BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Google Photos

Keep every picture safe, find any photo in seconds, and share them with the people you love

A plain-English guide to protecting and enjoying your photos

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

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What's Inside

This is your Google Photos manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. We start with what Google Photos is and how to set it up, spend real time making sense of storage (where most of the questions come from), then move on to finding, sharing, and enjoying your pictures. Every feature comes with what it actually does *for you* and slow, step-by-step directions anyone can follow. If a screen looks a little different on your device, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

What Google Photos Is — and Why It's Worth It

The big idea in plain English: a safe home for every picture you take, reachable from any device, that you never have to think about once it's set up. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you're holding this book, I'd guess one of two things is true. Either you've got years of precious photos trapped on a phone and you lie awake a little worried about losing them — or someone helped you turn on something called Google Photos and now you're not quite sure what it did or how to use it. Either way, you've come to exactly the right place, and I'm glad you're here.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, right here in Portage County, and I wrote this the same way I'd sit down next to you at your kitchen table: patiently, in plain English, no rushing and no fancy words. If I ever use a term you don't know, I'll stop and explain it right then — you won't have to look anything up.

Why this one matters so much

Of all the things I help people with, protecting their photos might be the most important. A phone can be lost, dropped in the lake, or simply stop working one day — and if your only copies of the grandchildren, the family reunions, and the ones who've passed on were on that phone, they're gone with it. That thought is unbearable, and it's the very thing Google Photos is built to prevent.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once Google Photos is set up, every picture you take is quietly copied to a safe place on the internet within minutes. Lose your phone and your photos are still there, waiting on your next phone or any computer. You get to stop worrying — and that peace of mind is the whole point.

You truly can't break anything

Here's a promise to carry through the whole book: **you cannot break your photos, your phone, or Google Photos by tapping around and exploring.** Google Photos is especially forgiving — even when you delete something, it holds onto it for a while before it's truly gone, so there's almost always a way back. Tapping, poking, and trying things is exactly how everyone learns. Relax your shoulders.

And I'm only a phone call away

This book will carry you a long way on your own. But if you ever get stuck, you're never stuck alone — that's not how I do things. Call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll sort it out together, with no judgment and no eye-rolling. There is no such thing as a silly question about your photos.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Google Photos Actually Is

Let's clear up what this thing is before we touch a button, because the name makes it sound more complicated than it is.

A photo album that lives on the internet

Google Photos is a free app and website from Google that does two simple jobs: it keeps a safe copy of all your photos and videos on the internet, and it gives you a tidy place to look at them, search them, and share them. Think of it as a shoebox of photos that can never be lost in a fire or a flood, and that you can open from your phone, your tablet, or any computer.

"The internet" and "the cloud" — same thing, friendlier word

You'll hear the word **cloud** a lot. It sounds mysterious, but it just means "stored on big, safe computers somewhere else, reachable over the internet." When your photos are "in the cloud," they're sitting safely on Google's computers — not only on your phone. That's the magic: the photo exists in two places, so losing one copy doesn't lose the picture.

GOOD TO KNOW

It works on Apple and Android alike

Google Photos isn't just for Android phones. It works beautifully on an iPhone or iPad too — you download it from the App Store like any other app. Many Apple folks use Google Photos right alongside Apple's own photo system, and that's perfectly fine. One foot in each world causes no trouble.

What "backing up" means

The heart of Google Photos is **backup** — a word worth knowing. To back up a photo means to make a safe second copy of it somewhere else, automatically. When backup is turned on, every new picture you snap is copied up to the cloud within a few minutes, with no effort from you. You take photos exactly as you always have; Google Photos does the protecting in the background.

What it is not

- It is **not** something you have to open and fuss with daily. Set it up once and it runs on its own.

- It is **not** going to delete your photos behind your back. It only removes what you choose to remove.
- It is **not** the same as the Photos app that came with your phone — though the two can live together happily. We'll untangle that in a moment.

CHAPTER 3

What You Need Before You Start

Good news — you very likely have everything already. Here's the short list.

1. A phone, tablet, or computer

Any modern smartphone (iPhone or Android), tablet (iPad or Android), or computer will do. Most people set it up on their phone, since that's where the photos are taken, and then also enjoy looking at them on a bigger screen later.

2. A Google Account

A **Google Account** is a free account from Google — the same kind of account you'd use for Gmail (Google's email). It's your key to Google Photos. If you have a Gmail email address, you already have a Google Account and you're ready. If not, the app will help you make one for free; it takes only a few minutes.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **One account ties it all together**
>
> Your Google Account is what lets your photos follow you from device to device. Sign in with the same account on your phone and your computer, and the very same photo library appears in both places. Keep a note of the email address and password somewhere safe — it's the key to your memories.

3. An internet connection

Backing up photos sends them over the internet, so you need to be connected — at home that's your **Wi-Fi** (wireless home internet). Most people set Google Photos to back up only over Wi-Fi, so it never touches their phone-plan data. We'll set that up together.

4. A little bit of free storage (and patience the first time)

Google gives every account **15 gigabytes** of free storage to start — "gigabytes" is just a measure of how much can be stored, and 15 of them holds a good many photos. The very first backup, if you have thousands of old photos, can take a while (sometimes overnight) as it copies them all up. After that, each new photo backs up in moments. We'll talk all about storage in its own part, because it's where most of the questions come from.

FROM BILL

Don't let "storage" scare you off

The word storage worries people more than it should. For now, just know this: you start with free space, it's plenty for a lot of pictures, and if you ever need more there are easy choices. We'll walk through every bit of it slowly in Part 3. You're not behind — this trips up nearly everyone at first.

PART 2

Getting Set Up — Once and for All

Installing the app, signing in, and turning on backup — the handful of one-time steps that start protecting your photos. We'll go slowly; you only do this once.

