BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Internet Radio & Local Stations

iHeartRadio, TuneIn, Audacy, station apps and smart speakers — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide to replacing the kitchen radio

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For iHeartRadio, TuneIn, Audacy, NPR & smart speakers · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to listening to the radio over the internet: the free apps, your favorite Northeast Ohio stations, and the smart speakers that play them when you ask. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Every feature comes with what it actually does *for you*, and every job comes with slow, numbered steps. Apps change their buttons now and then, so if a screen looks a little different on yours, look for the same words nearby.

Part 1 — Getting Started

1 A Note from Bill
2 What Internet Radio Is
3 What You Need to Listen
4 What's Free and What Costs Money

Part 2 — The Radio Apps

5 iHeartRadio
6 TuneIn (Free and Premium)
7 Audacy
8 Public Radio: NPR and Ideastream
9 A Station's Own App and Website
10 Radio Garden: Spin the Globe

Part 3 — Smart Speakers and Voice

11 Playing Radio on Alexa
12 Playing Radio on Google and Nest Speakers
13 Siri, iPhone and HomePod
14 When the Speaker Plays the Wrong Station

Part 4 — Radios, Cars and Alarms

15 Wi-Fi Internet Radios
16 HD Radio vs. Internet Streams
17 Radio Apps in the Car
18 Wake Up to the Radio

Part 5 — Northeast Ohio Radio

19 Northeast Ohio Stations and Their Apps
20 Ballgames: Why a Game Won't Stream

Part 6 — Data, Safety and Fixes

21 When the Stream Won't Play

22 How Much Phone Data Radio Uses
23 Fake Radio Apps and "Free Stream" Scams
24 Setting Up Radio for a Parent

Part 7 — Getting Help

25 When to Call Bill
26 Your Radio Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Getting Started

What internet radio really is, what you need to listen, and which parts are free.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe the old radio on the kitchen counter finally gave out. Maybe your favorite station fades to static in the back bedroom, or the new house doesn't pick it up at all. Or maybe someone gave you a smart speaker and said "just ask it to play the radio," and you'd like to know how. 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. The good news about internet radio is that it's the same radio you already love — the same morning hosts, the same ballgames, the same classical music and news — just arriving over your Wi-Fi instead of through the air. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting at your kitchen table: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain what internet radio is, and how it's different from AM, FM and HD Radio.
- Walk you through the big free apps — iHeartRadio, TuneIn, Audacy and the NPR app — one step at a time.
- Show you how to ask Alexa, Google or Siri to play a station, and what to do when they play the wrong one.
- List the Northeast Ohio stations I could confirm, and which app carries each one.
- Explain why a ballgame sometimes won't play online, how much phone data radio uses, and the fake apps and "free stream" sites to steer clear of.

The big promise: you can't break it

Nothing in this guide can damage your phone, your speaker or your radio. If you tap the wrong station, you tap another one. If an app gets confusing, you close it and open it again. The free apps don't need a credit card. The few places where money or your personal information is involved, I'll mark clearly.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Once it's set up, internet radio is often easier than the old dial: no static, no fiddling with an antenna, and your favorite station sounds the same in every room. You can even hear a hometown station from anywhere in the country, which is a comfort for anyone who has moved away from Northeast Ohio.

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 about getting the radio to play.

Let's start with what internet radio actually is.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Internet Radio Is

"Internet radio" sounds technical, but the idea is simple. Most radio stations now send out their programs two ways at once: over the air from their tower, as they always have, and over the internet as a **stream** — a steady flow of sound that a phone, computer or smart speaker can play.

Three ways to hear the same station

	Regular AM/FM	HD Radio	Internet stream
Arrives by	Air, from the tower	Air, in digital form	Your Wi-Fi or phone data
What you need	Any radio	A radio marked HD Radio	Phone, speaker, computer or Wi-Fi radio
Range	Fades with distance	Fades with distance	Works anywhere with internet
Cost to listen	Free	Free	Free (uses internet or data)

Chapter 16 explains HD Radio in more detail. For most people, the internet stream is the easiest replacement for the kitchen radio, because it plays clearly in every room that has Wi-Fi.

