BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Home Phone Service

Landlines, internet phones, Ooma and keeping your number — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide to the phone on your kitchen wall

Keep your number, keep your peace of mind

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Landline, VoIP & cellular home phone · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your home phone manual. It explains, in plain English, the kinds of home phone service you can have today, what they really cost, how to keep the number you've had for years, and how to make sure your phone works for 911 and in a power outage. Read it in any order and at your own pace. If a screen or bill looks a little different from what's described here, don't worry: the idea is still the same.

Part 1 — Understanding Home Phone Today

1 A Note from Bill
2 The Three Kinds of Home Phone
3 Which One Do You Have Right Now?
4 Why Phone Companies Are Retiring Copper Lines

Part 2 — Choosing a Service

5 Phone Service from Your Cable or Internet Company
6 Ooma: Buy the Box, Skip Most of the Bill
7 magicJack and Other Low-Cost Options
8 Cellular Home Phone Bases
9 Do You Still Need a Home Phone at All?
10 Comparing Costs Honestly

Part 3 — Keeping Your Number & Switching

11 Keeping Your Phone Number (Porting)
12 Switching Step by Step Without Losing a Day
13 Canceling the Old Service the Right Way

Part 4 — 911, Power Outages & Safety

14 How 911 Works on Each Kind of Phone
15 Your 911 Address: Keep It Current
16 When the Power Goes Out
17 Backup Batteries and Other Plans

Part 5 — The Phones in Your House

18 Choosing a Cordless Phone
19 Connecting Phones and Wall Jacks
20 Caller ID, Call Waiting & Voicemail
21 Blocking Spam and Robocalls on a Home Phone
22 Phones for Hearing and Vision Needs

Part 6 — Things That Plug Into Your Phone Line

23 Medical Alert Systems

24 Alarm Systems and Fax Machines
25 Scams Aimed at Home Phone Customers

Part 7 — Fixing Common Problems

26 No Dial Tone
27 Choppy Calls, Echo and Static
28 Callers Can't Reach You

Part 8 — When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

29 When to Call Bill
30 Your Home Phone Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Understanding Home Phone Today

What a "home phone" really is in 2026, the three ways it reaches your house, how to tell which one you have, and why the old copper lines are being retired. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Whoever is reading this guide, it's for **you**. Maybe your phone company sent a letter saying your landline is "being upgraded." Maybe your bill keeps creeping up and you're wondering whether there's a cheaper way to keep the number you've had for decades. Or maybe a family member said, "Just get an Ooma," and you'd like to know what that actually means before you unplug anything.

I'm Bill. With 30+ years of professional experience, I help folks here in Portage County, Ohio feel at home with their technology, and the home phone comes up again and again. It's one of the most-asked-about topics in my whole guide library. That makes sense: for many households, the home phone is the number the doctor, the pharmacy, the church and the grandkids all know by heart. Nobody wants to lose it.

What this guide covers

- **The three kinds of home phone service** you can have today, and how to tell which one is in your house.
- **The main choices**: phone service from your cable or internet company (like Spectrum Voice or Xfinity Voice), Ooma, magicJack, and the cellular "home phone" boxes from the wireless carriers.
- **Keeping your number** when you switch, step by step.
- **911 and power outages**: the honest truth about what works when the lights go out, and how to plan for it.
- **Your phones and gadgets**: cordless phones, caller ID, voicemail, robocall blocking, medical alerts, alarm systems and fax machines.
- **Fixing common problems** like no dial tone or choppy calls.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end, you'll know exactly what kind of phone service you have, what it really costs, what your choices are, and how to switch without losing your number or your peace of mind. Most of all, you'll know your home phone will be there for you in an emergency.

The big promise: you won't lose your number by reading

Nothing in this guide happens by accident. Reading it, or poking around your phone's settings, won't cancel anything or move your number anywhere. The steps that *do* change your service are clearly marked, and I'll tell you the safe order to do them in. The single most important rule is in *Canceling the Old Service the Right Way* (Chapter 13): **never cancel your old phone service until your number has finished moving.**

And you're never stuck alone. If you'd like a hand, call me at **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is $49 remote · $99 in your home, and there's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

The Three Kinds of Home Phone

A "home phone" today just means a phone number that rings at your house, on a regular telephone you pick up and dial. What's changed is the path the call takes to get there. There are three main paths, and knowing which one you have explains almost everything: what you pay, what happens in a power outage, and how 911 finds you.

1. The traditional copper landline

This is the phone line your parents had. A pair of copper wires runs from the phone company's building, along the poles or underground, into your house. The phone company sends a small amount of electricity down those wires, which is why an old corded phone plugged into the wall often kept working even when your power was out.

Big phone companies are steadily retiring these copper lines and moving customers to newer service. You'll read more about that in *Why Phone Companies Are Retiring Copper Lines* (Chapter 4).

2. Internet phone service (VoIP)

VoIP (say "voyp") stands for *Voice over Internet Protocol*. It's a fancy way of saying your phone calls travel over your internet connection instead of copper wires. Your regular phone plugs into a small box (a modem or adapter), and that box turns your voice into internet data.

Most home phone service sold today is some kind of VoIP, including:

- **Phone service from your cable or internet company**, such as **Spectrum Voice** or **Xfinity Voice**. The phone jack is usually on the cable modem itself.
- **Ooma**, where you buy a small box once and plug it into your internet router.
- **magicJack**, a small adapter with a yearly service fee.
- **Fiber phone service**, when the phone company runs fiber-optic internet to your house and your phone rides along on it.

3. Cellular home phone

The third path skips wires altogether. A small base station sits in your house and connects to a cell tower, just like a cell phone does. You plug your ordinary home phone into the base, and it works like a landline. The big wireless carriers sell these, and AT&T's replacement for copper lines, called **AT&T Phone-Advanced**, uses this kind of connection in many homes.

	Copper landline	Internet phone (VoIP)	Cellular home phone
How the call travels	Copper wires from the phone company	Your internet connection	A nearby cell tower
Needs home internet?	No	Yes	No
Works when power is out?	Often, with a corded phone	Only with a backup battery	Only with a backup battery
Typical monthly cost	Usually the highest	Low to moderate	Low to moderate
Future	Being retired in many areas	Most common today	Growing, especially in rural areas

GOOD TO KNOW

Your phones don't care which path you use

The ordinary corded or cordless phones you already own work with all three kinds of service. When you switch, you usually just plug the same phone into a different box. You don't need to buy new phones unless you want to.

CHAPTER 3

Which One Do You Have Right Now?

