BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

HBO Max

Plans, signing in, profiles, downloads, bundles and billing — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for families and grandparents

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For HBO Max in the U.S. · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to HBO Max, the streaming service that carries HBO's shows and movies along with a lot more. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. It explains the plans and what they cost, how to get HBO Max onto your TV, how to set up profiles for the family, how downloads, sports and bundles work, and how to cancel or spot a fake email. Streaming plans change often, so every price here is marked "as of November 2026"; the HBO Max website always has the final word.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What HBO Max is, why its name keeps changing, whether you already have it through another bill, what the plans cost, and how to sign up.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe a friend told you that you simply *have* to watch a certain HBO series. Maybe your cable company says HBO Max is "included" and you're not sure what that means. Or maybe you've been paying for it for years, the name changed twice, and now you're wondering whether you're paying for the right thing. Whichever it is, this guide is for **you**.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. Streaming services are one of the most common things people ask me about: how to sign in on the TV, which plan to pick, and how to stop a charge they don't recognize. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting on your couch: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain what HBO Max is, and why it was called "Max" for a while.
- Help you find out whether you already have it through your TV, internet or phone company.
- Lay out the three plans and their prices as of November 2026, so you pay only for what you'll use.
- Walk you through signing in on your TV with a code, one step at a time.
- Set up profiles for everyone, including safe Kids profiles for the grandchildren.
- Cover downloads, live sports, bundles, billing, canceling, and the scam emails that use HBO's name.

The big promise: you can't break it

Nothing you tap in the HBO Max app can damage your TV or your phone. If you pick the wrong show, you press **Back**. If you sign in wrong, you try again. The only things that really matter are your password and your money, and I'll point those out clearly.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Once it's set up, HBO Max is a simple way to watch well-made shows and movies whenever you like, with no schedule to keep and no recordings to manage. Knowing how it works also means you won't pay twice for something your cable bill already includes.

And I'm only a phone call away

If anything in this guide leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question, especially about a TV remote.

Let's start with what HBO Max actually is.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What HBO Max Is (and Why the Name Keeps Changing)

HBO Max is a streaming service: you pay a monthly or yearly fee and watch shows and movies over the internet, on a TV, phone, tablet or computer. It carries HBO's own series and films, plus movies from Warner Bros., Discovery shows such as home and cooking programs, children's programming, and, on some plans, live sports.

HBO, HBO Max, Max, and HBO Max again

If you're confused by the name, you're in good company. Here is the short history:

- **HBO** is the cable channel many people have known for decades.
- **HBO Max** was the streaming service that launched in 2020.
- In 2023 the service was renamed simply **Max**, and the app's icon changed.
- On **July 9, 2025**, it went back to being called **HBO Max**. Nobody had to download a new app; the existing app updated itself, and the old max.com web address now leads to **hbomax.com**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Same service, same account

If you signed up when it was called Max, nothing changed about your account, password or plan when the name changed back. Older emails, receipts and help pages may still say "Max." They're talking about the same thing.

Who owns it now

HBO Max used to belong to Warner Bros. Discovery. On **October 6, 2026**, Paramount completed its purchase of Warner Bros. Discovery, and the combined company is now called **Skydance**. That means HBO Max and Paramount+ have the same owner.

The company has said it plans, eventually, to combine its streaming services into a single one. As of November 2026, no date, name or price for that has been announced, and HBO Max and Paramount+ are still sold as separate services. If you pay for both, keep paying for both for now, and watch for an official email from HBO Max (not a text with a link) if anything changes.

HEADS UP

Big news attracts scammers

Whenever a company changes its name or owner, fake "update your account for the new service" messages follow. A real change will never require you to give your password or card number in reply to a text or email. Chapter 22 explains what to do.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the history means you won't be thrown when a receipt says "Max" or a news story mentions Skydance — and you won't fall for a message that uses the confusion to trick you.

CHAPTER 3

Do You Already Have HBO Max?

Before you pay for HBO Max, check whether you're already getting it through another bill. Many people are, without knowing it. Here are the common ways, as of November 2026.

Through Spectrum TV

Spectrum includes **HBO Max Basic With Ads** with its eligible residential TV plans, at no extra charge. You turn it on through **Spectrum App Central** on Spectrum's website: sign in, then choose HBO Max. The ad-free version of HBO Max is included only in Spectrum's top TV plan; on other plans you can pay the difference to upgrade. Our Spectrum TV guide has the details.

Through a phone or internet company

- **Cricket Wireless**: its Supreme plan includes HBO Max Basic with Ads.
- **Verizon** has offered HBO Max as a discounted add-on perk. The details change, so check your Verizon account.
- **Xfinity** and other cable companies sell HBO Max with some TV packages or as an add-on.

Through a bundle

If you pay Disney for the **Disney+, Hulu & HBO Max** bundle, you already have HBO Max. Chapter 17 explains that bundle.