Who carries the stream

A station's stream usually reaches you through one of these:

- **The station's owner's app.** Big radio companies have their own free apps. Stations owned by iHeartMedia play in the **iHeartRadio** app; stations owned by Audacy play in the **Audacy** app.
- **A directory app** such as **TuneIn** or **Radio Garden**, which gathers stations from many owners in one place.
- **The station's own app or website**, often with a big "Listen Live" button.
- **A smart speaker**, which quietly uses one of those apps behind the scenes when you ask it to play a station.

GOOD TO KNOW

A short delay is normal

An internet stream usually runs a little behind the over-the-air signal — sometimes a few seconds, sometimes longer. If you have a regular radio and a smart speaker playing the same station in different rooms, you'll hear an echo. Nothing is wrong; that's just the stream catching up.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing that the station and the app are separate things makes everything else easier. If one app won't play a station, another one often will.

CHAPTER 3

What You Need to Listen

You probably already own everything you need. Here's the short list.

Something to play it on

- **A smartphone or tablet** — iPhone, iPad or Android. Free apps from the App Store or Google Play.
- **A smart speaker** — an Amazon Echo (Alexa), a Google or Nest speaker, or an Apple HomePod. You ask it out loud; no screen needed. Part 3 covers these.
- **A computer** — any web browser can play most stations from their websites.
- **A Wi-Fi internet radio** — a radio that looks like a radio, with knobs and presets, but tunes in over Wi-Fi. Chapter 15 explains them.
- **Your car** — through Apple CarPlay, Android Auto or a phone plugged in. Chapter 17.

An internet connection

At home, that's your Wi-Fi. Away from home, your phone uses its cellular data, which can count against your plan. Radio uses far less data than video, but it adds up over a long day; Chapter 22 shows how to keep an eye on it.

Sometimes an account

Most apps let you listen to live radio without signing up. A free account mainly lets you save favorites so they follow you to a new phone or speaker. If an app asks, an email address and a password are enough. Write them on the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 26.

TIP

Put the speaker where the old radio was

A smart speaker or Wi-Fi radio needs a power outlet and a decent Wi-Fi signal. The spot on the kitchen counter where the old radio lived is usually perfect.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No new antenna, no new wiring, and often nothing new to buy. The phone in your pocket can be a radio today.

CHAPTER 4

What's Free and What Costs Money

Live radio over the internet is free to listen to, the same as over the air. You "pay" by hearing the commercials the station already plays, plus sometimes a short ad when a stream starts. Paid plans exist, but they're optional extras.

	Free	Paid option (optional)
iHeartRadio	Live stations, podcasts, some music features	Paid plans with more music features
TuneIn	Most live stations and podcasts	TuneIn Premium — fewer ads, commercial-free news and some live sports
Audacy	Its stations and podcasts	—
NPR app	Your local public station and NPR podcasts	Supporting your station is a donation, not a fee
Radio Garden	Live stations worldwide	Small optional in-app purchases

Chapter 6 gives the TuneIn Premium details, as of November 2026. For the other paid plans, check the price shown inside the app before you subscribe; prices change, and the app's own screen has the final word.

HEADS UP

You never have to pay to hear a local station

If a website or app says you must pay or enter a card number just to hear a local AM or FM station, be suspicious. The real stations want you listening for free. Chapter 23 explains the common tricks.

GOOD TO KNOW

Ballgames are the exception

Live play-by-play of pro sports is the one area where streaming rules get complicated. A game you can hear free on the car radio may be blocked in an app. Chapter 20 explains why, and how to listen anyway.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can replace the kitchen radio without signing up for anything. If you ever decide a paid plan is worth it, you'll know exactly what you're getting.

PART 2

The Radio Apps

iHeartRadio, TuneIn, Audacy, the NPR app, a station's own app, and Radio Garden — what each one is good for and how to start listening.

CHAPTER 5

iHeartRadio

iHeartRadio is the free app from iHeartMedia, one of the biggest radio companies in the country. Every station iHeartMedia owns plays in it, and so do many stations it doesn't own. In Cleveland that includes WTAM 1100, 100.7 WMMS and 99.5 WGAR (Chapter 19 has the list).