Before you change anything, it helps to know what you have. This takes about five minutes and you won't touch a single setting. Grab your most recent phone bill and walk around the house with me.

Clue 1: Your bill

- **One bill from a cable company** (like Spectrum or Xfinity) that includes internet, TV and "Voice" means you have cable VoIP phone service.
- **A bill from AT&T, Frontier, Windstream, Verizon or a small local phone company** that lists a "local line" or "basic line" may be a copper landline, or it may already have been moved to fiber or a newer service. Look for words like *Fiber*, *Digital Voice* or *Phone-Advanced*.
- **No monthly phone bill at all**, only taxes and fees, usually means Ooma Basic.
- **A once-a-year charge** often means magicJack.
- **A line on your cell phone bill** called "Home Phone" or similar means a cellular home phone base.

Clue 2: Follow the cord

Pick up the base of your main phone and follow its phone cord to where it plugs in.

- If it goes into a **wall jack**, you'll need to look further. That jack could be fed by copper wires from outside, or by a modem elsewhere in the house that sends the dial tone through your wiring.
- If it goes into the back of a **cable modem** (the box your internet comes from), it's cable phone service.
- If it goes into a small box labeled **Ooma** or **magicJack**, that's your answer.
- If it goes into a box with a little antenna or a label from a wireless carrier, it's a cellular home phone.

Clue 3: The power test (only if you want to)

Here's a gentle way to learn how your phone behaves when the power goes out. Pick a calm daytime moment.

1. Find the box your phone service depends on: the modem, Ooma box, or cellular base.
2. Unplug that box's **power cord** from the wall. (Don't unplug any other cables.)

3. Pick up your phone. Do you hear a dial tone? If the box has a backup battery, you may still hear one.
4. Plug the power back in. Give it five minutes to start up fully, then check for a dial tone again.

HEADS UP

Don't do the power test on a medical-alert line in use

If someone in the house relies on a medical alert button or a monitored alarm that uses the phone line, do this test only when someone else is home and nobody needs help. Better yet, ask your alarm or medical-alert company how to test it safely.

TIP

Write down what you find

Jot down on your phone bill: what kind of service you have, the company, your account number and the account PIN or passcode if you know it. You'll need these if you ever switch.

CHAPTER 4

Why Phone Companies Are Retiring Copper Lines

If you've received a letter saying your landline is being "upgraded," "modernized" or "retired," you're not alone. Across the country, the big phone companies are shutting down the old copper network and moving customers to fiber, wireless or internet-based service.

Why it's happening

- Copper lines are decades old, expensive to repair, and fewer people use them every year.
- Storms, flooding and age wear the wires out, and replacement parts are getting harder to find.
- Fiber and wireless networks carry far more than voice calls, so companies would rather maintain just those.

What AT&T has announced

AT&T has said it plans to retire most of its copper network outside California by the end of 2029. For customers who still have a traditional landline, AT&T's replacement is called **AT&T Phone-Advanced**. AT&T says it lets customers keep using their existing landline devices, including phones, fax machines and alarm systems, over its wireless or fiber network, with satellite service where there's no coverage. Exact dates depend on where you live, and customers receive letters before their service changes.

Checked against AT&T;'s network announcements and FCC reporting on November 13, 2026.

Other phone companies, including Verizon and Frontier, have also been moving customers off copper in some areas. If you have service from one of them, read any letter they send carefully and keep it.

If you get a retirement letter

1. **Don't panic and don't ignore it.** These letters usually give you months of notice.
2. Look for the **date** your current service ends and the **replacement** they're offering.
3. Check the letter's **phone number** against the number on your regular bill before you call. Scammers sometimes copy these letters.
4. Ask the company: Will my number stay the same? Will my phones, fax, alarm or medical alert still work? What happens in a power outage? Will my price change?

5. Compare their offer with the other choices in *Part 2* (Chapter 5) before you agree to anything.

SCAM ALERT

Watch for fake "your landline is being shut off" calls

Scammers love news like this. A caller who says your phone will be disconnected *today* unless you pay right now, by gift card, wire or payment app, is not your phone company. Hang up and call the number printed on your bill.

FROM BILL

You have choices

The replacement your phone company offers is one option, not the only one. Sometimes it's the best fit, especially in rural areas with weak internet. Sometimes another service will cost less. I'm happy to look over the letter with you and help you decide.

PART 2

Choosing a Service

Spectrum Voice, Xfinity Voice, Ooma, magicJack and the cellular home phone boxes, explained side by side, with honest talk about what each one really costs.

CHAPTER 5

Phone Service from Your Cable or Internet Company

If you already pay a cable company for internet, the easiest home phone to add is often theirs. Around here that's usually **Spectrum Voice**, from Charter's Spectrum. In other parts of the country it may be **Xfinity Voice** from Comcast, or phone service from a fiber company. These are all internet phone (VoIP) services, but they're run by the same company that brings your internet, on its own network.

How it works

Your cable modem, or a voice modem the company provides, has one or two phone jacks on the back. Your home phone plugs in there, or the installer connects that jack to the phone wiring in your walls so every jack in the house works.

The good parts

- **One company, one bill.** Internet, TV and phone together. If something breaks, there's one number to call.
- **Unlimited calling** in the U.S. is typically included, often with Canada and some other countries.
- **Familiar features** like caller ID, call waiting, voicemail and some call blocking usually come with it.
- **You can usually keep your number** when you move it from another company.

The trade-offs

- **Price depends on the bundle.** The phone line is usually cheapest as part of a package, and promotional prices often go up after the first year.
- **It needs your internet and your power.** If the cable service goes down, or the power goes out and you don't have a backup battery, the phone stops working. See *When the Power Goes Out* (Chapter 16).
- **Canceling internet can cancel the phone.** If you ever change internet companies, plan for your phone number too.

Spectrum Voice, in plain numbers

Spectrum sells Voice mostly as an add-on to Spectrum Internet. Its posted price guides show how prices change over time: for example, one of Spectrum's published guides shows its bundled voice rate going from $25.00 to $30.00 a month in January 2026 for the customers that guide covers. Taxes and fees are added on top. Your price depends on your plan and any promotion, so the only sure number is the one on your own bill.

Checked against Spectrum's posted Voice price guide on November 13, 2026.

Xfinity Voice

Comcast's Xfinity Voice works the same way, through an Xfinity gateway. Comcast tells customers plainly that Xfinity Voice won't work during a power outage without a backup battery, and that a battery can provide up to 24 hours of standby power. Prices vary by bundle and change often, so ask for the *full monthly price after any promotion ends*, including taxes and fees.