How to check for sure

1. Look at your cable, internet and phone bills for a line that says HBO Max (or Max).
2. Search your email for "HBO Max" and "Max" to find a welcome email or receipt.
3. On an iPhone, open **Settings**, tap your name, then **Subscriptions**, and look for HBO Max.
4. If you have Spectrum, sign in to Spectrum App Central and see whether HBO Max is listed for your plan.
5. When in doubt, call the company that sends the bill and ask, "Does my plan include HBO Max?"

TIP

Signing in through your provider

If your provider gives you HBO Max, you usually create your HBO Max account through the provider's link or sign in with the provider's username, not by paying HBO Max directly. Chapter 8 walks you through it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Five minutes of checking can save you $10 to $23 a month — the cost of paying for HBO Max twice.

CHAPTER 4

HBO Max Plans & Prices

If you pay HBO Max directly, there are three plans in the U.S. They all have the same shows and movies; the differences are ads, picture quality, how many TVs can watch at once, downloads, and live sports. These are the prices as of November 2026, before tax.

	Basic with Ads	Standard	Premium
Monthly price	$10.99	$18.49	$22.99
Yearly price	$109.99	$184.99	$229.99
Ads	Yes, during shows	No ads on shows and movies	No ads on shows and movies
Screens at once	2	2	4
Picture quality	Full HD (1080p)	Full HD (1080p)	4K Ultra HD & Dolby Atmos where available
Downloads	None	Up to 30	Up to 100
Live sports	No	Yes	Yes

These prices took effect in late 2025: right away for new subscribers, and at renewal on or after November 20, 2025 for existing ones. As of November 2026, there has been no newer U.S. price change.

Which plan is right for you?

- **Basic with Ads** — fine if you watch a show now and then and don't mind commercial breaks.
- **Standard** — a good fit for a household that watches often and dislikes ads, or wants downloads for trips, or live sports.
- **Premium** — only worth it if you have a 4K TV and care about the sharpest picture, or need more than two TVs watching at the same time.

TIP

The yearly plan

Each yearly price is exactly ten times the monthly price, so paying for a year costs about two months less than paying monthly — but only if you'll keep HBO Max all year. If you tend to sign up for one series and cancel, monthly is better.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some live sports still have ads

Even on Standard and Premium, live sports events include commercials, just like on regular TV.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Picking the plan that fits how you actually watch can save $50 to $140 a year compared with buying the biggest plan "just in case."

CHAPTER 5

Signing Up & Creating Your Account

If you've decided to pay HBO Max directly, signing up takes about five minutes. It's easiest on a computer, tablet or phone, where typing is simpler than on a TV remote.

Sign up on the website

1. On a computer or tablet, type **hbomax.com** into the address bar yourself.
2. Choose the button to sign up or see plans.
3. Pick **Basic with Ads**, **Standard** or **Premium**, and monthly or yearly.
4. Enter your email address and make up a password. Use a password you don't use anywhere else.
5. Enter your payment card, check the price shown, and confirm.
6. Watch for a welcome email from HBO Max. Keep it; it shows your plan and the date you signed up.

TIP

Write it down once

Put the email address and password you used on the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 25, or in your password manager. Most sign-in trouble later comes down to "which email did I use?"

Signing up through the TV or a phone app

You can also sign up inside the HBO Max app on a Roku, Fire TV, Apple TV, iPhone or Android phone. If you do, you may be billed by **Roku, Amazon, Apple or Google** instead of HBO Max. That's perfectly fine, but it changes where you go to cancel or change plans later. Chapter 18 explains.

HEADS UP

Type the address yourself

Search results and ads sometimes lead to look-alike websites. Always type **hbomax.com** into the address bar, or use the official app from your TV's or phone's app store.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Signing up on the website keeps your billing in one place, with HBO Max, which makes changing plans, adding an extra member and canceling the simplest they can be.

PART 2

Watching on Your TV & Devices

Getting the app onto your TV, signing in with a code or through your cable company, finding something to watch, and turning on subtitles.

CHAPTER 6

Getting the HBO Max App on Your TV

HBO Max works on nearly every modern streaming device and smart TV: Roku, Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, Google TV and Chromecast, and smart TVs from Samsung, LG and Vizio, as well as game consoles, phones, tablets and web browsers. On most of them, the app is free to download; you just need an account to watch.

Finding and installing the app

1. Press the **Home** button on your TV or streaming-device remote.
2. Open the device's app store. Each brand names it a little differently — look for a word like **Apps**, **Store** or **Search** on the home screen.
3. Choose **Search** and spell out **HBO Max** with the on-screen keyboard.
4. Pick the app with the purple-and-white HBO Max logo, then choose **Add**, **Get** or **Install**.
5. When it finishes, open it. You'll see a welcome screen with **Sign In**.

TIP

Already had the "Max" app?

You don't need a new app. The old Max app updated itself to the HBO Max name in July 2025. If your TV still shows an old icon, check for app updates in your device's settings, or restart the TV.

GOOD TO KNOW

Which is easier: smart TV or streaming stick?

Both work. If your TV is more than six or seven years old and the app is slow or won't install, an inexpensive streaming stick (Roku, Fire TV, Google TV) often gives a faster, easier experience. Our Roku and Fire TV guides cover setting one up.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once the app is on your main screen, HBO Max is one press away — no more hunting for the right input or channel.