Get the app

1. On an iPhone or iPad, open the **App Store**. On Android, open **Google Play**.
2. Search for **iHeartRadio**. Check that the maker is listed as **iHeartMedia** before you tap **Get** or **Install**.
3. Open the app. It may ask you to create a free account or sign in. You can usually skip this to start listening, but an account saves your favorites.
4. If it asks to use your location, choosing **Allow While Using App** helps it show stations near you. You can say no and search by name instead.

Find and play a station

1. Tap the **Search** magnifying glass.
2. Type the station's call letters or nickname — for example **WTAM** or **WGAR**.
3. Tap the station in the list. It starts playing within a few seconds, often after a short ad.
4. Tap the **heart** or **follow** button so the station shows up in **Your Library** next time.

> TIP
> **Use call letters, not just the number**
> Typing "99.5" brings up every 99.5 in the country. Typing **WGAR** or "99.5 WGAR Cleveland" finds the right one.

What else is in the app

- **Podcasts** — many radio shows are saved as podcasts you can play later.
- **Artist and song "stations"** — iHeartRadio can build a music-only stream around a singer you like. These aren't real radio stations, just music picked by a computer.
- **Paid plans** with more music features. Live radio doesn't need them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One free app gives you the big Cleveland news-talk, rock and country stations, plus the Cavaliers and Guardians broadcasts' home stations, all in the same place.

CHAPTER 6

TuneIn (Free and Premium)

TuneIn is a radio directory: it gathers streams from tens of thousands of stations around the world, no matter who owns them. It also matters because Amazon's Alexa speakers have long used TuneIn behind the scenes for many radio requests (Chapter 11).

Free TuneIn

1. Install **TuneIn Radio** from the App Store or Google Play. The maker is **TuneIn**.
2. Open it and tap **Search**.
3. Type call letters, a city, or a kind of music — "Cleveland," "classical," "WZAK."
4. Tap a station to play it. Tap the **heart** or **Favorite** button to save it.

The free version plays most live stations, with the station's own commercials plus some ads from TuneIn.

TuneIn Premium

TuneIn Premium is the optional paid plan. TuneIn's help center says it adds commercial-free news from networks such as CNN, FOX News Radio and MSNBC, live play-by-play of some sports (the NHL is one it names), and audiobooks, on top of everything in the free app. It works in the phone apps, on the web at tunein.com, and on some other devices such as Sonos.

What it costs: as of November 2026, price listings show TuneIn Premium at about **$9.99 a month**, and TuneIn sometimes offers a free trial. I couldn't confirm the price on TuneIn's own pages, so check the price shown in the app before you agree to anything.

> HEADS UP
>
> **Premium doesn't remove a local station's commercials**
>
> When you listen to your local station, you're hearing what the station broadcasts, commercials included. Premium's "commercial-free" stations are TuneIn's own selections. If you mainly listen to local radio, the free version may be all you need.

TIP

Canceling a trial

If you start a free trial through your iPhone, cancel it in **Settings** > your name > **Subscriptions**. On Android, open **Google Play**, tap your picture, then **Payments & subscriptions** > **Subscriptions**. Put the trial end date on your calendar the day you start.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

TuneIn is the "phone book" of radio. If you can't find a station anywhere else — a small-town station, a church station, the station back where you grew up — TuneIn often has it.

CHAPTER 7

Audacy

Audacy is another large radio company (it was called Entercom, and its app used to be called Radio.com). In Cleveland, Audacy's own materials list four stations: 92.3 The Fan, 98.5 WNCX, Star 102 (WDOK) and Q104 (WQAL). Its free **Audacy** app and audacy.com carry them.

Is Audacy still around?

Yes. Audacy went through a Chapter 11 bankruptcy restructuring in 2024 to cut its debt. The stations and the app kept running through it, and the company finished the restructuring later that same year as a privately held company. I found no sign of a second bankruptcy. As of November 2026 its Cleveland stations are still on the air and streaming. For listeners, nothing changed: same stations, same free app.

GOOD TO KNOW

Changes in 2026 you may have noticed

CBS News Radio, the national news service many Audacy stations carried, shut down in May 2026, and Audacy news stations switched to ABC News Audio for national news. Audacy also agreed to put some of its stations on SiriusXM starting in September 2026. Your local Audacy stations still play free in the Audacy app.