Checked against Comcast's Xfinity Voice backup-power notice on November 13, 2026.

TIP

The one question to ask before you sign

"What will my total monthly bill be, with taxes and fees, in month 13?" Write the answer down with the name of the person who told you and the date. Promotional prices are real, but they end.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ask about the battery

Federal rules require companies that sell this kind of home phone service to *offer* you a backup battery for sale when you sign up. They don't have to give it to you free, and you don't have to buy it, but you should know the option exists. Details are in *Backup Batteries and Other Plans* (Chapter 17).

CHAPTER 6

Ooma: Buy the Box, Skip Most of the Bill

Ooma is a home phone service that works over the internet you already have. You buy a small device, the **Ooma Telo**, one time. You plug it into your internet router, plug your home phone into the Telo, and you have a dial tone.

What it costs

- **The Telo device:** a one-time purchase. The price changes with sales, so check Ooma's site or a store.
- **Ooma Basic service:** Ooma lists the service itself at **$0.00 a month**. You still pay monthly **taxes and fees**, and that amount depends on where you live. Ooma's website has a tool to estimate them for your ZIP code.
- **Ooma Premier:** an optional upgrade with a monthly charge that adds extra features, such as more call-blocking tools and voicemail sent to your email.

Checked against Ooma's home phone service pages on November 13, 2026.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> **"Free" means no service charge, not no bill**
>
> Ooma Basic doesn't charge for the service, but government taxes and fees (including a 911 fee) still apply every month. For many people the total is still far less than a traditional phone bill. Just go in expecting a small monthly charge, not zero.

Setting up an Ooma Telo

1. Before you start, **activate** the Telo using the instructions in the box. You'll create an Ooma account online, enter the activation code printed on the device, and enter your home's **911 address**.
2. Plug the Telo's network cable into a free port on your **internet router**.
3. Plug the Telo's power adapter into the wall.
4. Plug your home phone (or your cordless phone's base) into the Telo's **phone** jack.
5. Wait for the lights on the Telo to settle. The startup can take several minutes, and it may update itself the first time.
6. Pick up the phone and listen for a dial tone. Make a test call to a family member.

HEADS UP

Get the 911 address exactly right

When you activate Ooma, you're asked for the address where the device will be used. That's where emergency responders will be sent if someone dials 911. Type your full street address carefully, and update it if you ever move the Telo. See *Your 911 Address: Keep It Current* (Chapter 15).

Keeping your old number

You can usually bring your existing number to Ooma. Ooma may give you a temporary number to use while the move happens, and there may be a one-time charge for moving your number. Ask before you order, and follow the order in *Switching Step by Step Without Losing a Day* (Chapter 12) so you never lose service.

Power outages and Ooma

Like all internet phones, Ooma needs power and internet. Ooma sells add-ons that help: a **battery backup** that keeps the Telo base running when the power goes out, and cellular backup options that keep calls going if your internet goes down. Remember that your router and modem need power too, so plan for all of them together.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why people like Ooma

For a household with good home internet, Ooma can cut the monthly phone bill to little more than taxes and fees, keep the same phones in the house, and keep the number everyone knows.

CHAPTER 7

magicJack and Other Low-Cost Options

magicJack is another internet phone service. It's a small adapter that plugs into your internet router, and your phone plugs into it. Instead of a monthly bill, magicJack is usually paid in advance for a year or more at a time.

What to know before you buy

- **Prepaid by the year.** The first year typically comes with the device. After that, you renew. Renewal prices vary with the length of the plan and with promotions, so check magicJack's own site for today's price.
- **It needs internet and power**, just like Ooma and cable phone service.
- **Register your 911 address** during setup and keep it current.
- **Moving your number in** is possible, and usually costs extra.
- **Watch the renewal date.** Put it on your calendar so the service doesn't lapse, and so you aren't surprised by an automatic charge.

Other low-cost choices

There are many smaller internet phone companies. Some are very good. When you compare any of them, use the checklist in *Comparing Costs Honestly* (Chapter 10): total yearly cost, 911 address, number porting, battery backup and how you reach a real person when something goes wrong.

HEADS UP

Cheap is only good if it works when you need it

If your home phone is your main way to reach 911, or a medical alert depends on it, reliability matters more than saving a few dollars. Read *How 911 Works on Each Kind of Phone* (Chapter 14) before you choose the cheapest box.

FROM BILL

Not sure the numbers add up?

Bring me your bills. I'll lay out what you pay now and what each option would cost over a full year, taxes and fees included, with no sales pitch.

CHAPTER 8

Cellular Home Phone Bases

A cellular home phone base gives you a landline-style phone without any wires or internet. The base is a small box with a phone jack and a built-in cellular connection, like a cell phone without a screen. Your regular home phone plugs into it.

Who offers them

- **The big wireless carriers.** Verizon, for example, sells a wireless home phone device that connects your existing landline phone to its 4G LTE network. You supply your own home phone.
- **AT&T Phone-Advanced**, AT&T's replacement for retired copper lines, uses wireless or fiber, and is designed to keep existing phones, fax machines and alarm systems working.
- **Some internet phone companies** offer cellular boxes as a main connection or as a backup.

When a cellular base is a good fit

- You **don't have home internet**, or don't want to pay for it just for a phone.
- Your internet is **unreliable**, but your cell signal at home is solid.
- You want a home phone that keeps working if a storm knocks out the cable line (as long as the cell towers are up and the base has battery power).

Questions to ask

1. **Is the cell signal good where I'll put the base?** A spot near a window often helps.
2. **Does it have a battery inside?** How many hours does it last when the power is out?
3. **Can I keep my current number?** Ask whether there's a charge.
4. **Will my fax, alarm or medical alert work with it?** Get a clear yes or no.
5. **What's the monthly price on its own, and as a line added to my cell phone plan?**

TIP

Test your signal first

Before you sign up, stand where the base will go and look at your cell phone's signal bars. If you're on the same carrier and see one bar or none, a cellular home phone may struggle there.

CHAPTER 9

Do You Still Need a Home Phone at All?

It's a fair question, and there's no single right answer. Plenty of people happily drop the home phone and use only a cell phone. Plenty of others keep a home phone on purpose. Here's an honest way to think it through.

