions before you leave, like planning an outing in plain words. The topic "Ways Google Maps Can Make Life Easier" walks you through it. And in March 2026 Google began rolling out **Immersive Navigation** in the U.S., a redesigned, more 3D driving view. If your screen suddenly looks more three-dimensional while driving, that's why; the voice and the steps in this manual work the same way.

HEADS UP

AI can be wrong

Google itself says AI answers can sometimes be incorrect. Double-check anything important, such as whether a pharmacy is open or a road is closed, and always follow the actual road signs.

PART 7

Family, Sharing & the Car

Let loved ones see that you've arrived safely, send someone exactly where you are, and use Google Maps on your car's dashboard screen.

CHAPTER 22

Sharing Your Location with Family

Location sharing lets people you choose see where your phone is on their own map, live. Families use it so a grown child can see that Mom got home from her evening class, or so a spouse knows you're ten minutes away. **You** decide who sees it and for how long, and you can stop at any time.

What the other person can see

Google says people you share with can see:

- Your name and photo.
- Your phone's recent location, even when you're not using Google apps.
- Your phone's battery level and whether it's charging.
- Your arrival and departure times, if they set up a Location Sharing notification.

Sharing your location

1. Open Google Maps and make sure you're signed in.
2. Tap your **profile picture > Location sharing**.
3. Tap **New share** (a person with a plus sign).
4. Choose how long: for a set time (such as 1 hour) or **Until you turn this off**.
5. Tap the person you want to share with. If asked, let Maps see your contacts.
6. Tap **Share**.

GOOD TO KNOW

They need a Google Account

Google's help says the person you share with needs a Gmail (Google) account and needs to be in your contacts with that Gmail address. For someone without one, you can send a link instead (below).

Sharing with someone who doesn't have a Google Account

1. Tap your **profile picture > Location sharing > New share**.
2. Choose to send a link, for example by **Message** or another app.
3. Send it. Anyone who has the link can see your live location for up to 24 hours.

STAY SAFE

A link can be forwarded

Anyone holding a location link can see where you are until it runs out. Send links only to people you trust, and only through a private message, never in a public post.

Seeing a family member who shares with you

1. Tap your **profile picture > Location sharing**.
2. Tap the person's picture. The map shows where their phone is.
3. To refresh their spot, tap their picture on the map > **More** > **Refresh**.

Asking for someone's location

If you've shared with each other before, open **Location sharing**, tap the person and tap **Request**. They get a notification and your email address, and they can choose to share, ignore the request, or block you. It's always their choice.

Stopping a share

1. Tap your **profile picture > Location sharing**.
2. Tap the person you no longer want to share with.
3. Tap **Stop**.

FROM BILL

A family conversation first

Location sharing works best when everyone agrees to it and understands it. Sit down together, decide who shares with whom and why, and agree that anyone can stop at any time. It's a tool for peace of mind, not for keeping tabs on each other.

GOOD TO KNOW

iPhone families may use Find My instead

If everyone in your family has an iPhone, Apple's **Find My** app also shares locations. Google Maps sharing is handy when the family is a mix of iPhone and Android. Use one or the other; you don't need both.

CHAPTER 23

"I'm On My Way": Sharing Your Trip

Sometimes you don't want ongoing location sharing; you just want the people waiting for you to know when you'll arrive. That's what **Share trip progress** is for. When the trip ends, the sharing ends by itself.

Sharing your arrival time

1. Set your destination and start navigation (Chapter 10). Do this before you pull out.
2. Swipe up on the information card at the bottom.
3. Tap **Share trip progress**.
4. Tap the person you want to share with, then tap **Share**.
5. They can see your destination, your estimated arrival time and where you are along the way.
6. When you arrive or stop navigation, sharing stops automatically.

To stop sharing before you arrive, swipe up on the information card and tap **Stop sharing**.

Sending a place, not your location

To send someone an address, such as where to meet for lunch, open the place in Maps and tap **Share**. Choose Messages, email or another app. They get a link that opens the place in their own map app. This doesn't share where *you* are.

Sending a dropped pin

For a spot without an address (a trailhead, a particular parking lot, the end of a long driveway), touch and hold the map to drop a pin, tap the pin's card at the bottom, then tap **Share**.