CHAPTER 4

Installing Google Photos

Many phones already have Google Photos on them. Let's find out, and install it if needed. Look first for its icon: a little colorful pinwheel or four-petaled shape in red, yellow, green, and blue.

On an Android phone

Google Photos usually comes already installed on Android phones — look for the pinwheel icon on your Home screen or in your apps. If it's there, you're set; skip ahead to signing in. If somehow it's missing, open the **Play Store** (a colorful triangle), search **Google Photos**, and tap **Install**.

On an iPhone or iPad

1. Open the **App Store** (blue icon with a white letter made of drawing tools).
2. Tap the **Search** magnifying glass at the bottom and type **Google Photos**.
3. Find the one made by **Google LLC** and tap **Get**, then confirm with Face ID, Touch ID, or your passcode. It downloads on its own.

On a computer

On a computer there's nothing to install — you simply visit the website **photos.google.com** in your web browser (the program you use for the internet, like Chrome, Safari, or Edge) and sign in. The website looks and works much like the app, with a comfortably bigger view.

> HEADS UP
>
> **Get the real one, from Google**
>
> App stores sometimes list copycat apps with similar names and icons. The genuine Google Photos is made by **Google LLC** — check the maker's name under the title before installing. When in doubt, don't guess; give me a call and we'll make sure you've got the right one.

CHAPTER 5

Signing In With Your Google Account

When you first open Google Photos, it asks you to sign in with your Google Account — the key we talked about. This connects the app to your personal, private photo library.

1. Open **Google Photos**.
2. It shows a sign-in screen. If your Google Account already appears, tap it. Otherwise tap **Sign in** or **Add account**.
3. Type your Google Account email address (the one ending in @gmail.com, usually) and tap **Next**.
4. Type your password and tap **Next**. You may be asked to confirm it's really you with a code — that's a normal safety step.
5. If you don't have a Google Account, tap **Create account** and follow the friendly prompts. It's free and takes a few minutes.

> TIP
> **Write your email and password down somewhere safe**
> Your Google Account email and password are the key to your photos. Write them on a card and keep it somewhere only you know — a drawer, a little address book. Not taped to the device itself. If you ever forget the password, there's a recovery process, but having it written saves a headache.

What "your library" means

Once you're signed in, Google Photos shows **your library** — all the photos tied to your account. On a brand-new account it'll be empty until backup copies your pictures up. On an account you've used before, your photos appear like magic. This library is private to you; no one else can see it unless you choose to share specific photos.

CHAPTER 6

Turning On Backup — the Important Switch

This is the step that actually protects your photos, so let's do it carefully. **Backup** is the setting that automatically copies your pictures to the cloud. When it's on, you're protected; when it's off, you're not. Most people want it on.

Finding the backup setting

1. Open **Google Photos**.
2. Tap your **account picture or initial** in the top-right corner (a little circle with your photo or a letter in it).
3. You'll see a line about **Backup**. If it already says "Backup complete" or "Backing up," you're protected — wonderful. If it says backup is off, tap **Turn on backup**.
4. If asked, give the app permission to access your photos — tap **Allow**. It needs this to copy them; it's normal and safe.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> **How to know it's working**
>
> Tap your account picture any time to see backup's status. "Backing up…" means it's busy copying; "Backup complete" means every photo is safely in the cloud. A little cloud symbol on a photo (with a line through it, or a small arrow) tells you at a glance whether that particular picture has made it up yet.

Set it to back up over Wi-Fi only

To make sure backup never eats into your phone-plan data, tell it to use Wi-Fi only:

1. Tap your **account picture**, then **Photos settings** (or the gear icon), then **Backup**.
2. Look for **Mobile data usage** or **Cellular data** settings.
3. Set photos and videos to back up over **Wi-Fi only** (turn cellular/mobile data for backup off).

Now backup waits politely until you're on Wi-Fi — usually at home — and never surprises you with data charges. This is how most folks set it, and it's the worry-free choice.

CHAPTER 7

Storage Saver vs. Original Quality

When you turn on backup, Google asks one question that confuses people: what **quality** to save your photos at. There are two choices, and here's the plain-English difference.

Choice	What it means for you
Storage Saver	Saves slightly smaller copies — Google gently shrinks each photo (to a still-generous size) and video so they take up far less room. For the vast majority of folks, the pictures still look great on any phone, tablet, or ordinary print. More photos fit in your free space.
Original Quality	Saves each photo and video exactly as your camera captured it, at full size. The files are larger, so they fill your storage faster. Best only if you're a serious photographer or print large, poster-size enlargements.

TIP

For almost everyone, choose Storage Saver

Unless you're a professional photographer, **Storage Saver** is the friendly choice: your photos look lovely and you fit two or three times as many in the same free space. You can change this setting later if you ever wish to — though note the quality choice only affects photos backed up *after* you change it.

Where to find the quality setting

If you want to check or change it: tap your **account picture** > **Photos settings** > **Backup** > **Backup quality**, and pick **Storage Saver** or **Original quality**. If you're not sure, leave it on Storage Saver and get on with enjoying your pictures.

GOOD TO KNOW

Both choices count toward your free space

Here's a point that surprises people: *both* Storage Saver and Original quality use up your 15 GB of free Google storage — Storage Saver just uses it far more slowly. (Years ago Google offered unlimited free storage for smaller photos, but that ended, so today every photo counts.) We'll make full sense of this in the next part.

PART 3

Making Sense of Storage

The part where the confusion lives — what the 15 gigabytes really means, why your phone and the cloud are different, and exactly what to do when you see "storage full." Read this once and you'll never fret about it again.

CHAPTER 8

The 15 Gigabytes, Explained Plainly

Almost every worried question I get about Google Photos comes down to storage. Let's take it slowly, because once you understand this one picture, the whole thing clicks into place.