Listen in the Audacy app

1. Install **Audacy** from the App Store or Google Play. Check that the maker is Audacy.
2. Open it. You can listen without an account, though a free account keeps your favorites.
3. Tap **Search** and type the station, such as **92.3 The Fan** or **WNCX**.
4. Tap the station to play it, and tap the heart or favorite button to save it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Audacy stations are often in TuneIn too

Many stations can be found in more than one app. If one app gives you trouble, try the station's name in TuneIn or on the station's own website.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Classic rock, soft favorites, pop hits and Browns talk from one free app — and you don't have to worry that the 2024 headlines meant your station disappeared.

CHAPTER 8

Public Radio: NPR and Ideastream

Public radio stations are nonprofit, supported by listeners, and carry NPR news programs like *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, plus local news and music. You can hear them in two free apps.

The NPR app

The **NPR** app (it replaced the older NPR One app) includes live radio from your local public station, NPR news, and NPR podcasts. NPR's help says to look for **Live Radio** on the Home screen, or the **My Local Station** section under the My NPR icon.

1. Install **NPR** from the App Store or Google Play. The maker is NPR.
2. Open it and let it pick your local station, or choose one yourself.
3. Tap **Live Radio** to hear your station live.

Our local public radio: Ideastream Public Media

In Northeast Ohio, public radio comes from **Ideastream Public Media**. **WKSU 89.7** — licensed to Kent State University and operated by Ideastream — is the NPR news station. **WCLV 90.3** is Ideastream's classical music station. Ideastream's free **Ideastream Public Media** app plays both, as does **ideastream.org**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Remember WCPN?

In March 2022 Ideastream reorganized its radio stations: news moved to WKSU and classical music WCLV moved to 90.3, the frequency many people still think of as WCPN. If an old preset or a smart speaker routine still says "WCPN," update it to WKSU for news or WCLV for classical.

TIP

What to say to a smart speaker

Ideastream suggests "Play WKSU" or "Play 89.7 FM" for news, and "Play WCLV Classical" or "Play 90.3 FM" for classical music. Ideastream also has an Alexa skill. Chapter 11 has more voice tips.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Local news, weather and Kent State's own station in your kitchen every morning, free — the same station many Portage County families have had on for years.

CHAPTER 9

A Station's Own App and Website

Almost every station has a website with a **Listen Live** button, and some have their own app. This is often the simplest way to listen on a computer.

Listen on a computer

1. Open your web browser (Chrome, Edge, Safari or Firefox).
2. Type the station's web address if you know it, or search for the call letters and city, such as "WZAK Cleveland."
3. Make sure the result is the station's real site, not an ad (Chapter 23).
4. Click **Listen Live** or the play button. Keep that browser tab open while you listen.

Station apps

Some stations, especially public stations and some independents, offer their own app. Others simply send you to iHeartRadio or Audacy. The station's website will tell you which. When you search an app store, check the maker's name matches the station or its owner.

TIP

Make it one tap

On a phone you can add the station's website to your Home Screen. On an iPhone, open it in Safari, tap the **Share** button, then **Add to Home Screen**. On Android in Chrome, tap the three dots, then **Add to Home screen**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No app to learn at all: one button on a page you already know how to open.

CHAPTER 10

Radio Garden: Spin the Globe

Radio Garden is a delightful free app and website (**radio.garden**) that shows the whole Earth as a globe. Each green dot is a city or town with stations on the air. Spin the globe, tap a dot, and you're listening to live radio from there.

1. On a computer, go to **radio.garden**. On a phone, install **Radio Garden Live** from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Drag the globe with your finger or mouse. Pinch or scroll to zoom.
3. Tap a green dot. A station from that place starts to play, and a list of the others there appears.
4. Tap the **heart** to save a station you like. Use **Search** to find a town by name.

The website is free to use. The phone app is free to download; the App Store lists optional in-app purchases, but you don't need them to listen.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Hear the hometown station where you grew up, the radio in the town your grandchildren moved to, or a station from a country you visited — just for the fun of it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not every station is there

Radio Garden only lists stations whose streams it can play. If a station is missing, try TuneIn or the station's own website.