CHAPTER 7

Signing In on Your TV with a Code

Typing an email and password with a TV remote is slow and frustrating. HBO Max offers an easier way: the TV shows you a short code, and you finish signing in on your phone or computer.

Sign in with the code

1. Open the HBO Max app on your TV and choose **Sign In**.
2. The TV shows a **6-digit code** and a web address. Leave the TV on that screen.
3. On your phone or computer, type the web address shown on the TV into the address bar. HBO Max's help pages give it as **hbomax.com/signin**.
4. Sign in with your HBO Max email and password if you're asked.
5. Type in the 6-digit code exactly as the TV shows it, and continue.
6. In a few seconds the TV signs in by itself and shows your profiles.

Or scan the QR code

Many TVs also show a square **QR code** next to the number code. Point your phone's camera at it, tap the link that pops up, and sign in on your phone. The TV signs in automatically.

TIP

If the code doesn't work

Codes expire after a few minutes. Choose **Sign In** again on the TV to get a fresh one, and type it promptly. Make sure there are no extra spaces. If it still fails, try signing in on a different device, or with your email and password directly.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "activation" websites

Search engines show many look-alike pages for "HBO Max TV sign in" that are not run by HBO Max. Some ask for payment or a phone call to "activate" your TV. Activating is always free. Only type the address your TV shows, and never call a phone number from one of these pages.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Signing in by code takes less than a minute and spares you from pecking out a long password one letter at a time with the remote.

CHAPTER 8

Signing In Through Your TV or Internet Provider

If HBO Max comes with your cable, internet or phone service (Chapter 3), you sign in a little differently. HBO Max calls this signing in **with a provider**.

The general steps

1. Open the HBO Max app and choose **Sign In**.
2. Look for an option to sign in with a provider, or to connect a TV or mobile provider.
3. Pick your company from the list — Spectrum, Xfinity, Verizon, Cricket and many others are there.
4. Sign in with the username and password you use for **that company's** website (not an HBO Max password).
5. Follow the prompts to create or link your HBO Max account.

Spectrum customers

Spectrum asks you to activate HBO Max first through **Spectrum App Central** on Spectrum's website. After that, you sign in to the HBO Max app with the account you set up.

HEADS UP

Changing providers

If you switch internet or TV companies, HBO Max through the old company stops. Before canceling the old service, decide whether you'll get HBO Max through the new company or pay HBO Max directly. Your profiles may need to be set up again.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Signing in through your provider means you watch what you're already paying for, without a second bill.

CHAPTER 9

Finding Something to Watch

HBO Max has thousands of shows and movies. These tools help you find the good ones without endless scrolling.

Search

1. Choose the **magnifying glass** (Search), usually at the top or left side of the screen.
2. Spell the first few letters of a title, actor or topic. Results appear as you type.
3. Pick a result to see a description, the seasons and episodes, and a **Play** button.

TIP

Talk instead of typing

Many remotes have a microphone button. Hold it down and say the name of the show or movie. It's usually much faster than the on-screen keyboard.

My List: save shows for later

When you see something you'd like to watch later, choose its title and then the **+** or **My List** button. You'll find your saved shows in the My List or My Stuff section. Each profile has its own list.

Continue Watching

HBO Max remembers where you stopped. On the home screen, look for a **Continue Watching** row, and pick the show to start right where you left off.

Browsing by brand and category

Scroll the home screen for rows by brand (HBO, Warner Bros., DC, Discovery and others) and by category (comedy, documentaries, kids and family, and so on).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With My List and Continue Watching, you spend your evening watching instead of searching — and you never lose your place in a long series.

CHAPTER 10

Subtitles, Captions & Audio

If the dialogue is hard to follow — mumbled lines, accents, loud music — subtitles help a great deal. HBO Max lets you turn them on for each show, and change their size and color on your device.

Turn on subtitles while watching

1. Start playing a show or movie.
2. Press the select or OK button on your remote (or tap the screen) to bring up the controls.
3. Choose the **Audio and Subtitles** icon, which looks like a speech bubble.
4. Under Subtitles, choose **English - CC** (closed captions, which also describe sounds). Choose **Off** to turn them off again.

Make subtitles bigger or easier to read

The look of subtitles is set on your device. On an iPhone or iPad: **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Subtitles & Captioning** > **Style**. On Android, search the Settings app for "Caption" and open **Caption style**. On a computer, open your profile in HBO Max and look under **Settings** for **Subtitle Style**. On a TV, look in the TV's own accessibility or captions settings.

TIP

Subtitles keep coming on by themselves?

Your device's own caption setting may be switched on. Turn it off in the TV's or phone's accessibility settings, then turn subtitles off in HBO Max.

Audio Description

Many HBO Max titles have **Audio Description**, a narrated track that describes what's happening on screen for people with low vision. The Ways HBO Max Can Make Life Easier chapter near the front of this guide shows how to find and use it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Captions mean no more rewinding to catch a line, and no more turning the volume up so loud it bothers the rest of the house.