What "15 gigabytes" is

Every free Google Account comes with **15 gigabytes** of storage in the cloud — room on Google's computers to keep your things. A gigabyte ("GB" for short) is simply a unit of how much digital stuff you can store, the way a gallon measures milk. Fifteen gigabytes holds a great many photos — often thousands, especially on the Storage Saver setting.

The twist: that 15 GB is shared

Here's the part nobody explains. Your 15 GB isn't just for photos — it's **shared** across three Google services that all draw from the same bucket:

- **Google Photos** — your backed-up pictures and videos.
- **Gmail** — your Google email, including big attachments people send you.
- **Google Drive** — any documents or files you keep with Google.

So if your Gmail is stuffed with years of emails and attachments, that eats into the same 15 GB your photos want to use. This is why someone with few photos can still see "storage almost full" — it's often the email doing it. Knowing this is half the battle.

GOOD TO KNOW

One bucket, three faucets

Picture a single 15-gallon bucket with three faucets filling it: Photos, Gmail, and Drive. When the bucket's full, it doesn't matter which faucet filled it — everything stops until you make room. That's why we'll look at all three when space runs low, not just your photos.

CHAPTER 9

On My Phone, or In the Cloud? The Big Confusion

This is the question I'm asked more than any other: "If I delete a photo, is it really gone? Where do my photos actually live?" Let's untangle it once and for all.

Two separate places

After backup, each photo exists in **two** places at once:

- **On your phone** — the copy stored in the phone itself, which fills up the phone's own storage.
- **In the cloud** — the backed-up copy on Google's computers, which fills up your 15 GB.

These are different places with different storage. Your phone has its own storage (nothing to do with the 15 GB), and the cloud has the 15 GB. A photo can be in one, the other, or both. Understanding this makes everything else sensible.

Why it matters for deleting

Because there are two copies, *where* you delete from matters enormously:

What you do	What actually happens
Delete inside the Google Photos app	This removes the photo from BOTH your phone and the cloud (it goes to Trash first — recoverable for a while). Use this when you truly want a picture gone everywhere.
"Free up space" in Google Photos	This removes ONLY the phone's copy, keeping the cloud copy safe. Use this to make room on a full phone without losing any pictures. (Its own chapter is coming.)

HEADS UP

The mix-up that loses photos

People sometimes open their phone's *own* photo app (not Google Photos), delete pictures to free space, and panic when they vanish. If backup was on, the cloud copy is usually still safe in Google Photos — but to avoid the scare entirely, do your deleting and space-freeing from *inside the Google Photos app*, where it tells you clearly what it's doing.

CHAPTER 10

When You See "Storage Full" — What to Do

Sooner or later you may get a message that your Google storage is nearly full, and backup pauses. Don't panic — nothing is lost, and you have several calm choices. Here they are, easiest first.

First, see what's using the space

1. On a computer or phone browser, visit **one.google.com/storage** (or tap the storage line in Photos settings).
2. It shows a simple bar: how much Photos, Gmail, and Drive are each using.
3. Now you know which faucet filled the bucket — often it's old emails with big attachments, not photos at all.

Your choices for making room

- **Clean up Gmail:** delete large old emails and empty the Gmail trash. This often frees a surprising amount with no effect on your photos.
- **Empty the Google Photos Trash:** deleted photos sit in Trash and keep using space until emptied (we cover this soon).
- **Switch to Storage Saver** for future backups so new photos use space more slowly.
- **Buy a little more storage** through Google One — often just a few dollars a month for a lot more room. The next chapter explains this honestly.

TIP

What happens if you do nothing?

If your storage stays full, your *existing* photos remain safe — nothing already backed up is deleted. What stops is *new* backups: fresh photos won't copy to the cloud until you make room or add storage. So there's no emergency, just a nudge to tidy up or upgrade when it's convenient.

FROM BILL

This is a perfect thing to call me about

Sorting out "storage full" — figuring out what's eating the space and choosing the easiest fix — is one of the most common calls I get, and one of the most satisfying to solve together. If that message has you worried, don't stew over it. Call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll clear it up in a few minutes.

CHAPTER 11

Buying More Storage (Google One)

If 15 GB isn't enough — and for a lifetime of photos it often isn't — you can buy more. Google's paid storage plans are called **Google One**. Here's the honest picture, without any pressure.

What Google One is

Google One is simply a larger storage allowance for the same account, paid monthly or yearly. You get more room (plans commonly start around 100 GB and go up), shared across Photos, Gmail, and Drive just like the free 15 GB. Your photos, app, and everything else work exactly the same — there's just more space in the bucket.

Is it worth it?

For many people, yes — a small monthly fee (often just a few dollars) to never worry about running out of room for a lifetime of family photos is money well spent. It's far cheaper than losing pictures. But it's entirely optional: if you're happy tidying up now and then to stay under 15 GB, you never need to pay a penny.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Prices change — so I'm keeping it general**
>
> I won't quote you an exact price, because Google adjusts the plans from time to time and I'd hate to tell you something that's gone stale. When you're ready to look, the current plans and prices are shown plainly at **one.google.com**, and I'm glad to walk through the choices with you.

How to add storage, if you decide to

1. Visit **one.google.com** on a computer or in your phone's browser, signed in to your Google Account.
2. Look at the plans offered and pick the amount of storage that suits you.
3. Follow the prompts to pay. The extra space is available right away, and backup resumes.

STAY SAFE

Only ever pay through Google itself

Buy storage only at the real **one.google.com**, never through a link in a text or email claiming your storage is full. Those are a common trick (more on this in the safety part). Google will never phone you demanding payment. When unsure, stop and call me first.

PART 4

Finding and Enjoying Your Photos

Now the fun part — getting around the app, and the genuinely magical way Google Photos lets you find any picture in seconds, even among thousands.