> **TIP**
>
> **Perfect for appointments and visits**
>
> Before you leave for a family visit, share trip progress with whoever's expecting you. No one has to call and ask "Where are you?" while you're driving, and you don't have to answer the phone.

CHAPTER 24

On the Car Screen: CarPlay & Android Auto

Many cars made in the last several years can show your phone's apps on the dashboard screen. On an iPhone, that's **Apple CarPlay**; on Android, **Android Auto**. Google Maps works on both, with a bigger map and the voice coming through the car's speakers.

Google Maps on Apple CarPlay

Google's help page lists what you need: a CarPlay-compatible car, an iPhone with a recent version of iOS, and an up-to-date Google Maps app. Then:

1. Connect your iPhone to the car, by cable or wirelessly if your car supports it.
2. On the car's screen, tap the **Google Maps** icon.
3. Use the search bar at the top, or speak to Siri, to choose a destination.
4. Pick the place and start navigation.

> **TIP**
> **Make Google Maps your CarPlay favorite**
> If Apple Maps keeps opening instead, you can drag the Google Maps icon to the first page of your CarPlay screen. On iPhone, open **Settings > General > CarPlay**, choose your car, tap **Customize** and drag the icons into the order you like. The new order shows the next time you connect.

Google Maps on Android Auto

On Android Auto, Google Maps is usually the main map. Connect your phone, tap the Maps icon on the car screen, and use the microphone button or say "Hey Google, navigate to..." followed by the place.

Everything you set up on the phone comes along

- Your **Home** and **Work** addresses (Chapter 15).
- Your saved lists (Chapter 16).
- Route choices like **Avoid tolls** (Chapter 11).
- Offline maps you've downloaded (Chapter 18).

GOOD TO KNOW

There's a whole manual for this

Bill's Complete Manual on **CarPlay & Android Auto** covers connecting your phone, music, hands-free calls and messages on the car screen in detail. This chapter is just the Google Maps part.

STAY SAFE

Set it before you shift into Drive

Car screens make it tempting to tap while driving. Choose your destination while parked, then let the voice guide you. Many cars lock the keyboard while moving for exactly this reason.

PART 8

Privacy & Staying Safe

What Google Maps remembers about where you've been, how to keep searches private, the fake phone-number scams to watch for, and location-sharing safety.

CHAPTER 25

Timeline: Where You've Been

Timeline is an optional diary of the places you've visited and the routes you've traveled. Some people love it ("What was the name of that restaurant we went to in May?"). Others would rather not have it at all. Both choices are fine, and you're in charge.

The big change: Timeline now lives on your phone

Timeline used to be stored in your Google Account and could be viewed on a computer. Google changed that between 2024 and 2025: Timeline is now kept **on your phone itself**, and the web version on computers was retired. If you remember looking at your Timeline on a computer, that's why it isn't there anymore.

- **Timeline is off unless you turn it on.** Google says it's off by default and only on if you opt in.
- **Each phone keeps its own Timeline.** Changes on one phone don't show on another.
- **Backup is optional.** You can choose an encrypted backup on Google's servers so your Timeline survives a lost or replaced phone.

Looking at your Timeline

1. Open Google Maps.
2. Tap your **profile picture > Your Timeline**.
3. To look at another day, tap **Today** at the top and pick a day on the calendar.

Turning Timeline on or off

1. Tap your **profile picture > Your Timeline**.
2. Tap **More** (three dots) > **Location & privacy settings**.
3. To turn it on: if it says **Timeline is off**, tap it and turn on **Timeline**.
4. To turn it off: tap **Timeline is on**, then choose **Turn off**, or **Turn off and delete activity** to erase what's saved too.

Deleting some or all of it

To delete	Do this
One visit	Open the day, tap **More** beside the visit > **Remove**.
One day	Open the day, tap **More** > **Delete day** > **Delete**.

To delete	Do this
A range of dates	**More > Location & privacy settings > Delete range of Timeline data**.
Everything	**More > Location & privacy settings > Delete all Timeline data**.
Automatically	**More > Location & privacy settings > Auto-delete Timeline**, then choose to delete anything older than 3, 18 or 36 months.