PART 3

Profiles & Family

Giving everyone in the house their own profile, keeping the grandchildren safe with a Kids profile, and the rules for sharing HBO Max with family who live somewhere else.

CHAPTER 11

Profiles for Everyone in the House

A **profile** is a separate space inside one HBO Max account. Each profile has its own My List, its own Continue Watching row and its own suggestions, so your mystery series isn't mixed up with your spouse's documentaries.

How many profiles you can have

An HBO Max account can have up to **5 profiles** in total. There are two kinds: **Adult** profiles and **Kids** profiles (Chapter 12). Profiles are free; they don't change your price, and they don't let more TVs watch at once than your plan allows.

Add a profile

1. Open HBO Max. If you see the "Who's watching?" screen, look for **Add Profile** or a **+**.
2. If you're already in a profile, open the profile picture or **My Stuff** area and choose to switch or manage profiles.
3. Choose **Adult** or **Kids**.
4. Type a name, pick a picture if you like, and save.

Edit or delete a profile

From the same profile screen, choose **Edit** (or **Manage Profiles**), pick the profile, and change the name or picture, or delete it. Deleting a profile erases its list and viewing history, but not the account.

Lock your profile with a PIN

If you'd like to keep others in the house out of your Adult profile, HBO Max lets you add a 4-digit **Profile PIN** to any Adult profile. After that, anyone switching to that profile has to type the PIN. Look for the Profile PIN option when you edit the profile.

> **TIP**
>
> **One profile per person**
>
> Resist sharing one profile. HBO Max's suggestions are based on what each profile watches, so shared profiles get muddled recommendations and a Continue Watching row full of other people's shows.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your own profile means HBO Max remembers exactly where *you* left off, and suggests the kinds of shows *you* enjoy.

CHAPTER 12

Kids Profiles & Parental Controls

HBO Max carries plenty of grown-up programming. If grandchildren visit, or if you're setting this up for a family, a **Kids profile** keeps them to shows suitable for their age.

What a Kids profile does

- Shows only titles at or below the **content rating** you choose, in browsing and in search.
- Has no access to account settings, so a child can't see your password, change your plan or see payment details.
- Can be locked so a child can't leave it without a grown-up's code (Kid-Proof Exit, below).

Create a Kids profile

1. Go to the profile screen and choose to add a profile.
2. Choose **Kids**.
3. Enter the child's name.
4. Choose a **content rating** — for example, a younger child might be limited to TV-Y7 and G, an older child to TV-PG and PG.
5. Save. The profile appears with the others on the "Who's watching?" screen.

Kid-Proof Exit and the Parent Code

Kid-Proof Exit stops a child from simply switching to an adult profile. When it's on, leaving the Kids profile asks for a 4-digit **Parent Code** that only you know. To leave, choose **Exit Kids Profile** if asked and type the code. Turn it on in the Kids profile settings, and pick a code a child won't guess (not 1234, and not a birthday).

Change the rating later

As children grow, edit the Kids profile from the profile screen and choose a new content rating. HBO Max may ask for your Parent Code first.

HEADS UP

Adult profiles are open by default

A Kids profile only helps if children use it. If your own profile has no Profile PIN (Chapter 11), a curious child can still choose it. Add a PIN to adult profiles when young children visit often.

GOOD TO KNOW

It isn't a substitute for a grown-up nearby

Ratings are a good guide, but every family's standards are different. For younger children, it's still wise to know what they're watching.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can hand over the remote and step into the kitchen, knowing the grandkids will only see shows you've approved.

CHAPTER 13

Sharing HBO Max & the Extra Member Add-On

HBO Max is meant to be shared by the people who live in your home. For years, many families also shared their password with a grown child or a relative across town. Since 2025, HBO Max has limited that, much as Netflix and Disney+ have.

The household rule

Your HBO Max subscription is for the people in your household. Someone who lives elsewhere can be added officially as an **extra member** for an extra monthly fee, instead of using your password.

What the Extra Member Add-On is

- Costs **$7.99 a month** plus tax, on top of your plan (the price HBO Max's help page shows as of November 2026; you'll see the price before you confirm).
- You can add **one** extra member.
- The extra member must be **18 or older** and live in the same country as you.
- They get their **own sign-in and password**, and can watch on one device at a time.
- It's only available if you pay **HBO Max directly**. If you're billed by an app store, a bundle with Disney+ and Hulu, or your internet, TV or phone company, the add-on isn't offered.

Add an extra member

1. On a computer or phone, go to **hbomax.com/subscription** and sign in.
2. Choose **Get Add-Ons**, then add the Extra Member Add-On and confirm the price.
3. Go to your account page (**hbomax.com/account**) and choose **Manage Extra Members**.
4. Enter the person's name and email to send an invitation.
5. They open the email, accept, and set up their own password.

> TIP
>
> **If the invitation runs out**
>
> Invitations expire after a while. If yours does, HBO Max emails you so you can resend it or invite someone else.

Removing an extra member

Go back to **Manage Extra Members** or your subscription page and remove the add-on. The extra member can keep watching until the end of the add-on's current billing period.