CHAPTER 12

Getting Around the App

Google Photos is laid out simply. Along the bottom you'll find a few buttons that are your whole map. Let's walk through them so nothing's a mystery.

Button	What it's for
Photos	Your main view — every picture and video, newest at the top, grouped by date. This is home base; scroll down to travel back through the years.
Search	A magnifying glass. The clever part — type or tap to find photos by who's in them, where they were taken, or what's in them. We'll make the most of this next.
Collections / Library	Your albums, favorites, Archive, Trash, and tools live here. The housekeeping drawer.
Your account picture	Top corner — backup status, settings, and storage. The control panel.

Opening and getting back

Tap any photo to open it full-screen. Swipe left or right to move to the next or previous picture. To close it and return to the grid, swipe down or tap the back arrow at the top-left. You can't get lost — the back arrow always walks you out one step at a time.

TIP

Pinch to see more or fewer at once

In the main Photos view, place two fingers on the screen and spread them apart to make the pictures bigger (fewer on screen), or pinch them together to shrink them (more on screen, handy for scanning years quickly). It's a gentle, satisfying way to zoom through your memories.

CHAPTER 13

The Magic of Search

Here's where Google Photos earns its keep. You do not have to scroll through thousands of pictures to find the one you want. Just **search**, in plain words, and it finds them in a blink. This one feature delights people more than any other.

Search by what's in the picture

Tap **Search** and simply type what you're looking for, as you'd say it:

- Type **dog** and it shows every photo with a dog in it.
- Type **beach**, **birthday cake**, **snow**, **flowers** — it recognizes what's pictured and gathers them.
- Type a year like **2019**, or a month, or a holiday.

Search by place

If your photos recorded where they were taken (most phone photos do), you can type a town, a state, or a country — **Florida**, **Cleveland** — and see every picture from there, no matter when. A lovely way to relive a trip.

Search by person

Google Photos can group pictures by **face**, so all the photos of one grandchild are gathered together. In Search you'll see a row of faces near the top; tap one to see every photo of that person across the years. You can even label a face with a name, then just search the name.

GOOD TO KNOW

Is face grouping spying on me?

It's a fair question. The face grouping happens privately within your own account to help *you* find *your* photos — it's not shown to anyone else, and you can turn it off in settings if you'd rather. Many people find it one of the most useful features there is; others prefer it off. Your choice, either way.

When search surprises you

It isn't perfect — occasionally it'll guess "cat" for a fluffy slipper, or miss a blurry face. That's fine; it finds the right pictures far more often than not, and you've lost nothing by trying. Think of it as a wonderfully fast helper, not a flawless one.

CHAPTER 14

Albums and Favorites

Beyond searching, you can gather photos into **albums** — like the physical photo albums you may have on a shelf, but weightless and un-losable. Albums are optional; search finds things without them. But many people enjoy making a few for special occasions.

Marking favorites

The quickest bit of organizing: open any photo and tap the **heart**. It drops that picture into your **Favorites**, a ready-made album of your best-loved shots, easy to find later. No setup — just tap hearts on the ones you love.

Making an album

1. Go to **Collections** or **Library** and tap **New album** (a + or "Create album").
2. Give it a name — "Mary's Wedding," "Garden 2026," whatever you like.
3. Tap **Add photos** and tap each picture you want; then tap **Done**.

Your album is saved. Open it any time to flip through just those pictures, and add more to it whenever you like. Nothing is moved or copied away — an album is just a tidy gathering of pictures that still live in your main library too.

Memories — little surprises

Near the top of your Photos view you may see **Memories**: small automatic collections Google puts together — "On this day three years ago," "Your trip to the lake," a grandchild through the seasons. Tap one to watch a gentle slideshow. They arrive on their own, like a pleasant surprise in the mail, and you can hide any you'd rather not see.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Between search, favorites, albums, and Memories, a lifetime of photos stops being an overwhelming pile and becomes something you can actually enjoy — finding the exact picture you want in seconds, and being surprised by happy ones you'd forgotten. That's the difference between having photos and *having* them.

PART 5

Sharing Your Photos

The joy of Google Photos is passing pictures around the family. Here are the three easy ways — a quick share, a shared album everyone adds to, and an automatic link to a loved one.

CHAPTER 15

Sharing a Photo or a Few

The simplest sharing: send someone a picture or a handful. It takes seconds and works whether or not the other person uses Google Photos.

Sharing a single photo

1. Open the photo you want to share.
2. Tap the **Share** button — an arrow or three-dots-connected symbol, usually at the bottom or top.
3. Choose how to send it: tap a family member's name if it's suggested, or pick **Messages** to text it, **Email**, or another app.
4. Send it off. The other person gets the picture to keep.

Sharing several at once

To send a batch: in the main Photos grid, press and hold the first photo until a checkmark appears, then tap each additional photo to check it too. When you've picked them all, tap **Share** and choose how to send. A whole afternoon's pictures in one go.

Sharing by link

Sometimes the easiest thing is a **link** — a little web address that shows the photos. When you share, you may see **Create link**. Choose it, and Google copies a link you can paste into any text or email. Anyone you send it to can tap it and view the pictures, even if they don't use Google Photos at all.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **A link is like handing out a key**
>
> Anyone who has the link can open those photos, so share links only with people you trust and don't post them somewhere public. You can stop sharing a link later (in the shared item's options) if you change your mind. For ordinary family sharing, links are perfectly safe and wonderfully handy.

CHAPTER 16

Shared Albums — Everyone Adds Their Own

A **shared album** is a photo album that more than one person can add to and view — perfect for a family reunion, a wedding, or a holiday where everyone took pictures. Instead of a dozen people swapping photos every which way, they all land in one shared place.