HEADS UP

Deleting is permanent

Google says deleted Timeline data can't be recovered. If you might want those memories, leave them, or set auto-delete for an older range instead.

Backing up Timeline before a new phone

Getting a new phone soon? To bring your Timeline along, turn on backup first. In **Your Timeline**, tap the **cloud** icon at the top right and turn on **Backup**. Google notes that backup requires auto-delete to be turned off, and that it can take a few days for changes to reach the backup. On the new phone, tap the cloud icon, pick the old phone's backup and choose **Import**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Other Google settings may also save locations

Turning Timeline off doesn't erase every trace of location in your Google Account. Google explains that settings such as Web & App Activity can record your general area with your searches. You can review these at **myactivity.google.com**.

TIP

"When was I last there?"

If Timeline is on, open any place in Maps and scroll to the bottom. Tap **Your visits and Maps history** to see when you last went. Handy for remembering the last dentist visit.

CHAPTER 26

Incognito Mode & Your Search History

Sometimes you'd rather Maps not remember a search: a surprise party venue, a gift shop, or a doctor you'd like to keep private on a shared account. **Incognito mode** is made for that.

Turning Incognito mode on and off

1. Open Google Maps.
2. Tap your **profile picture** at the top right.
3. Tap **Turn on Incognito mode**. Your profile picture changes to an Incognito icon.
4. When you're finished, tap the Incognito icon and choose **Turn off Incognito mode**.

What Incognito mode does

While it's on, Google says Maps on that phone won't:

- Save your searches or navigation history to your Google Account.
- Send you notifications.
- Update your Timeline.
- Use your activity to personalize Maps.

What it doesn't do

- It doesn't hide you from your internet or phone company, or from other apps.
- It doesn't stop **Location sharing**. If you're sharing your location with family, they still see you. Google says this plainly.
- You can't download offline maps while it's on.
- It only affects Google Maps on that phone, not Google Search or other Google services.

Clearing past searches

To erase searches you've already made, go to **myactivity.google.com** on your phone or computer, signed in to your Google Account, and look for your Maps or search history. There you can delete individual items, a date range, or everything, and set automatic deletion.

TIP

A gentle reminder to turn it off

Incognito mode turns off features many people like, such as saved home address suggestions and personalized results. Remember to switch it off when you're done with that private search.

CHAPTER 27

Scams: Fake Listings & Phony Phone Numbers

Google Maps is a wonderful phone book, and that's exactly why scammers try to get into it. The most common trick doesn't involve hacking your phone at all. It's simply a **wrong phone number** that leads to a crook instead of a real company.

How the fake-number scam works

1. A scammer adds a fake business listing to Google, or sneaks a bogus phone number into a real company's listing by suggesting edits.
2. You search for something like "airline customer service" or "bank help line" and tap **Call**.
3. A friendly voice answers with the company's name. They "help" with your problem.
4. Then they ask for your card number, a fee, a gift card, a payment app transfer, or remote access to your computer.

News outlets have reported real cases, including travelers who called a number listed on Google Maps for an airline's airport help desk and reached a scam call center instead. Google says it uses both people and automated systems to catch these, but some slip through.

SCAM ALERT

Never trust a phone number just because it's on a map

For your bank, credit card, airline, Medicare, Social Security, a utility or any tech company, get the number from your card, your statement, your paper bill or the company's own website that you type in yourself. Real companies don't ask you to pay with gift cards, wire money, scan a QR code to pay, or let a stranger control your computer.

Warning signs on the phone

- They want payment **before** they've done anything.
- They ask for gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency or a payment app like Zelle.
- They want to "connect to your computer" or have you download an app.
- The person answers with a vague name, or seems to answer for many different companies.
- They pressure you: "This must be done right now or your account will be closed."

Fake businesses and fake locksmiths

Some listings are for businesses that don't really exist at that address, such as locksmiths, towing or repair companies that send whoever answers and then charge far more than quoted. Before calling a service company from Maps, look for a real street address, a website, and plenty of reviews over a long time. Better yet, ask neighbors or family for someone they've used.

SCAM ALERT

"Google" calling about your listing

If you own a small business, beware of calls claiming to be from Google that say your Maps listing will be removed unless you pay. Google doesn't call to demand payment for your listing. Hang up.