GOOD TO KNOW

Their history can come with them

If your grown child already has a profile on your account, you can transfer it to their new extra member account so they keep their history and My List. The Ways HBO Max Can Make Life Easier chapter shows how.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

For $7.99 a month, a son or daughter who moved out can keep watching legitimately, on their own sign-in, without needing your password.

PART 4

Downloads, Sports & Picture Quality

Taking shows with you on a trip, what live sports HBO Max carries, what happened to CNN, and how many TVs can watch at the same time.

CHAPTER 14

Downloading Shows for Trips & Offline Viewing

A **download** saves a show or movie onto your phone or tablet so you can watch it later without the internet: on an airplane, in a waiting room, or at a cabin with no Wi-Fi. It's one of the most useful features for travelers, and one of the most misunderstood.

Who can download

- Downloads work on **phones and tablets** in the HBO Max app. You can't download to a TV or a web browser.
- **Basic with Ads** doesn't include downloads. **Standard** allows up to **30** downloads and **Premium** up to **100**, as of November 2026.
- That limit is for the whole account, shared by every profile and device — not 30 for each person.
- Not every title can be downloaded. Titles that can show a download button.

Download a show or movie

1. Before you leave home, connect your phone or tablet to your **Wi-Fi**. Downloads are large.
2. Open the HBO Max app and pick your profile.
3. Find the movie, or the show and the episode you want.
4. Tap the **download** button, which looks like a downward arrow. A circle shows the progress.
5. When it's finished, look for your saved titles in the app's **Downloads** area (usually under your profile or My Stuff).
6. To watch, open Downloads and tap the title. No internet needed.

How long a download lasts

- An unwatched download expires **30 days** after you download it.
- Once you press Play, you have **48 hours** to finish it.
- A download also disappears if the title leaves HBO Max.
- An expired download can usually be renewed: connect to the internet, open Downloads and choose the option to renew it.

TIP

Download the night before

Hotel and airport Wi-Fi can be slow. Download two or three episodes at home the night before a trip, then check that one plays with your phone in Airplane Mode.

GOOD TO KNOW

Hit the limit?

If HBO Max says you've reached your download limit, delete a few you've already watched. Swipe or tap Edit in the Downloads area and remove them, then try again.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A long flight or a hospital waiting room goes by much faster with a favorite series saved on your tablet, and it uses none of your phone's data.

CHAPTER 15

Live Sports (and What Happened to CNN)

Besides shows and movies, HBO Max streams some **live sports** in the U.S. It's a nice extra if you follow baseball, hockey or college basketball, though it doesn't replace a full sports package.

What's included

- Live sports come with the **Standard** and **Premium** plans. Basic with Ads doesn't include them.
- HBO Max's help pages describe more than **1,700 live events** a year, including **MLB** baseball, **NHL** hockey, **NCAA March Madness**, the French Open tennis tournament (Roland-Garros), U.S. Soccer and cycling, plus sports shows from Bleacher Report.
- If you get HBO Max through a provider or bundle, live sports may or may not be part of your version. HBO Max notes that availability varies by subscription provider.

Finding a game

1. Open HBO Max and look for **Sports** in the menu or on the home screen.
2. Browse live and upcoming events, or search for your team's name.
3. Choose a live event to watch now. Upcoming events show their start time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Game schedules change

Which games are on HBO Max depends on the TV rights for each league and season, and those change. If you're signing up for one particular game or tournament, look it up in the Sports section first.

CNN is no longer streamed live

HBO Max used to include a 24-hour live CNN stream. It ended on **November 17, 2025**. HBO Max still carries some CNN documentaries and specials on demand. CNN now sells its own streaming subscription separately, so for live news you'll need CNN's own app or your TV service.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If baseball or hockey is on your list, Standard may cover the games you care about without a second sports subscription. If it isn't, you can happily choose Basic with Ads and save.

CHAPTER 16

Picture Quality, Internet Speed & Screens at Once

A few settings and limits decide how good HBO Max looks and how many people can watch at the same time. None of them are complicated once you know where they come from.

How many TVs can watch at once

Your plan sets how many devices can play HBO Max **at the same moment**: **2** on Basic with Ads and Standard, **4** on Premium (Chapter 4). You can sign in on more devices than that; the limit is only on how many are playing at once. If a third TV tries to play on a two-screen plan, you'll see a message saying too many devices are in use.

TIP

Too many screens?

Stop playback on a device nobody is watching — a bedroom TV left on, or a tablet with a paused show. If you can't find it, Chapter 21 shows how to sign out of all devices at once.

4K and Dolby Atmos

4K Ultra HD is the sharpest picture, and **Dolby Atmos** is a surround-sound format. You only get them on the **Premium** plan, with a TV or streaming device that supports them, on titles that offer them, and with a fast enough internet connection. If any one of those is missing, you'll see regular HD, which still looks very good.

Internet speed

Streaming needs a steady connection. If the picture looks blurry for the first few seconds and then sharpens, that's normal: the app starts with lower quality and improves as it measures your speed. If it stays blurry or keeps stopping to load, see Chapter 23.