Creating a shared album

1. Make an album (or open an existing one).
2. Tap the **Share** button or the **add people** option within the album.
3. Choose the family members to invite, or create a link to send them.
4. They tap to join, and can then view the album — and, if you allow it, add their own photos to it.

Why families love these

After the reunion, everyone drops their pictures into the one shared album, and suddenly you have the whole day from every angle — the shots you missed, the grandchildren you didn't catch. Everyone sees everything, no one has to email a hundred files, and it all stays in one tidy place you can revisit for years.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A shared album turns scattered, half-remembered pictures into a complete family record that everyone helps build. It's the modern version of passing the photo envelope around the table — except nobody has to give up their copy, and it never gets lost.

HEADS UP

Deleting from your library removes it from shared albums too

One thing to know: if you delete a photo from your own library, it also disappears from any shared album you added it to. So if you've shared something you want the family to keep, leave your copy in place rather than deleting it later to save space — use "Free up space" instead, which keeps the cloud copy safe.

CHAPTER 17

Partner Sharing — a Standing Connection

Partner sharing is a lovely feature for the person you're closest to — a spouse, an adult child. It quietly and automatically shares your photos with that one person, so you never have to send them manually. Set it up once and it just keeps you connected.

How it works

You choose one trusted person and decide what to share with them — all your photos, or just certain ones (say, only photos of the grandchildren). From then on, when you take a picture that fits, it appears for them automatically in their own Google Photos. They do the same for you, if you both set it up, and you each get a gentle window into the other's days.

Setting it up

1. Tap your **account picture** > **Photos settings** > **Partner sharing** (or Sharing).
2. Choose the person (they'll need a Google Account and the app).
3. Decide what to share — everything, or only photos of specific people, or only from a certain date onward.
4. Send the invitation. Once they accept, sharing begins on its own.

> TIP
> **Grandparents' favorite setup**
>
> Many grandparents set partner sharing with an adult child so that every photo of the grandchildren the child takes shows up automatically for Grandma and Grandpa — no asking, no sending, just a steady, happy stream of the little ones. If that sounds like a joy, it's a wonderful thing to set up together, and I'm glad to help.

You stay in control

Partner sharing is entirely optional and fully reversible. You pick exactly what's shared, and you can change or stop it any time in settings. It only ever involves the one person you chose — nothing is public, and no one else can see your photos.

PART 6

Touching Up and Printing

Simple ways to make a photo look its best right on your phone, and how to turn your favorites back into something you can hold — prints, enlargements, and photo books.

CHAPTER 18

Simple Edits Anyone Can Do

Google Photos has gentle tools to improve a picture — brighten a dark shot, straighten a crooked horizon, trim out a distraction. You can't hurt the original; every edit can be undone, so experiment freely.

Opening the editor

1. Open a photo.
2. Tap the **Edit** button — usually three little sliders, at the bottom.
3. You'll see rows of tools. Try them; nothing sticks until you choose to save.

The edits most worth knowing

Tool	What it does
Enhance / Auto	A one-tap "make it better" that adjusts brightness and color automatically. Often all a photo needs.
Crop	Trims the edges — to cut out clutter, straighten a tilted shot, or zoom in on a face. Drag the corners.
Brightness / Light	Makes a too-dark photo brighter or a washed-out one richer. Slide until it looks right to your eye.
Rotate	Turns a sideways photo upright.

Saving — safely

When you're happy, tap **Save** or **Save copy**. Choosing **Save copy** keeps your untouched original *and* the edited version, so you never lose the first one — a nice safety net. If you ever regret an edit, open the photo, tap Edit, and there's an option to revert to the original.

> TIP
>
> **You truly cannot ruin a photo here**
>
> Every edit is undo-able, and the original is always recoverable. So slide the brightness all the way up just to see what happens, try a crop you're not sure about — it's the best way to learn, and the picture is never in any danger.

CHAPTER 19

Turning Photos Into Prints You Can Hold

Digital photos are safe and searchable, but there's still nothing like a print on the mantel or in a frame on the piano. Google Photos can help you order prints, enlargements, and even bound photo books, mailed to your door.

Ordering from Google Photos

Within the app, look under **Collections** or the menu for a **Print store** or **Order prints** option. You pick the photos, choose the size (from wallet prints to enlargements) or a photo book, and Google prints and ships them. It's a tidy way to get prints without leaving your chair.

Other easy ways to print

- **The drugstore or warehouse club:** many pharmacies and stores print photos cheaply. You can often upload from your phone to their website or app, then pick the prints up in an hour.
- **Your own printer:** if you have a photo-capable printer, you can print directly from the app — though home printing of nice photos can be fussy, and a print shop usually does better for keepsakes.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why bother with prints

A backed-up photo is safe forever, but a *printed* one gets seen — on the wall, in a frame, tucked in a birthday card to a grandchild. Prints are how your photos become part of the daily life of the house, and part of what you pass down. A few favorites on paper is a lovely habit.

FROM BILL

I'm happy to help you order a batch

If you'd like to get a set of prints or a photo book made but the ordering feels fiddly, that's a grand thing to do together. We'll pick the pictures, choose the sizes, and get them on their way. Give me a call at **(330) 200-8042** — it's one of the more cheerful jobs I get to do.

PART 7

Housekeeping Without Fear

Freeing up a full phone the safe way, tidying what you don't need to see, and understanding the Trash — so you can clean up with confidence and never lose a picture by accident.

CHAPTER 20

"Free Up Space" — Clear Your Phone, Keep the Cloud

This is one of the most useful tricks in the whole app, and the one that saves the most phones. When your phone itself is full — "Storage almost full," won't take new photos — Google Photos can clear the phone's copies while keeping every picture safe in the cloud.

How it works

Remember from Part 3 that each backed-up photo lives in two places: on your phone and in the cloud. The **Free up space** tool removes only the *phone's* copies of photos that are already safely backed up. The pictures don't disappear — they stay in Google Photos, in the cloud, and reappear the instant you open them. Your phone just stops holding a second copy it doesn't need.