PART 3

Smart Speakers and Voice

Asking Alexa, Google or Siri to play a station — and what to do when the speaker picks the wrong one.

CHAPTER 11

Playing Radio on Alexa

An Amazon Echo speaker is the simplest kitchen radio of all: you just ask. As of November 2026, Amazon's newer assistant, **Alexa+**, is available to everyone in the US — included with Prime, or $19.99 a month without it. The radio requests below work with either the older Alexa or Alexa+, and playing live radio from free services doesn't need any subscription.

Just say it

- "Alexa, play **WTAM**."
- "Alexa, play **89.7 WKSU**."
- "Alexa, play **Star 102 Cleveland**."
- "Alexa, play **NPR**."
- "Alexa, stop." or "Alexa, volume five."

Call letters work best. Adding the city helps when a nickname, like "The Fan," is used by stations in many cities.

Which app does Alexa use?

Alexa doesn't stream radio by itself; it borrows a service. For radio that has most often been **TuneIn**, and it can also use **iHeartRadio** or Amazon Music. If a station won't play one way, name the app on the end:

- "Alexa, play WMMS **on iHeartRadio**."
- "Alexa, play WZAK **on TuneIn**."

Link iHeartRadio and make it the default

If most of your stations are iHeartMedia stations, you can tell Alexa to use iHeartRadio first. iHeartRadio's help center gives these steps, starting in the iHeartRadio app on your phone:

1. Open the **iHeartRadio** app and tap **Settings** (top left).
2. Tap **Apps and Voice Assistants**, then **Alexa App Linking**.
3. Sign in and allow the link when asked.
4. Tap **Set as Default**. The Alexa app opens to its **Default Services** page, where you can confirm iHeartRadio for radio.

TIP

Where Default Services lives in the Alexa app

You can also reach it from the Alexa app itself: look in **Settings** for **Music & Podcasts**, then **Default Services**. Amazon moves things around between app versions, so if you don't see it, search the app's settings for "default."

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No buttons, no glasses, no tuning — your hands can be full of bread dough and the radio still comes on.

CHAPTER 12

Playing Radio on Google and Nest Speakers

Google's speakers — the Nest Mini, Nest Audio, Nest Hub and the new Google Home Speaker — answer to "Hey Google." Google's newer assistant, called **Gemini for Home**, has been rolling out to Nest speakers and displays going back about ten years, so even an older speaker may have it.

Ask for a station

Google's help center says you can ask for a station by its name, its call letters or its frequency, and you can name the service or the city:

- "Hey Google, play **WKSU**."
- "Hey Google, play **99.5 WGAR**."
- "Hey Google, play **92.3 The Fan in Cleveland**."
- "Hey Google, play **WTAM on iHeartRadio**."
- "Hey Google, **play the radio**." — picks up the last station you played.
- "Hey Google, stop."

If the speaker says it can't find the station, try the call letters with the city, or the station's nickname. You can also start the station in the iHeartRadio or TuneIn app on your phone and use the app's **Cast** button (a small screen with curved lines) to send it to the speaker.

GOOD TO KNOW

Exact behavior is still changing

Google is moving its speakers from the older Google Assistant to Gemini for Home, and some features are part of a paid Google Home Premium plan. Asking for a station by name is the safest habit. If something that used to work stops, the Cast button is a reliable backup.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The same hands-free radio as an Echo, on the speaker you already have — and you can group several Nest speakers to play the same station through the whole house.

CHAPTER 13

Siri, iPhone and HomePod

Apple's Siri can play many radio stations on an iPhone, iPad or HomePod. When Apple added this, it drew on stations from iHeartRadio, TuneIn and Radio.com (now Audacy), and the station plays in the **Music** app.

Say "radio station"

The trick is to say the words **radio station**. Without them, Siri may go looking for a song or album in Apple Music instead.

- "Siri, play **radio station** WTAM."
- "Siri, play **radio station** WCLV."

TIP

Search the Music app

On an iPhone, open the **Music** app, tap **Search**, and type the call letters, such as **WKSU**. Live stations usually show up in the results, and you can tap to play.