Good reasons to keep a home phone

- **Everyone knows the number.** Doctors, pharmacies, friends and family have called it for years.
- **A big, simple phone is easier** to hear and dial than a small smartphone.
- **It's always in the same place**, so it can't be lost in a coat pocket.
- **Visitors, caregivers and grandkids** can use it in an emergency without knowing your cell phone's passcode.
- **A medical alert or alarm system** may depend on it.
- **Cell signal inside your house is weak.**

Good reasons to let it go

- You already carry a cell phone everywhere and answer it reliably.
- Most calls to the home phone are robocalls and sales calls.
- Your cell signal at home is strong.
- The money would be better spent elsewhere.

A middle path: keep the number, drop the bill

If the number matters more than the line, you have options. You can move ("port") your home number to a low-cost service like Ooma, so the number keeps ringing at home for very little each month. Some people move the home number to a cell phone instead. See *Keeping Your Phone Number (Porting)* (Chapter 11) for how porting works.

STAY SAFE

Make sure everyone can call 911

If you drop the home phone, make sure every person in the house, and any regular caregiver, knows how to call 911 on a cell phone, and that a charged phone is always within reach. Keep a phone near the bed at night.

FROM BILL

Decide together

This is a good one to talk over with family. If you'd like a neutral person to explain the options at the kitchen table, I'm glad to help.

CHAPTER 10

Comparing Costs Honestly

Phone prices are hard to compare because companies quote them differently: one quotes a monthly promotion, another a yearly prepaid price, another "free" plus taxes. The fix is to put every option into the same terms: **total cost for a full year, including everything**.

Your comparison checklist

What to add up	What it includes
Equipment	Any device you buy once (Ooma Telo, magicJack, cordless phones) or rent monthly (a modem).
Monthly or yearly service	The regular price, and the price after any promotion ends.
Taxes and fees	Ask for an estimate for your address. These include 911 and federal fees.
Moving your number	Any one-time charge to bring your number over.
Battery backup	The cost of a backup battery, if you want one (and you probably should).
Add-ons	Premium features, extra lines, international calling.
Internet	If the phone needs internet you wouldn't otherwise pay for, count it.

Work it out on paper

1. Write each option across the top of a sheet of paper.
2. Write the checklist items down the side.
3. Fill in each box. Leave a question mark where you don't know.
4. Call or check the website to fill in the question marks.
5. Add each column for a full year. Divide by 12 to see the true monthly cost.

TIP

Look at your bill's fine print

On your current bill, find the line for phone service and every tax and fee connected to it. That total, not the advertised price, is what you'd be saving if you switched.

GOOD TO KNOW

This guide pairs with a Phone & Internet Bill Check-Up

If you'd like a second pair of eyes on all your phone, internet and TV bills together, Bill's Home Tech offers a Phone & Internet Bill Check-Up. Call (330) 200-8042 to ask about it.

PART 3

Keeping Your Number & Switching

How to move the phone number you've had for years to a new company, the safe order of steps, and how to cancel the old service without losing a day of calls.

CHAPTER 11

Keeping Your Phone Number (Porting)

Moving your phone number from one company to another is called **porting**. It's your right in most cases. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has rules that let you keep your number when you change providers, as long as you stay in the same general area.

The key facts

- **You start with the new company, not the old one.** The new company contacts your old company and asks for the number.
- **Don't cancel your old service first.** If the old account closes before the number moves, the number can be lost.
- **Simple moves are quick.** Under FCC rules, a simple port (one line, no complications) should be completed within one business day. Moves involving landlines or several lines can take longer, so plan for a few days.
- **It isn't always possible.** If you're moving to a different part of the country, or the new company doesn't serve your area code, you may not be able to bring the number along.
- **If a company drags its feet,** you can file a complaint with the FCC at **consumercomplaints.fcc.gov** or call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322).

Checked against the FCC's porting consumer guide on November 13, 2026.

What you'll need

Gather this	Where to find it
Your phone number	The number you want to keep.
Account number	From your current phone bill. It may be different from your phone number.
Account PIN or passcode	Some companies require a port-out PIN. Call your current company to get one if needed.
Name and address on the account	Exactly as they appear on the bill.
A recent bill	Many new companies ask for a copy, or for details from it.

TIP

Match the details exactly

The most common reason a port gets stuck is a small mismatch: a middle initial, "Street" versus "St.", or an old address. Copy the name and address *exactly* as they appear on your current bill.

SCAM ALERT

Never give a port-out PIN to a caller

Your account PIN protects your number from being stolen. Only give it to the new company *you* contacted. If someone calls you asking for it, hang up. That's a common trick for hijacking phone numbers.

CHAPTER 12

Switching Step by Step Without Losing a Day

Here's the safe order for moving your home phone to a new service. Follow it in order and your phone keeps ringing the whole time.

1. **Gather your details** from *Keeping Your Phone Number (Porting)* (Chapter 11): number, account number, PIN, name and address.
2. **Check special devices.** Make a list of anything else that uses your phone line: medical alert, alarm system, fax, satellite TV box. See *Medical Alert Systems* (Chapter 23) and *Alarm Systems and Fax Machines* (Chapter 24).
3. **Sign up with the new company** and tell them you want to **keep (port) your existing number**. Give them your details.
4. **Ask for the expected port date** and write it down. Ask whether you'll get a temporary number in the meantime.
5. **Set up the new equipment** if you have it, but keep your old phone service connected.
6. **Wait for the port to finish.** The new company will tell you when. Often your old line simply stops working that day and the new one starts.
7. **Test the new line:** call out to a family member, then have them call your home number. Call your own voicemail.
8. **Update your 911 address** with the new company if it isn't already set. See *Your 911 Address: Keep It Current* (Chapter 15).
9. **Only now, cancel the old service** if it didn't cancel automatically. See *Canceling the Old Service the Right Way* (Chapter 13).
10. **Return any rented equipment** to the old company and keep the receipt.

HEADS UP

If you also have internet or TV from the old company

Porting your phone number usually ends only the phone part of a bundle. Your internet or TV may continue, and your bundle discount may change. Ask your old company what your new bill will be once the phone line is gone.

GOOD TO KNOW

Expect a short gap on the switch day

On the day the number moves, there may be a few minutes or hours when calls go to the new service before your new phone is plugged in. That's normal. Plug the new equipment in early, and you'll be ready.

CHAPTER 13

Canceling the Old Service the Right Way

This is the step people most often get wrong, so it gets its own chapter. The rule is short:

STAY SAFE

Never cancel first

Cancel your old phone service only after your number has finished moving and you've tested the new line. If you cancel first, the old company may release the number, and getting it back can be difficult or impossible.

When the port finishes

- With many companies, a completed port **automatically cancels** the old phone line. With others, you still need to call.
- Call the old company and ask: "Is my phone line fully closed? Is there any remaining balance? Are there any other services still on my account?"
- Ask for a **confirmation number** and write it down with the date and the person's name.