Using it

1. First make sure backup is complete (tap your account picture; it should say "Backup complete").
2. Tap your **account picture**, then look for **Free up space on this device**.
3. It tells you how many photos it can clear from the phone and how much room that frees. Tap to confirm.
4. Done — your phone has breathing room again, and not a single photo was lost.

TIP

The safe answer to a full phone

If your phone nags that it's out of space, reach for **Free up space** before you start deleting anything. It's the gentle fix: more room on the phone, every photo still safe in the cloud. You can do it again any time the phone fills back up.

HEADS UP

Make sure backup finished first

Free up space only removes phone copies of photos it has already backed up — so always confirm "Backup complete" before using it. If a photo hasn't backed up yet (say, from this morning, before you reached Wi-Fi), let backup catch up first so nothing's cleared before it's safe.

CHAPTER 21

Archive — Tidy the View, Keep the Photo

Sometimes you want a photo out of your main view without deleting it — a screenshot, a receipt, a picture of where you parked. That's what **Archive** is for. Archived photos are kept safe but tucked out of the main scroll.

Archiving a photo

Open the photo, tap the **three dots** (more options), and choose **Archive**. It vanishes from your main Photos view but stays fully backed up and searchable, waiting in the Archive folder under Collections whenever you want it. To bring it back, open it from Archive and choose **Unarchive**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Archive is not deleting

An archived photo is not gone and not at risk — it's just moved out of the main river of pictures so your day-to-day view stays about the memories, not the receipts and screenshots. Think of it as a drawer you tuck things into, not a trash can.

CHAPTER 22

The Trash — Your Safety Net

When you delete a photo in Google Photos, it isn't gone immediately. It goes to the **Trash** (sometimes called the Bin) and waits there for a while before being permanently removed. This is a wonderful safety net — if you delete something by mistake, you can get it back.

How the Trash works

- Delete a photo and it moves to **Trash**, not oblivion.
- It sits in Trash for a set number of days (recently around 30 days — Google has used different windows over time) and is then permanently deleted on its own.
- While a photo is in Trash, it still counts toward your storage — so to actually reclaim space, you empty the Trash.

Rescuing a photo you deleted by mistake

1. Go to **Collections** or **Library**, then tap **Trash** (or Bin).
2. Find the photo. Press and hold to select it.
3. Tap **Restore**. It returns to your library, right where it was.

> TIP
>
> **If a photo's missing, check the Trash first**
>
> Before you panic that a picture is lost, open the Trash — if you deleted it in the last few weeks, it's very likely sitting right there, one tap from being restored. The Trash has rescued more treasured photos than I can count.

Emptying the Trash to reclaim space

When you're sure you don't need what's in the Trash, open it and tap **Empty trash** to permanently remove it and free the storage. Only do this when you're certain — once the Trash is emptied, those photos are truly gone. And remember it can take a day or two afterward for your storage amount to update.

HEADS UP

Emptying Trash is the one truly final step

Everything else in Google Photos is forgiving and reversible — except emptying the Trash, which permanently deletes what's in it. So pause and look before you empty it. If you're ever unsure whether something in there matters, restore it to be safe, or leave the Trash alone and let it clear on its own.

CHAPTER 23

Keeping Your Own Copies

Google Photos is a superb safe place for your pictures, but it's wise not to rely on any single service forever. You can always pull your photos back out — to your computer, a memory stick, or another service — and it's a good idea to keep a copy of your true treasures somewhere of your own.

Downloading a photo to your device

To save a copy of any photo back onto your phone or computer, open it, tap the **three dots**, and choose **Download** (on a computer, **Download** from the menu). The full picture saves to your device, yours to copy onto a memory stick or print as you like.

Getting all your photos at once

Google offers a tool called **Takeout** (at **takeout.google.com**) that lets you download your entire photo library in one go — useful if you ever want a complete copy on a computer or an external drive. It's a bit technical, so it's a fine thing to do together with a family member or with me.

FROM BILL

A belt-and-suspenders habit

For irreplaceable photos — the wedding, the ones of loved ones gone — I like people to have them in *more than one* place: in Google Photos, and also on a computer or a memory stick in a drawer. It's not that Google is unsafe; it's that your most precious memories deserve a backup of the backup. I'm glad to help you set that up — (330) 200-8042.

PART 8

Bringing Photos In — and Enjoying Them Everywhere

Rescuing the shoebox of old printed photos into Google Photos, bringing in pictures from a computer or camera, and enjoying it all on the big screen. This is where your whole life of memories comes together.

CHAPTER 24

Rescuing Old Printed Photos

Some of your most precious pictures aren't on any phone — they're in albums and shoeboxes, printed years ago, the only copy of a wedding or a parent long gone. Those are exactly the ones most at risk from a flood, a fire, or simply fading. The good news: you can bring them safely into Google Photos, where they'll be protected alongside everything else.

The easy way: photograph them with PhotoScan

Google makes a free companion app called **PhotoScan** that turns your phone into a little scanner for printed photos — no bulky equipment needed. It takes a glare-free picture of each print and tucks it into your Google Photos.

1. Install **PhotoScan by Google Photos** from your App Store or Play Store (made by Google LLC).
2. Open it and hold your phone above a printed photo on a table in good light.
3. Follow the on-screen dots — it guides you to move the phone to a few spots to capture the photo without glare.
4. It saves a clean, straightened copy, which backs up to Google Photos like any other picture.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Scanning the old shoebox is one of the most meaningful afternoons you can spend. Those irreplaceable prints — the only copies — become safe forever, searchable, and shareable with the whole family. Children and grandchildren treasure these more than any new photo. It's giving the past a future.