Reporting a fake listing or wrong number

1. Open the place's page in Google Maps.
2. Scroll down and tap **Suggest an edit**.
3. Choose what's wrong, such as the phone number, or that the place doesn't exist, and follow the steps.

Google also has a separate complaint form for business names, phone numbers or websites on Maps that look fraudulent; you'll find it by searching Google Maps Help for "report a business on Google Maps."

FROM BILL

If you've already called and paid

Don't be embarrassed; these scams fool careful people. Call your bank or card company right away using the number on your card, and report it at **reportfraud.ftc.gov**. If they got into your computer, turn it off and give me a call.

CHAPTER 28

Location-Sharing Safety

Location sharing is a gift between family members who trust each other. Used carelessly, though, it can tell the wrong person where you are. A few simple habits keep it safe.

Check who can see you, every few months

1. Tap your **profile picture > Location sharing**.
2. Look at every name listed. Each one can see your location.
3. Tap anyone who shouldn't be there anymore and tap **Stop**.

Pause all sharing at once (Android)

On an Android phone, Google provides a master switch. Open the phone's **Settings > Location > Location services > Google Location Sharing**, and turn off **Use Location Sharing**. Google notes that changing Maps' own location permission or using Incognito mode does **not** stop location sharing; this switch, or tapping **Stop** beside each person, does.

Hide, deny or block

To do this	Do this
Hide someone from your map	Tap their icon on the map > **More** > **Hide from map**. Bring them back later from **Location sharing > More** > tap them > **Unhide**.
Say no to a request	When someone asks for your location, tap **No**. Nothing is shared.
Block someone	Tap **Block** on their request. They can no longer ask for your location. Unblock later from **Location sharing > More > Blocked users**.

SCAM ALERT

Strangers asking you to share your location

Never share your location with someone you've only met online, a caller who says they're from a company, or anyone who pressures you. A real bank, delivery service or government office never needs your live location from Google Maps.

STAY SAFE

If you're worried someone is tracking you

Check the **Location sharing** list on your phone first. If you see a name you don't recognize or didn't approve, tap **Stop**. If you feel unsafe, contact local police, and reach out to someone you trust. I can also help check your phone's settings.

Safer habits

- Share for a set time ("for 1 hour") rather than forever, unless it's close family.
- Use **Share trip progress** (Chapter 23) for one-time "I'm on my way" messages.
- Don't post screenshots of your map or Timeline on social media; they can reveal your home address.
- Keep your phone locked with a passcode, so no one else can turn sharing on without you knowing.

PART 9

Fixes, Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

Quick fixes for the common hiccups, an honest word on when a hand is worth it, and the whole manual boiled down to one page.

CHAPTER 29

Fixing Common Hiccups

Most Google Maps problems have simple fixes. Work through these calmly, in order. Nine times out of ten, one of the first few does it.

The three fixes that solve most problems

1. **Close Google Maps completely and open it again.** On iPhone, swipe up from the bottom and pause, then swipe the Maps card up and away. On Android, tap the square or three-line button (or swipe up and hold), then swipe Maps away.
2. **Update the app** from the App Store or Play Store (Chapter 3).
3. **Restart the phone.** Turn it off, wait 30 seconds, and turn it back on.

"The blue dot is in the wrong place"

- Step outside or near a window; GPS needs a view of the sky.
- Make sure **Precise location** is on for Maps (Chapter 4).
- Turn Wi-Fi on, even if you aren't connected to a network. It helps your phone find itself.
- Tap the blue dot and choose **Calibrate** if it's offered.

"I can't hear the directions"

- Tap the **speaker** button during navigation and choose sound on, not mute or alerts only (Chapter 13).
- Turn the phone's volume up with the side buttons **while** a direction is being spoken.
- Check **Settings > Navigation > Guidance volume** and set it to **Louder**.
- In the car, check the car's volume and that the phone is connected by Bluetooth or CarPlay/Android Auto.

"It keeps saying GPS signal lost"

This is normal in tunnels, garages and dense downtown streets. If it happens everywhere, restart the phone, check that location is on, and make sure no phone case or mount has a metal plate behind the phone. Google has a help article titled "Troubleshoot persistent GPS Signal Lost notifications" with more steps.