Rented equipment

If the old company rented you a modem or other box, ask how to return it. Many cable companies let you drop equipment at a store or a shipping location. Get a receipt. Unreturned equipment is one of the most common surprise charges after switching.

Check your next two bills

Look carefully at the next two bills from your old company. You should see a final bill and then nothing. If a charge keeps appearing, call with your confirmation number.

TIP

Keep one folder

Keep the cancellation confirmation, the equipment return receipt and the new company's welcome letter in one folder. If anything goes sideways later, everything you need is in one place.

PART 4

911, Power Outages & Safety

The most important part of this guide: how 911 finds you on each kind of phone, why your registered address matters, and how to keep a working phone when the power goes out.

CHAPTER 14

How 911 Works on Each Kind of Phone

On an old copper landline, 911 call centers automatically knew where you were, because your number was tied to a fixed address. Newer services can do this too, but they rely on the address *you* gave the company. That's the key difference, and it's worth understanding.

Copper landline

The phone company knows the address of the line. 911 sees your number and address automatically.

Internet phone (VoIP)

The FCC requires internet phone companies that connect to the regular phone network to provide 911 to every customer. You can't opt out. They must get your physical address before your service starts, give you easy ways to update it, and send your call, your callback number and your registered address to the right 911 center. They must also make sure you understand any limits on their 911 service, and give you warning labels to put on or near your equipment.

The FCC also warns VoIP customers that:

- A 911 call may not reach the right 911 center, or may not pass along your number or location, if the address on file is wrong or the device has been moved.
- You may need to update your address each time you move the equipment.
- VoIP service may not work during a power outage, or when the internet connection fails or is overloaded.
- Texting 911 is available only in some areas, and 911 centers currently can't receive photos or video.

Checked against the FCC's VoIP and 911 Service guide on November 13, 2026.

Cellular home phone

A cellular base calls 911 over the cell network. Ask your provider how your address is shared with 911, and register your street address with them if they ask for it.

STAY SAFE

Teach everyone in the house

The FCC suggests telling children, babysitters and visitors about your phone service and any 911 limits. Make sure everyone knows where the phones are and that they need power to work.

TIP

Put your address by the phone

Tape a card with your full street address and nearest cross street next to each phone. In a stressful moment, even people who know the address can blank on it. A visitor won't know it at all.

CHAPTER 15

Your 911 Address: Keep It Current

With internet phone service, your **registered 911 address** is the address emergency responders will be sent to. If it's wrong, help may go to the wrong place. This takes two minutes to check and is one of the most important things in this guide.

When to check it

- Right after you set up new phone service.
- Any time you move, even across town.
- If you take an Ooma or magicJack box to a second home or on a long trip.
- If your street address changes (it happens, for example when a county renumbers rural roads).

How to check and update it

1. Sign in to your phone company's website or app, or call their customer service number from your bill.
2. Look for **911 address**, **E911**, **emergency address** or **registered location**. Every company words it a little differently.
3. Read the address carefully: house number, street name, apartment or unit, town and ZIP code.
4. If anything is wrong or missing, update it and save.
5. Write down the date you checked it.

HEADS UP

Moving the box moves the problem

Internet phone boxes work anywhere there's internet. That's convenient, but if you take one to a cottage or a relative's house and someone dials 911, the call may go to the 911 center for your *registered* address, not where you are. Update the address before you go, or call 911 from a cell phone instead.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With a correct 911 address, a call from your home phone tells the dispatcher exactly where to send help, even if the person calling can't speak or doesn't know the address.

CHAPTER 16

When the Power Goes Out

Here's the honest truth: **most home phone service today stops working when the power goes out**, unless something is supplying backup power. That includes cable phone service, Ooma, magicJack, fiber phone service and most cellular bases. In Northeast Ohio, with summer storms and winter ice, that's worth planning for.

What needs power

Your setup	What must have power for a call to work
Cable phone (Spectrum Voice, Xfinity Voice)	The cable modem or voice modem, plus the company's network outside
Ooma or magicJack	The Ooma or magicJack box, your router, and your modem
Fiber phone	The fiber box (often on an outside or garage wall) and any modem inside
Cellular home phone base	The base (many have a battery inside), plus nearby cell towers
Cordless phones (any service)	The cordless phone's base station. Cordless phones go dead in an outage.
Corded phone on a copper landline	Usually nothing in your house. The phone company powers the line.

HEADS UP

Cordless phones don't work in a power outage

Even if your phone service has a backup battery, a cordless phone's base needs wall power. Keep one simple **corded phone** (the kind with a cord between the handset and the base) plugged into a jack that has dial tone. It's an inexpensive way to have a phone that works when the lights are out.

Your three backup options

- **A backup battery** for your phone equipment. See *Backup Batteries and Other Plans* (Chapter 17).
- **A charged cell phone.** Cell phones have their own batteries. The FCC notes they can often be charged from inexpensive backup sources, like a car charger or a battery pack.
- **Generator or battery power station** for the house, if you already have one. Plug the modem and router into it.

STAY SAFE

Generators belong outside

Never run a gas generator inside the house, garage or basement, even with the door open. Carbon monoxide can kill. Keep it outdoors and well away from windows and doors.

CHAPTER 17

Backup Batteries and Other Plans

Because newer phone service needs power, the FCC requires companies that provide fixed home phone service over their own networks to **offer** you a backup power option when you sign up.

What the rules say

- Companies must offer, for sale, a backup option that keeps your phone able to reach 911 for at least **8 hours** of standby.
- Since February 2019, they must also offer at least one option that provides **24 hours** of standby power.
- It's your choice whether to buy it. You pay for it, and nobody can force you to.
- Companies must tell you that your phone won't work in a power outage without backup power.

Checked against FCC backup-power orders and public notices on November 13, 2026.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Standby" isn't "talk time"

Standby hours mean the phone is ready to make or receive calls. Each call you make uses up the battery faster, so 8 hours of standby could mean less if you're on the phone a lot. Use calls in an outage for what matters.

Getting a battery

1. Call your phone company and ask: "What backup battery options do you offer for my phone service, and what do they cost?"
2. Ask whether it's a battery that goes **inside** your modem, or a separate box the modem plugs into.
3. Ask how long it lasts and how often it needs to be replaced. Batteries wear out over the years.
4. If you have Ooma, magicJack or another internet phone, look at a small **uninterruptible power supply** (UPS) from an electronics store. Plug the modem, router and phone box into its battery-backed outlets.
5. After it's set up, test it: unplug the UPS or modem from the wall and listen for a dial tone on your corded phone.