Even a plain photo of a photo works

No need to fuss if PhotoScan feels like one app too many — you can simply take an ordinary photo of a printed picture with your phone's regular camera, in good light, and it backs up like any other. PhotoScan just does a tidier job with less glare. Either way, the memory is saved.

FROM BILL

A lovely project to do together

Scanning a lifetime of prints can feel like a mountain on your own. It's one of my favorite jobs to help with — we set up at the kitchen table and work through the albums, and by the end your whole family history is safe. If that shoebox has been on your mind, call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll make a start.

CHAPTER 25

Bringing In Photos From a Computer or Camera

Perhaps you have photos on a computer, a memory card from a digital camera, or an old CD. Those can come into Google Photos too, so everything lives in one safe place.

Uploading from a computer

1. On the computer, open your web browser and go to **photos.google.com**, signed in to your account.
2. Click the **Upload** button (near the top).
3. Choose **Computer**, then find and select the photos you want (hold the Ctrl or Command key to pick several).
4. They upload and join your library, backed up like everything else.

From a camera's memory card

If your pictures are on a camera's memory card, slide the card into a computer (many computers have a slot, or you can use an inexpensive card reader that plugs in), then upload the photos from the card using the steps above. A grandchild or I can help the first time if the card and reader are unfamiliar.

> **TIP**
>
> **The computer version is roomy and comfortable**
>
> Doing a big upload — or just browsing a lifetime of pictures — is often nicest on a computer's large screen at photos.google.com. It's the very same library as on your phone, just easier on the eyes for a long session. Everything you do in one place shows up in the other.

CHAPTER 26

Videos, Too

Google Photos doesn't just keep your pictures — it keeps your **videos** right alongside them: the grandchild's first steps, the birthday song, the clip from the family gathering. They back up, search, and share just like photos, with a couple of things worth knowing.

- Videos take up **more storage** than photos — a few minutes of video can equal many pictures — so they're the first thing to check if your space fills quickly.
- To play one, just tap it; it starts on its own. Tap the screen for the pause and volume controls.
- Share a video exactly as you'd share a photo — though very long videos are better shared by **link**, since they're large to send any other way.

GOOD TO KNOW

The Storage Saver setting helps with videos most of all

Because videos are the big storage-eaters, the Storage Saver backup setting (from Part 2) makes the biggest difference here — it keeps your videos at a quality that still looks great on any screen while taking up far less room. Another good reason most folks leave Storage Saver on.

CHAPTER 27

Enjoying Your Photos on the Big Screen

Photos are lovelier large. Beyond your phone and computer, there are a few delightful ways to enjoy your Google Photos on the biggest screen in the house — the television.

Casting to your TV

If you have a streaming device or smart TV (such as a Chromecast, a Google TV, or many modern televisions), you can send your Google Photos up onto the big screen. In the app, look for the **Cast** button (a little screen with curved lines in the corner), tap it, and choose your TV. Your photos appear on the television for the whole room to enjoy — wonderful when family visits.

A digital photo frame

Some digital picture frames can connect to Google Photos and show a rotating slideshow of your pictures, updating on their own as you add new ones. A grandchild could set one up so Grandma's frame quietly shows the newest photos of the family all day long — a gift that keeps giving. If one interests you, I'm glad to help you choose and set it up.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

On the TV or a connected frame, your photos stop living inside a little phone and fill the room — a built-in slideshow for visits, holidays, and quiet evenings. It's the warmth of the old projector-and-screen family slide night, without the fuss, and always up to date.

CHAPTER 28

Moving From Another Photo Service

Maybe your photos have been living with Apple's iCloud, or Amazon Photos, or another service, and you'd like them gathered into Google Photos. It can be done — and you don't have to choose just one service, either.

The general idea

Most services let you **download** your photos to a computer, and then you **upload** them to Google Photos (Chapter 25). Apple even offers a direct "transfer a copy of your photos to Google Photos" option through its privacy website. These moves involve a few steps and some patience while a lot of pictures copy across.

TIP

You can keep more than one service

There's no rule that says you must pick a single home for your photos — many people happily keep both Apple's iCloud and Google Photos running, each with a full copy. Two safe copies in two places is, if anything, extra peace of mind. So there's no rush and no wrong answer here.

FROM BILL

Let me handle the fiddly moving day

Shifting a lifetime of photos from one service to another is exactly the sort of multi-step job that's easy to get tangled in alone — and easy for me, because I've done it many times. If you'd like your pictures brought together into Google Photos, call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll do it carefully, with nothing lost along the way.

PART 9

Privacy and Staying Safe

Who can see your photos (just you, unless you share), how to keep your account secure, and the scams that use "your storage is full" to trick people. A little knowledge, and you can relax.

CHAPTER 29

Who Can See Your Photos

Let's put a common worry to rest. The photos you back up to Google Photos are **private to you**. They're not posted anywhere, not shown to other people, and not visible to anyone who doesn't have your account password — unless *you* choose to share a specific photo or album.

Private by default

- Your library is tied to your Google Account and locked behind your password. No stranger can browse it.
- A photo becomes visible to someone else only when you deliberately share it — a link, a shared album, or partner sharing. You're always the one who decides.
- Face grouping and search happen privately within your own account to help you; they're not shared with others.

GOOD TO KNOW

Sharing is always a choice you make

Nothing in Google Photos is public unless you make it so, one photo or album at a time. And anything you've shared, you can un-share later from its options. If you ever want to check what you've shared, look under the Sharing area — it lists everything, and you're in full control.

CHAPTER 30

Keeping Your Account Secure

Since your Google Account is the key to all your photos (and your email), it's worth keeping that key secure. A few simple habits do the job.