"It sent me the wrong way" or "the road is closed"

- **Follow the road signs and detours**, not the map. Maps will reroute within a few seconds.

- When it's safe, report a closure or error: open the road or place and use **Suggest an edit** or **Report a problem**.

"The battery dies on long drives"

See Chapter 19: plug into a car charger, and turn the screen off on familiar roads.

"My saved places or home address disappeared"

- Tap your profile picture and check you're signed in to the **right Google Account**. Many people have two (an old Gmail and a newer one).
- Make sure **Incognito mode** is off (Chapter 26).
- Check that your home address is still in your Google Account under **Personal info** (Chapter 15).

"My offline map won't work"

- Check it hasn't expired: **profile picture > Offline maps** (Chapter 18).
- Make sure your whole route is inside the downloaded area.
- Remember that walking and transit directions don't work offline.

> **TIP**
>
> **When in doubt, write it down**
>
> If something odd keeps happening, jot down what you tapped and what you saw. It makes it much quicker for a family member, or for me, to spot what's going on.

CHAPTER 30

When to Call Bill

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

Times it's well worth a call

- **Setting it up just right**: home address, favorite places, louder voice, bigger text, a phone mount and charger that suit your car.
- **Family location sharing**: setting it up between iPhones and Androids so everyone's comfortable and knows how to stop it.
- **Getting it onto your car's screen** with CarPlay or Android Auto, and making Google Maps the one that opens.
- **Before a big road trip**: offline maps, route preferences and a practice run in the driveway.
- **If you think you've called a fake number** or let a stranger into your computer. Call your bank first, then me.
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person show you.** That's always a good enough reason.

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 always tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money. That's been my way through 30+ years of professional experience, and I'm proud to serve Portage County.

How to get help	Details
What it costs	$49 remote · $99 in your home. Remote means we work together over the phone and a secure screen-sharing connection.
Call or text	(330) 200-8042. Sophie, my AI receptionist, may answer and can help you book a time.
Book online	billshometech.com/book

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a visit at **billshometech.com/book**. Help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This manual and my guides are free to read; no question is too small.

Thank you for letting me ride along with you through Google Maps. Take your time, set your trip before you drive, and remember I'm only a phone call away.

— Bill

CHAPTER 31

Your Google Maps Cheat-Sheet

Print just this page and keep it in the glove box. The whole manual, boiled down.

The everyday moves

To do this	Do this
Find a place	Tap the search bar, type or tap the microphone, choose the result.
Get directions	Tap the place > **Directions** > choose Driving > **Start**.
Back to my blue dot	Tap the **my location** button at the bottom right.
Louder voice	Profile picture > **Settings > Navigation > Guidance volume** > Louder.
Avoid tolls or highways	On the directions screen, **More > Options**.
Add a stop	Directions > **More > Edit stops**, or say "Add a stop."
Take me home	Search **home**, or say "Hey Google, navigate home."
Save where I parked	Tap the blue dot > **Save your parking**.
Map with no signal	At home on Wi-Fi: Profile picture > **Offline maps** > **Select your own map**.
Look at a street	**Layers > Street View**, then tap a blue line.
Tell family I'm on my way	While navigating, swipe up > **Share trip progress**.
Share or stop sharing location	Profile picture > **Location sharing**.
Private search	Profile picture > **Turn on Incognito mode**.

Keep this information handy

Item	
My Google Account email	_____
Home address saved in Maps?	Yes / No
Who I share my location with	_____
Car charger and phone mount in the car?	Yes / No

When something's wrong, in order

1. Close Google Maps and open it again.
2. Check volume, location and that you're signed in.
3. Update the app, then restart the phone.
4. Follow the road signs, not the map, if they disagree.
5. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

Stay-safe rules

- Set your trip before you drive. Let the voice do the work.
- Get phone numbers for banks and big companies from your card or statement, not from a map listing.
- Share your location only with people you trust, and check the list now and then.
- When the map and the road signs disagree, the signs win.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

You've got this

You can now find any place, get there with spoken directions, save your favorites, manage without a signal, look before you go, keep family in the loop, and protect your privacy. That's everything you need to travel with confidence.