If Siri can't find it

1. Open the station's app (iHeartRadio, Audacy, TuneIn or NPR) on your iPhone and start the station.
2. To send it to a HomePod, tap the **AirPlay** button (a triangle with circles) on the playing screen and choose the HomePod.
3. Next time, you can usually just say "Siri, resume" or tap play.

HEADS UP

"That's not in your library"

Many people report Siri replying that a station isn't in their library. It's a known quirk, not something you did. Use the app and AirPlay steps above, and try again after the next software update.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If you already carry an iPhone, it can be your radio in every room — and a HomePod makes it sound like a real one.

CHAPTER 14

When the Speaker Plays the Wrong Station

It happens to everyone: you ask for your station and get one from another state, a podcast, or a song with a similar name. Here's how to fix it, in order.

1. **Say the call letters.** "Play W-K-S-U" is clearer than "play the NPR station."
2. **Add the city.** "Play 92.3 The Fan **Cleveland**."
3. **Name the app.** "... on iHeartRadio" or "... on TuneIn."
4. **Check the default.** If a music service like Spotify or Amazon Music is set as your default, the speaker may look for the name there first. Chapter 11 shows where to change it.
5. **Check the speaker's location.** In the Alexa or Google Home app, make sure the device's address is your home, so "local" means Northeast Ohio.
6. **Start it from the phone.** Play the station in its app and send it to the speaker.

TIP

Make a routine for your morning station

Once you get it right, save it. In the Alexa app, a **Routine** can start a station when you say "Alexa, good morning." Under **Add action**, choose **Music & Podcasts** and type the station. Chapter 18 has more.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A minute of fixing once means the right station every time after, for everyone in the house.

PART 4

Radios, Cars and Alarms

Wi-Fi radios that look like real radios, HD Radio, listening in the car, and waking up to your favorite station.

CHAPTER 15

Wi-Fi Internet Radios

A **Wi-Fi internet radio** (sometimes called a "Wi-Fi radio" or "smart radio") looks and works like a regular tabletop radio: a speaker, a volume knob, preset buttons and a small display. The difference is that it tunes in stations over your home Wi-Fi instead of the antenna. Many also include a regular FM tuner, so they work even when the internet is down.

Who it suits

- Someone who prefers **real buttons** to talking to a speaker or tapping a phone.
- A home where the favorite station **doesn't come in clearly** over the air.
- Anyone who wants a station from **another city** on the kitchen counter, with no phone needed.

Setting one up

1. Plug the radio in near where you'll use it, ideally within good Wi-Fi range of your router.
2. Turn it on and follow the setup on its display. It will list nearby Wi-Fi networks.
3. Choose your home network and enter the Wi-Fi password, letter for letter. Capitals matter. The password is often on a sticker on your router.
4. Once it's connected, look for a menu called something like **Internet Radio**, **Stations** or **Search**, and find your station by call letters or by location (United States, Ohio, Cleveland).
5. While the station plays, press and hold a **preset** button to save it. Next time, one press brings it back.

Every brand's menus are a little different, so keep the small instruction booklet that came in the box. Some models are set up through a companion phone app instead.

HEADS UP

These radios depend on a station directory

A Wi-Fi radio finds stations through a directory service run by its maker or a partner company. If that service shuts down, the radio can lose its stations. That happened in 2021, when the Reciva service closed and many Wi-Fi radios from several brands stopped finding stations. Before you buy, choose a well-known brand that is still selling and updating its radios, and check that the model also has a regular FM tuner as a backup.

TIP

A smart speaker may be the simpler choice

If the person who'll use it is comfortable saying "Alexa, play WTAM," a smart speaker (Part 3) usually costs less and never needs its station list updated. A Wi-Fi radio is best for someone who wants buttons and knobs.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The old radio's simple feel — turn it on, press preset 1, there's your station — with clear sound from any station in the world.

CHAPTER 16

HD Radio vs. Internet Streams

You may see "HD Radio" on a car stereo or a tabletop radio and wonder if it's the same as internet radio. It isn't. HD Radio still comes through the air from the station's tower — it's just sent in digital form alongside the regular signal.