TIP

Write the battery date on it

Put a strip of tape on the battery or UPS with the month and year you installed it. Many need replacing every few years, and most beep or show a light when they're failing.

FROM BILL

Want it set up and tested?

This is one of the most useful things I do on a home visit: connect a battery backup to the modem, router and phone box, plug in a corded phone, and test it with you. $49 remote · $99 in your home.

PART 5

The Phones in Your House

Choosing a good cordless phone, connecting phones and jacks, caller ID and voicemail, blocking robocalls, and phones made for people with hearing or vision changes.

CHAPTER 18

Choosing a Cordless Phone

A good cordless phone makes a home phone much more pleasant. You can carry it from room to room, and most sets come with two or more handsets that share one base. Here's what to look for.

Features worth paying for

- **Big, backlit buttons** that are easy to see and press.
- **A large, bright screen** for caller ID.
- **Loud ringer and adjustable earpiece volume**. Some phones have an extra "boost" button for louder calls.
- **A speakerphone on the handset**, so you can talk hands-free.
- **Built-in call blocking**. Many newer cordless phones can screen unknown callers before your phone rings. See *Blocking Spam and Robocalls on a Home Phone* (Chapter 21).
- **Talking caller ID**, which announces who's calling so you don't have to find your glasses.
- **Hearing-aid compatibility** if you wear hearing aids.
- **Extra handsets** for the bedroom, kitchen and basement.

Features you can skip

- Pairing with your cell phone by Bluetooth, unless you'd really use it.
- Lots of handsets you won't place anywhere.
- Fancy styling. Readable buttons matter more.

HEADS UP

Keep one corded phone too

Cordless phones need wall power at the base, so they stop working in a power outage. Keep one inexpensive corded phone plugged in somewhere handy. See *When the Power Goes Out* (Chapter 16).

TIP

Charge the handsets on their cradles

Cordless handsets last longest when they live on their chargers between calls. If a handset dies quickly even when fully charged, its rechargeable battery may need replacing. Replacement batteries are inexpensive and usually just snap in.

CHAPTER 19

Connecting Phones and Wall Jacks

With internet phone service, the dial tone comes from a box: a modem, Ooma, or magicJack. There are two ways to get that dial tone to the phones in your house.

Option 1: One phone, plugged right into the box

The simplest setup. Plug a cordless phone base into the box's phone jack, and put the extra handsets anywhere in the house. They don't need phone jacks, only an outlet for their chargers. For most homes, this is all you need.

Option 2: Use the jacks in your walls

If you'd like the old wall jacks to work again, the box's phone jack can be connected to your home's phone wiring, so every jack has a dial tone. This works well, but there's one important step.

HEADS UP

Disconnect the old outside line first

Before sending dial tone from a box back through your wall jacks, the house wiring must be disconnected from the phone company's outside line. Otherwise the two can interfere, and in some cases it can damage the equipment. This is usually done at the phone company's gray box on the outside of the house. If you're not sure how, this is a good job for a professional.

Which jack is which?

- The **phone jack** on a modem or box is small and usually labeled **Phone**, **Tel** or **Line 1**.
- The **network (Ethernet)** jack is slightly wider. It's for connecting to the router, not to a phone.
- A phone cord's plug clicks into the smaller jack. If it seems loose in a jack, it's probably the wrong one.

TIP

Label your cables

A small piece of tape on each cord saying "phone" or "internet" saves confusion the next time you or a technician need to unplug something.

CHAPTER 20

Caller ID, Call Waiting & Voicemail

Most home phone services include the classic calling features. How you turn them on depends on your company, but the ideas are the same everywhere.

Caller ID

Caller ID shows the number, and often the name, of the person calling before you answer. Your phone must have a screen to show it, and the service must include it. Most do today.

SCAM ALERT

Caller ID can be faked

Scammers can make caller ID show any name or number they like, even your bank, the sheriff's office or your own number. Caller ID tells you who the caller *says* they are, not who they are. If a call worries you, hang up and call back using the number on your bill or the back of your card.

Call waiting

If you're on a call and someone else calls, you'll hear a soft beep. On most services, pressing the **Flash** or **Talk** button on your phone switches to the new caller, and pressing it again switches back.

Voicemail

Voicemail is the company's answering machine. It answers when you're busy or don't pick up, and it keeps working in a power outage because it lives on the company's system, not in your house.

1. Find the voicemail instructions from your company. They're usually in the welcome letter or on its website.
2. Dial the voicemail access number, often a short code or your own home number.
3. Set a **voicemail PIN**. Choose something that isn't 1234 or your house number.
4. Record a short greeting. You don't need to say your name or that you live alone. "You've reached us, please leave a message" is perfect.
5. Ask a family member to leave a test message, then practice listening to it and deleting it.

TIP

Voicemail by email or app

Some services, including some cable and Ooma plans, can send voicemails to your email or a phone app so you can listen while you're away. Ask your company whether yours does.

GOOD TO KNOW

Answering machine or voicemail?

A plain answering machine still works with any home phone service. Just don't use both at once, or they'll compete to answer. Pick one.

CHAPTER 21

Blocking Spam and Robocalls on a Home Phone

For many people, robocalls are the worst part of having a home phone. You can't stop every one, but you can cut them down a great deal.

Step 1: The Do Not Call Registry

Register your home number for free at **donotcall.gov** or by calling **1-888-382-1222** from the phone you want to register. It stops calls from legitimate telemarketers. Scammers ignore it, so it's a first step, not a cure.

Step 2: Your phone company's blocking tools

Most home phone services now include some call-blocking tools. Ask your company, or look in your account online, for features like these:

- **Spam or robocall filtering** that blocks or labels suspicious calls.
- **A block list** where you add specific numbers.
- **Anonymous call rejection**, which turns away callers who hide their number.
- On Ooma, extra blocking tools are part of the paid **Premier** upgrade.

Step 3: A cordless phone with call screening

Some newer cordless phones can ask unknown callers to say their name or press a key before the phone rings. Real people do it; robocalls usually hang up. You can let family and friends straight through by saving them in the phone's contacts.

Step 4: Good habits

- Don't answer numbers you don't recognize. Real callers leave a message.
- If you do answer and hear a recording, hang up. Don't press any number, even "to be removed."
- Never say "yes" to a question from an unknown caller you didn't expect.

TIP

There's a whole guide for this

Spam calls, robocalls and call blocking on every kind of phone are covered in more depth in Bill's guide library. Ask about it, or let me set up blocking for you.