- **Use a good password** you don't use anywhere else, and keep it written somewhere safe at home — not on the device.
- **Turn on two-step verification** if you haven't — it asks for a code (texted to your phone) when signing in somewhere new, so a stranger with just your password still can't get in. A grandchild or I can help you switch it on.
- **Keep a recovery phone number and email** on your account, so you can get back in if you ever forget the password.

TIP

Two-step verification is worth the small bother

Yes, being asked for a texted code now and then is a tiny extra step — but it's the single best thing you can do to keep your photos and email safe from thieves. Think of it as a deadbolt in addition to the doorknob lock. Set it once and it quietly protects you from then on.

CHAPTER 31

The Scams to Know About

Google Photos itself is safe. The thing to watch for is the occasional crook who uses the *idea* of photos and storage to trick people. Know these few patterns and you'll spot them a mile off.

SCAM ALERT

The "your storage is full — click here" message

A text or email arrives: "Your Google storage is full! Your photos will be deleted unless you act now — click here to fix it." It looks urgent and official. It's a **trick** to get you to a fake page that steals your password or your payment details. Real storage warnings appear quietly *inside* your Google account, never as a panicky text demanding you click a link. Don't tap it. Delete it.

SCAM ALERT

The fake "Google Support" call

Someone phones claiming to be Google, warning that your account or photos are at risk and offering to "help" — then asking for your password, a code they've texted you, or payment. **Google does not call people this way.** Never give a password or a verification code to anyone who calls you. Hang up; it's a scam.

SCAM ALERT

"Buy more storage" links

If you do need more storage, buy it *only* at the real **one.google.com**, by going there yourself — never through a link someone sent you. Scammers set up look-alike "storage" pages to capture your card. When in doubt, don't use the link; type the address yourself or ask for help.

The three habits that keep you safe

- **Never click a link** in an unexpected message about your storage or account — go to the service yourself instead.
- **Never give your password or a texted code** to anyone who contacts you, no matter who they claim to be.

- **When something feels urgent and scary, slow down.** Urgency is the scammer's favorite tool. A real problem will wait the few minutes it takes to check with family or with me.

FROM BILL

When in doubt, that's what I'm here for

If a message or call about your photos, storage, or Google account ever makes you uneasy, don't wrestle with it alone and don't click anything. Call me first at **(330) 200-8042**. Those "is this real?" calls are never a bother — they're exactly the thing I most want you to call about, and there's never a charge for asking.

PART 10

Your Cheat-Sheet & When to Call Bill

The one-page reminders to keep by your chair, and an honest word about when a call to me is the right move. You're ready.

CHAPTER 32

The Everyday Cheat-Sheet

Tear this out, fold it, and keep it where you keep your phone. It's the whole of Google Photos at a glance.

The everyday things

I want to…	Do this
Is my backup working?	Tap your account picture (top-right). It should say "Backup complete."
Find a photo	Tap Search, then type what's in it (dog, beach, a name, a place, a year).
Share a photo	Open it, tap Share, pick a person or Messages/Email — or Create link.
Make a favorite	Open a photo, tap the heart.
Free up a full phone	Tap your account picture → Free up space on this device (keeps cloud copies safe).
I deleted something!	Collections → Trash → find it → Restore (works for recent deletions).

The storage facts to remember

- You get **15 GB free**, **shared** among Photos, Gmail, and Drive — so a full Gmail can fill it too.
- **Both** quality settings use your storage; **Storage Saver** uses it far more slowly (best for most folks).
- Running full only stops *new* backups — your existing photos stay safe. Tidy up, or add storage at **one.google.com**.
- **Free up space** clears the phone but keeps the cloud copy. **Delete** removes both (to Trash first).

The golden safety rule

STAY SAFE

Never click a "storage full" link or give out a code

Real storage warnings live quietly inside your Google account — never in a panicky text or a phone call. Never click such a link, never give your password or a texted code to anyone who contacts you, and buy storage only by going to one.google.com yourself. When in doubt, call Bill.

CHAPTER 33

When to Call Bill

This book will carry you a long way, and most days you won't need anyone's help at all. But you're never stuck alone — that's simply not how I do things. Here's an honest word about when picking up the phone is the right move, so you never feel you're imposing.

Good reasons to call — none of them silly

- You want help **getting Google Photos set up** on a new phone and making sure backup is truly working.
- You got a **"storage full"** message and want help figuring out what's using the space and the easiest fix.
- You're moving to a **new phone** and want to be certain every photo comes with you.
- A message or call about your photos or account **felt wrong** — always check with me *before* you click or reply.
- You'd like help **ordering prints or a photo book**, or keeping a second copy of your treasures somewhere safe.
- You just want someone to **sit with you**, in plain English and no rushing, until it feels easy.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and I run **Bill's Home Tech** right here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping people feel at ease with their technology, and helping folks protect and enjoy a lifetime of photos is some of the most rewarding work I do.

Phone	(330) 200-8042 — call or text. If I can't pick up, leave a message and I'll call you back.
Book a visit online	billshometech.com/book
Where I work	Portage County, Ohio, and the nearby communities.
If you visit the website	You may chat with Sophie, my friendly assistant on the site, who can help you book a time to talk.

FROM BILL

My standing offer

If anything in this book — or anything Google Photos does — ever puzzles you, pick up the phone. No question is too small and no problem too silly. I'll come out, or talk you through it, as plainly and patiently as it takes. Helping someone rescue a photo they thought was lost, or finally feel their memories are safe, is about the best part of my week.

— Bill · Bill's Home Tech · (330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

A few parting words

Here's the truth to carry away from all these pages: **there is no such thing as a dumb question.** The folks I help are smart, capable people who simply weren't handed a manual that spoke plainly. Now you have one.

Don't feel you must learn it all at once. Get backup turned on — that one step protects everything — and the rest will come as you need it. Before long, a lifetime of photos you once worried about losing is safe, searchable in seconds, and a joy to share. **You're going to do just fine.**

— Bill