- A wired (Ethernet) connection, or a streaming device close to the router, helps most.
- Others in the house doing big downloads or video calls can slow your picture.
- Restarting the router and the TV fixes a surprising number of slow-streaming problems.

GOOD TO KNOW

Phones and data

Streaming on a phone away from Wi-Fi uses cellular data — an hour of video can use a large part of a small data plan. Use Wi-Fi when you can, or download ahead (Chapter 14).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the screen limit and what 4K needs keeps you from paying for Premium when your TV can't show the difference.

PART 5

Bundles, Billing & Canceling

Getting HBO Max in a bundle, what changes when Apple, Amazon, Roku or Google sends the bill, changing your plan or card, and canceling without surprises.

CHAPTER 17

Bundles: Disney+, Hulu & HBO Max

A **bundle** is two or more streaming services sold together for one price that's lower than paying for each one separately. The best-known bundle that includes HBO Max is sold by Disney.

The Disney+, Hulu & HBO Max bundle

Bundle	As of November 2026
With ads	$21.99 a month (Disney+, Hulu and HBO Max, all with ads)
No ads	$34.99 a month (all three without ads)
Who bills you	Disney — not HBO Max
Where to manage it	Your Disney+ or Hulu account

Things to know before you bundle

- You sign up and pay through **Disney+** or **Hulu**, then create or link your HBO Max account using the link Disney provides.
- If you already pay HBO Max directly, cancel that subscription **after** the bundle is working, so you don't pay twice and don't lose a day of viewing.
- The **Extra Member Add-On** (Chapter 13) isn't available on the bundle.
- To cancel or change the bundle, you go to Disney, not HBO Max. Canceling HBO Max's own subscription page won't stop a bundle charge.

TIP

Do the math first

A bundle saves money only if you'd really use all three services. If you mainly watch HBO, HBO Max on its own (Chapter 4) may cost less. Our Disney+ and Hulu guides explain their plans.

Bundles from your phone, internet or TV company

As Chapter 3 explains, Spectrum, Cricket and others include HBO Max with certain plans. That's a different kind of bundle: the company you already pay bills you, and you sign in to HBO Max through them (Chapter 8).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If you'd pay for Disney+ and Hulu anyway, the bundle can add HBO Max for much less than its own price, on one bill.

CHAPTER 18

When Apple, Amazon, Roku or Google Bills You

If you signed up inside the HBO Max app on an iPhone, Roku, Fire TV or Android phone, the company that makes that device may be the one charging you. HBO Max calls that company your **billing provider**. It matters because you change or cancel your plan **where you pay**.

Find out who bills you

1. On a computer or phone, go to **hbomax.com/subscription** and sign in. Or, in the app, open your profile or the settings gear and choose **Subscription**.
2. Your billing provider is shown at the top of that screen.
3. Your bank or card statement also gives a clue: a charge from APPLE.COM/BILL, Amazon, Roku or Google means one of them is billing you.

Where to go for each one

Billed by	Where to manage or cancel
Apple (iPhone, iPad, Apple TV)	iPhone **Settings** > your name > **Subscriptions** > HBO Max. Use the same Apple Account you subscribed with.
Roku	**my.roku.com/subscriptions** > HBO Max > **Manage subscription**, then turn off auto-renew.
Amazon (Fire TV, Amazon Appstore)	**amazon.com/appstoresubscriptions**, find HBO Max and turn off auto-renewal. If you added it as a channel in Prime Video, look under **Memberships & Subscriptions** in your Amazon account.
Google Play (Android)	Play Store app > profile picture > **Payments & subscriptions** > **Subscriptions** > HBO Max.
Samsung TV	**samsungcheckout.com** > Purchase History > Subscriptions.
Cable, internet or phone company	Call that company or use its website.

HEADS UP

Deleting the app doesn't cancel

Removing HBO Max from your TV or phone does **not** stop the charges. You have to cancel with the billing provider.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some features need direct billing

The Extra Member Add-On is only for people who pay HBO Max directly. If you want it, you'd cancel with the app store, let that subscription run out, and then sign up again at hbomax.com.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you know who sends the bill, you know exactly where to go to change plans, update a card or cancel — no more phone calls to the wrong company.

CHAPTER 19

Changing Your Plan or Payment Card

You can move between Basic with Ads, Standard and Premium whenever you like. If you pay HBO Max directly, you do it on the HBO Max website.

Change your plan

1. On a computer or phone, go to **hbomax.com/subscription** and sign in.
2. Choose the option to change your plan.
3. Pick the new plan, and monthly or yearly. Read the price and the date the change takes effect.
4. Confirm. HBO Max sends an email with the details.

GOOD TO KNOW

When the change happens

Upgrades often take effect right away; downgrades usually start at your next billing date, so you keep what you paid for until then. The screen shows the exact timing before you confirm.

Update your payment card

On the same subscription page, look for your payment method and choose to change it. Have the new card in front of you. If you're billed by Apple, Amazon, Roku or Google, update the card with that company instead (Chapter 18).