CHAPTER 22

Phones for Hearing and Vision Needs

If you're finding it harder to hear on the phone or read the buttons, the right phone makes a world of difference. Every kind of home phone service works with these phones.

For hearing

- **Amplified phones** make the caller's voice much louder than an ordinary phone, often with tone controls to make voices clearer.
- **Extra-loud ringers and flashing lights** let you know the phone is ringing from across the room.
- **Captioned phones** show the words the other person is saying on a screen, a little like closed captions on TV. They need a phone line plus internet. Ask your audiologist or hearing-aid provider about them.
- **Hearing-aid compatible** phones work with the telecoil ("T") setting on many hearing aids.

For vision

- **Big-button phones** with large, high-contrast numbers.
- **Talking caller ID and talking keypads** that read numbers aloud.
- **Photo speed-dial phones**: put a picture of each family member on a button, and press the picture to call.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A phone you can hear and see clearly means fewer missed calls, fewer misunderstandings with doctors and pharmacies, and more relaxed conversations with family.

GOOD TO KNOW

Relay services

For people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech difficulties, dialing **711** connects to a free relay service that helps with phone calls.

PART 6

Things That Plug Into Your Phone Line

Medical alert systems, home alarms and fax machines can all depend on your phone line. Here's how to keep them working when you change service, and the scams aimed at home phone customers.

CHAPTER 23

Medical Alert Systems

Many medical alert systems, the kind with a button worn on a pendant or wristband, were designed to call for help over a home phone line. If someone in your house relies on one, it's the **first thing to check** before changing phone service.

Two kinds of medical alert base

- **Landline-based** units plug into a phone jack and dial out over your home phone. Some work with internet phone service and some don't. It depends on the unit and the service.
- **Cellular** units have their own built-in cell connection and don't need a home phone at all. Many medical alert companies now offer these.

Before you switch phone service

1. Find the medical alert company's phone number, usually on the base unit or the monthly bill.
2. Tell them: "I'm changing my home phone service to (name the service). Will my unit still work?"
3. If they're not sure, ask whether they can switch you to a cellular unit, and what it costs.
4. After your new service is working, ask the company how to run a **test call**, and do it together.
5. Check that the base has a backup battery, and that it lasts through a power outage.

STAY SAFE

Test after every change

After any change to your phone service, internet or wiring, test the medical alert button the way its company recommends. Don't assume it still works. A medical alert that can't call out is worse than none, because you're counting on it.

TIP

Power outages matter here too

If the medical alert uses your home phone and your phone needs power, the alert needs power too. A cellular unit with its own battery, or a battery backup for your phone equipment, keeps it working through an outage.

CHAPTER 24

Alarm Systems and Fax Machines

Home alarm systems

Older monitored burglar and fire alarm systems often reported to the monitoring center over the phone line. Newer systems usually use a cellular radio or the internet instead. If yours uses the phone line, a change in phone service can quietly stop it from reporting.

1. Call your alarm company before you switch phone service.
2. Ask: "Does my system report over my phone line? Will it work with my new service?"
3. If it depends on the phone line, ask about a cellular communicator. Many alarm companies offer one.
4. After the change, ask the alarm company to run a test signal with you, and confirm they received it.

Fax machines

Fax machines can be fussy with internet phone service, because faxes are sensitive to the small delays and compression internet calls use. Some work fine, some fail partway through. If you send faxes regularly:

- Ask your new phone company whether it supports fax on your line.
- Try sending a one-page test fax after switching.
- If it's unreliable, try a slower sending speed in the fax machine's settings, if it has one.
- For occasional faxes, an online fax service, or the fax service at an office supply store or library, may be simpler.

AT&T says its Phone-Advanced replacement service is designed to keep existing landline devices like fax machines and alarm systems working. As always, test yours after the change.

Checked against AT&T;'s Phone-Advanced announcements on November 13, 2026.

Other things that may use your phone line

- Older **satellite TV receivers** sometimes used the phone line for ordering movies. Most no longer need it.
- **Elevator or gate phones** in some buildings.
- **Credit-card terminals** for a small home business.

FROM BILL

Make a list before you switch

Walk the house with me, figuratively or for real: anything plugged into a phone jack goes on the list. Call each company before you switch, and test each one after. It's a short list for most homes, and it prevents the nastiest surprises.

CHAPTER 25

Scams Aimed at Home Phone Customers

Home phones get more than their share of scam calls, partly because scammers assume older people answer them. A few scams are tied directly to phone service. Knowing them in advance takes away their power.

SCAM ALERT

"Your phone service will be disconnected today"

A caller claims to be your phone or cable company and says your service will be cut off within the hour unless you pay right now, often by gift card, prepaid card, payment app or cryptocurrency. Real companies send bills and notices; they don't demand gift cards. Hang up and call the number on your bill.

SCAM ALERT

"We're upgrading your line, we need your PIN"

Someone says they're from your phone company and need your account PIN or a code that was just sent to you "to finish the upgrade." That code or PIN can let them steal your phone number or account. Never share codes or PINs with a caller who contacted you.

SCAM ALERT

The fake tech support call

A caller says your phone line or internet has a virus or problem and offers to fix it if you let them into your computer. Phone and internet companies don't call out of the blue to fix your computer. Hang up.

SCAM ALERT

The "refund" or "overcharge" call

A caller says you were overcharged and are owed a refund, then asks for your bank account to "deposit" it. If you think you were overcharged, call the number on your bill yourself.

Bill's simple rule for the home phone

- **If they called you, don't trust caller ID.**
- **If they want money fast, or in gift cards, it's a scam.**
- **If they want a PIN or code, it's a scam.**

- **Hang up and call the number on your bill.**

TIP

Report it

You can report scam calls to the Federal Trade Commission at **reportfraud.ftc.gov**. If you gave out a PIN or payment information, call your phone company and your bank right away using the numbers on your bills.

PART 7

Fixing Common Problems

No dial tone, crackly or choppy calls, callers who can't get through. Most home phone problems have a simple fix you can try yourself first.

CHAPTER 26

No Dial Tone

You pick up the phone and hear nothing. Don't worry. Work through these steps in order, and stop as soon as the dial tone comes back.

Step 1: Is it the phone or the service?

1. Try a **different phone**, ideally a corded one, plugged into the same box or jack.
2. If you have cordless phones, check that the **base station** is plugged into the wall and its power light is on.
3. If the other phone works, the problem is the first phone. Try a new phone cord, or charge or replace the handset battery.

Step 2: Restart the equipment

For internet phone service (cable, Ooma, magicJack), restarting fixes a surprising number of problems.

1. Check whether your **internet** is working. Can a computer, tablet or TV get online?
2. Unplug the **power cord** from the modem, the router and the phone box (Ooma, magicJack or voice modem).
3. Wait a full **30 seconds**.
4. Plug the **modem** back in first. Wait until its lights settle, which can take a few minutes.
5. Plug the **router** back in and wait again.
6. Plug the **phone box** back in last. Wait until its lights settle.
7. Pick up the phone and listen.

Step 3: Check for an outage

If your internet is down too, the problem may be outside your house. Use a cell phone to check your provider's outage page or app, or call the support number on your bill.

Step 4: For a copper landline

If you still have a traditional landline, unplug everything from every phone jack in the house, then plug one corded phone into one jack. If you now have a dial tone, one of the devices you unplugged was the problem. Add them back one at a time to find it. If there's still no dial tone, call the phone company's repair number.

TIP

Keep the repair number somewhere other than the phone

Write your phone company's repair number on paper by the phone, and save it in your cell phone. When the home phone is down, you'll need another way to call.

CHAPTER 27

Choppy Calls, Echo and Static

Internet phone calls depend on a steady internet connection. When the connection stumbles, voices can break up, drop words, echo or sound robotic.

Things to try

- **Restart** the modem, router and phone box, in that order (see *No Dial Tone* (Chapter 26)).
- **Notice when it happens.** If calls get choppy when someone is streaming movies or on a video call, your internet may be too busy. Some routers and phone boxes have a setting that gives phone calls priority. Ask your provider.
- **Use a wired connection.** Ooma and similar boxes work best connected to the router with a network cable, not Wi-Fi.
- **Move the cordless base** away from microwaves, Wi-Fi routers and other cordless gadgets, which can cause static.
- **Try a corded phone.** If a corded phone sounds fine, the cordless set is the problem, not the service.
- **Check the cords.** A worn or kinked phone cord can crackle. Replacement cords are inexpensive.

GOOD TO KNOW

Echo usually comes from the other end

If *you* hear your own voice echoing, the cause is often on the other caller's phone, especially a speakerphone turned up loud. Ask them to pick up the handset and see if it stops.

FROM BILL

When it keeps happening

If calls are choppy every day, your internet itself may need attention: an aging modem, a weak router, or a plan that's too slow for your household. That's exactly the kind of thing I can test and sort out.

CHAPTER 28

Callers Can't Reach You

Sometimes your phone seems fine for calling out, but people tell you it rings and rings, goes straight to voicemail, or says the number isn't in service.

If calls go straight to voicemail

- Check that **Do Not Disturb** isn't turned on. Many services and phone boxes have one, and it's easy to switch on by accident.
- Check for **call forwarding** you may have set up and forgotten.
- Check that the **ringer** on your phone isn't turned off or turned all the way down.
- Restart your equipment (see *No Dial Tone* (Chapter 26)).

If callers hear "not in service"

- This often happens **during a number move** (porting). Ask your new company whether the port has finished.
- It can also mean the account was closed by mistake, or a bill wasn't paid. Call your phone company right away.

If some callers get through and others don't

Your call-blocking settings may be catching people you want to hear from. Look at your blocked list and any spam filter settings in your phone company's account, or on your cordless phone. Add family, doctors and your pharmacy to your allowed contacts.

TIP

Test with a friend

When you change any setting, ask a friend or family member to call you right afterward. It's the quickest way to know it worked.

PART 8

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

CHAPTER 29

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, one calm step at a time. But some jobs are easier with a second pair of hands, and some are worth getting exactly right the first time. Here's when I'd want you to call.

Call me when

- **You got a letter** saying your landline is being retired or changed, and you'd like help understanding your options.
- **You want to compare costs** and see what you'd really save by switching.
- **You're moving your number** and want the switch done in the right order.
- **A medical alert, alarm or fax** depends on your phone line.
- **You want a battery backup** set up and tested, so your phone works in an outage.
- **You'd like the wall jacks working** again with internet phone service.
- **Robocalls are driving you crazy** and you want blocking set up.
- **Something just isn't working** and the steps in Part 7 didn't fix it.

FROM BILL

How I like to help

I'm Bill, and with 30+ years of professional experience, I help folks feel at home with their technology, right here in Portage County, Ohio. I don't rush and I don't talk down to anyone. Whether it's a quick question about a letter from the phone company or setting up a whole new home phone, we'll handle it together. Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. If you call and I'm with another customer, Sophie, my AI receptionist, will take your details so I can call you back.

Thank you for reading. Your home phone is a lifeline for a lot of people, and now you know how to keep it working, keep it affordable and keep your number. Keep this guide handy, and don't be a stranger.

— Bill

CHAPTER 30

Your Home Phone Cheat-Sheet

Copy the key facts onto a card and keep it next to your main phone.

About my phone service

Kind of service	Copper landline / Cable VoIP / Ooma / magicJack / Cellular base
Company and support number	_____
Account number	_____
Account PIN (keep private)	Store it somewhere safe, not on this card
911 address on file	_____ (checked on _____)
Backup battery installed	Date: _____ Replace by: _____

The golden rules

- **Keep one corded phone** plugged in. Cordless phones die in a power outage.
- **Keep your 911 address current** with internet phone service, especially after a move.
- **Never cancel old service before your number finishes moving.**
- **Test medical alerts and alarms** after any change to your phone or internet.
- **Never give a PIN or code** to a caller who contacted you.
- **Restart in order:** modem, then router, then phone box.

Quick fixes

Problem	Try this first
No dial tone	Try a corded phone. Restart modem, router, phone box. Check internet.
Choppy calls	Restart. Connect the phone box to the router with a cable.
Calls go to voicemail	Check Do Not Disturb, call forwarding and the ringer.
Power is out	Use the corded phone if you have backup power, or a charged cell phone.
Scary call about your service	Hang up. Call the number on your bill.

Useful numbers

- **Emergency:** 911
- **Do Not Call Registry:** donotcall.gov or 1-888-382-1222

- **FCC consumer help:** 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322), consumercomplaints.fcc.gov
- **Report scams:** reportfraud.ftc.gov
- **Bill's Home Tech:** (330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

You're in charge of your home phone now

You know what kind of service you have, what it costs, how to keep your number and how to stay safe when the power goes out. That's real peace of mind, for you and for everyone who calls you.

Bill's Home Tech · Complete Manuals Series · (330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com · Portage County, Ohio