TIP

A new card from the bank

When your bank sends a replacement card, update it here right away. If a payment fails, HBO Max may pause your access until the card is updated.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Switching down to Basic with Ads in a month when you're busy, and back up when a big series returns, is an easy way to keep the cost in check.

CHAPTER 20

Canceling HBO Max (and Starting Again)

There's no penalty for canceling HBO Max, and you can come back any time. Here's how to do it cleanly.

If you pay HBO Max directly

1. Go to **hbomax.com/subscription** on a computer or phone and sign in. (In the app: profile or settings gear > **Subscription**.)
2. Check the billing provider at the top. If it isn't HBO Max, use Chapter 18 instead.
3. Choose to cancel your subscription and follow the prompts. You may be offered a discount to stay; it's fine to say no.
4. Watch for a **confirmation email**. Keep it until the next billing date has passed with no charge.

What happens next

- You can keep watching until the end of the period you've already paid for.
- If you have the Extra Member Add-On, it ends too.
- If you got HBO Max through Spectrum, a bundle or a phone plan, canceling has to go through that company.

Canceled by mistake, or want it back?

Sign in at **hbomax.com** with the same email address and choose to restart or resubscribe. If you return before too long, your profiles and lists are usually still there. Use the same account rather than making a new one.

> **TIP**
>
> **Cancel one day early**
>
> If you're on a free trial or a discount, cancel at least a day before it ends. You'll usually keep access until the end date anyway.

SCAM ALERT

Nobody needs to "help" you cancel

Canceling is something you do yourself, from the pages above. If a website or phone number offers to cancel HBO Max for you for a fee, or asks for remote access to your computer, it's a scam.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Many people subscribe for one series and cancel when it ends. Doing it the right way means no surprise charge next month.

PART 6

Safety & Fixing Problems

Passwords and sign-in trouble, keeping strangers off your account, spotting fake HBO Max emails and texts, and what to try when a show won't play.

CHAPTER 21

Passwords, Sign-In Trouble & Signing Out Everywhere

Most HBO Max sign-in problems come down to a forgotten password or the wrong email address. Both are easy to fix from a phone or computer.

Forgot your password

1. On a phone or computer, go to **hbomax.com/forgot-password**.
2. Enter the email address for your HBO Max account.
3. Open the email HBO Max sends and follow the link to make a new password.
4. Sign in again on your TV with the new password, or with a code (Chapter 7).

TIP

Not getting the email?

Check your Junk or Spam folder, and try any other email addresses you use. If you signed up through Spectrum or another provider, your HBO Max account may use the email you gave them.

Change your password

If you know your password but want a new one, sign in at hbomax.com on a phone, tablet or computer and open your **Account** page. HBO Max sends a **verification code** to your account email to confirm it's you. You can't change your password on a TV.

GOOD TO KNOW

Changing the password signs out every device

When you change your password, HBO Max signs your account out on **all** devices. That's a safety feature. Afterward, sign back in on each TV with the new password.

Sign out of all devices

If an old TV, a former roommate or a stranger might still be signed in, you can sign every device out at once:

1. In the HBO Max app on a phone or tablet, open an **Adult** profile.

2. Go to **Settings** > **Devices** > **Manage Devices**.
3. Choose the option to sign out of all devices and confirm.
4. Allow up to **4 hours** for it to take effect everywhere.
5. Change your password too, if you think someone knows it.

HEADS UP

Use a password that's only for HBO Max

If you use the same password for email, banking and HBO Max, one leak can open everything. A password manager, or a written list kept somewhere safe at home, makes unique passwords easy.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

In a few minutes you can lock out anyone who shouldn't be using your account — and stop "too many devices" messages caused by TVs you've forgotten about.

CHAPTER 22

HBO Max Scams & Fake Emails

Because so many people subscribe, HBO Max's name is a favorite of scammers. The messages look official, with the logo and colors, and they usually try to scare you or excite you.

What fake messages say

- "Your payment failed — your account will be suspended. Update your card now."
- "Your subscription has expired. Click here to renew."
- "Exclusive offer just for you: a free year of HBO Max."
- "Your account is being moved to the new service after the merger. Confirm your details."
- A website or phone number claiming you must pay to "activate" HBO Max on your TV.

What HBO Max says it will never do

HBO Max's own help center says it will **never** ask for your password, verification codes, payment information or bank details by text, and it doesn't ask for passwords or card details in a message. Its warning signs include a request to pay with **gift cards, prepaid cards or cryptocurrency**, an offer that's "exclusive" to you, and a link to a web address you haven't visited before.

SCAM ALERT

The safe habit

Never use the link in a message about your HBO Max account. Instead, type **hbomax.com** into your browser yourself, or open the HBO Max app, and sign in. If there's a real problem, it will show there. If everything looks normal, delete the message.

If you already clicked or typed something

1. Don't enter anything more. Close the page.
2. If you typed your password, change it right away at hbomax.com (Chapter 21). Change it anywhere else you use the same one.
3. If you gave a card or bank number, call your bank using the number on the back of your card, and report it.
4. Let HBO Max know about the message through its help center.

5. If you let a stranger onto your computer, turn the computer off and call Bill.

SCAM ALERT

Fake support phone numbers

Searching "HBO Max phone number" can turn up look-alike sites with numbers run by scammers. They may ask for remote access or gift cards. Get help only from **help.hbomax.com**, typed in yourself, or from the app.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One simple rule — go to the app or type the address yourself — protects your card and your account from nearly every streaming scam.

CHAPTER 23

When HBO Max Won't Play

When a show won't start, keeps stopping or the app freezes, work through these steps in order. Most problems are fixed by the first three.

The steps, in order

1. **Try another show.** If only one title fails, the problem is with that title. Try it again later.
2. **Close the app and open it again.** On most TVs, press Home, then reopen HBO Max.
3. **Restart the device.** Unplug the TV or streaming stick for one full minute, then plug it back in.
4. **Check the internet.** Does another app, like YouTube, work? If not, restart your router and modem the same way.
5. **Update the app.** Check your device's app store or settings for updates.
6. **Sign out and back in.** Find Sign Out in the app's settings, then sign in again (Chapter 7).
7. **Delete and reinstall the app.** This doesn't affect your account or subscription.

Common messages

If you see	What it usually means
Too many devices	Your plan's screen limit is reached. Stop playback elsewhere (Chapter 16).
Not available in your plan	Live sports or a feature may need Standard or Premium (Chapter 4).
Payment problem	Update your card at hbomax.com/subscription (Chapter 19).
Provider sign-in error	Sign in again through your TV or internet company (Chapter 8).
Content not available	It may not be streaming in your area, or it has left HBO Max.

TIP

Check before you troubleshoot

Occasionally HBO Max itself has an outage, often right when a big episode premieres. If nothing works on any device, wait an hour before changing settings.

HEADS UP

A very old TV or device?

If you have a very old device that the app no longer supports, the app may stop updating. A current streaming stick is usually the easiest fix.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most of the time, a restart gets you back to your show in a few minutes, without a call to anyone.

PART 7

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary of everything that matters.

CHAPTER 24

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Sorting out who you pay** — when you're not sure whether HBO Max comes from your cable bill, a bundle, an app store or a card charge you don't recognize, and you'd like it untangled once.
- **Getting HBO Max on every TV in the house**, signed in, with the app on the main screen and subtitles set the way you like them.
- **Setting up profiles for the family**, including Kids profiles with a Parent Code and an extra member for a grown child who lives elsewhere.
- **Choosing between plans and bundles** based on what you actually watch, so you're not paying for two of the same thing.
- **A message you're not sure about** — a "payment failed" email, a text about the merger, or a support number you found online.
- **After a scam** — if you clicked a link, typed a password or let someone onto your computer. Call your bank first, then me.

What I don't do

I can't change HBO Max's prices, issue refunds or see inside your HBO Max account on my own — only HBO Max or your billing provider can do that. I'll sit with you while you contact them and help you get it right.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, explain what I'm doing in plain words, and never talk down to anyone. I'll tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money. I've been doing this kind of work for more than 30 years, and I serve Portage County, Ohio, in person, and folks farther away by remote help.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is yours to keep for free; if you'd like a hand, I'm only a phone call away.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might be greeted by **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. A real person — me — does the actual help.

Thank you for taking the time to learn HBO Max. Pick a plan that fits, make a bowl of popcorn, and enjoy the show.

— Bill

CHAPTER 25

Your HBO Max Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide, boiled down to one page.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
The name	Max became HBO Max again in July 2025. Same app, same account.
Plans (as of Nov. 2026)	Basic with Ads $10.99 · Standard $18.49 · Premium $22.99 a month.
Screens at once	2 on Basic and Standard · 4 on Premium.
Downloads	None on Basic · 30 on Standard · 100 on Premium. Phones and tablets only.
Live sports	Standard and Premium only.
Extra member	$7.99 a month, one person 18+, only if you pay HBO Max directly.
Sign in on a TV	Choose Sign In, then enter the TV's code on your phone or computer.
Who bills me?	hbomax.com/subscription — the provider is shown at the top.
Cancel	Where you pay: HBO Max, Apple, Amazon, Roku, Google, Disney or your provider.
Forgot password	hbomax.com/forgot-password
Sign out everywhere	App: Settings > Devices > Manage Devices.
Messages with links	Don't tap. Open the app or type hbomax.com yourself.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Email address for HBO Max	_____
Where the password is kept	_____
My plan & monthly or yearly	_____
Who bills me (HBO Max, Apple, Amazon, Roku, Google, Disney, provider)	_____
Renewal date	_____
Kids profile Parent Code kept where	_____
Extra member's name & email	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Try another show, then close and reopen the app.
2. Unplug the TV or streaming stick for a full minute.
3. Check that another app works. If not, restart the router.
4. Can't sign in? Reset the password at hbomax.com/forgot-password.
5. Strange charge? Check who bills you at hbomax.com/subscription.
6. A worrying email or text? Don't tap. Go to the app instead.
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

SCAM ALERT

Never pay with gift cards

HBO Max will never ask you to pay with gift cards, prepaid cards or cryptocurrency. Anyone who does is a scammer. Hang up or delete the message.