How HD Radio works

- The station sends its regular AM or FM signal and a digital signal **on the same frequency**. Ordinary radios keep hearing the regular signal; HD Radio receivers pick up the digital one.
- The "HD" is a brand name. It doesn't stand for "high definition."
- It's **free**. There's no monthly fee; you only need a radio marked HD Radio.
- Many FM stations send extra channels called **HD2**, **HD3** and sometimes **HD4**. The main station is HD1. The extra channels can carry completely different programs, and they only appear on an HD Radio receiver.
- Near the edge of a station's range, the HD channels can drop out. HD1 falls back to the regular signal; an HD2 or HD3 channel may just go quiet until the digital signal returns.

Which one should you use?

If you…	HD Radio	Internet stream
Live near the station	Great — free, no data	Works too
Live far from the station	Drops out	Works anywhere
Are in the car	Free, no phone data	Uses phone data
Want a station from another state	No	Yes
Lose internet in a storm	Still works on batteries	Stops

STAY SAFE

Keep one battery radio in the house

When the power and internet go out in a storm, streams and smart speakers go silent. A plain battery or crank radio still picks up local AM and FM news and weather. Keep one with fresh batteries in the same drawer as your flashlight.

GOOD TO KNOW

Station HD channel numbers change

Stations rearrange their HD2 and HD3 channels from time to time, so I haven't listed them here. A station's own website usually lists what's on its HD channels this year.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the difference means you can pick the free, no-data option in the car and the works-anywhere option at home.

CHAPTER 17

Radio Apps in the Car

Your car's radio still picks up local stations for free. A radio app on your phone is handy when you drive out of range, want a station from somewhere else, or want a podcast of a show you missed.

Three ways to play the phone in the car

- **Apple CarPlay or Android Auto.** If your car's screen shows CarPlay (for iPhone) or Android Auto (for Android), many radio apps appear there as big icons. Tap one, or use the voice button on the steering wheel and say "play WTAM on iHeartRadio."
- **Bluetooth.** Pair the phone with the car once. Start the station on the phone *before* you pull out, then choose **Bluetooth** or **Phone** as the car's audio source.
- **A cable.** Some older cars have a USB or AUX (headphone-style) jack. Plug in and choose that source.

STAY SAFE

Set it up before you drive

Choose your station while parked. While driving, use the steering-wheel voice button or a passenger. Never type a search on the phone at a red light.

TIP

In range? Use the car radio

When you're within range of the station, the car's own FM, AM or HD Radio is free and uses no phone data. Save the app for when the signal fades.

Bill's guides on car touchscreens and adding CarPlay to an older car cover pairing in more detail. Chapter 22 explains how much phone data a long drive can use.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The ballgame or your morning show follows you all the way to the grandkids' house, even after the car radio fades to static.

CHAPTER 18

Wake Up to the Radio

A lot of us grew up with a clock radio. A smart speaker can do the same job — and it can turn the station off by itself after you've had your coffee.

Alexa: wake up to a station

- "Alexa, **wake me up to WKSU at 6:30**."
- "Alexa, set an alarm for 7 a.m. **every day**." (for a repeating plain alarm)
- "Alexa, what alarms do I have?" and "Alexa, cancel my 6:30 alarm."

Station alarms rely on the radio service Alexa uses, so they don't work for every station. If Alexa only sets a plain beeping alarm, try a **Routine** instead (below).

Alexa Routine: "Good morning" plays your station

1. Open the **Alexa** app on your phone.
2. Tap **More**, then **Routines**, then the **+** sign.
3. Under **When this happens**, choose **Voice** and type "good morning" — or choose **Schedule** and pick a time and days.
4. Tap **Add action**, choose **Music & Podcasts**, and type the station, such as "WKSU." Choose the service if it asks (TuneIn or iHeartRadio).
5. Choose which Echo should play it, then tap **Save**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menu names move around

Amazon has been redesigning the Alexa app for Alexa+. If you don't see a button exactly as written, look for the same words nearby. Amazon's Alexa+ announcements also tie some extras, including Routines on some devices, to Prime or a subscription, so if Routines is missing or asks you to upgrade, the plain "wake me up to" alarm above still works.

Fall asleep to the radio

- Alexa: "Alexa, **stop playing in 30 minutes**." or "Alexa, set a sleep timer for an hour."
- Google or Nest: "Hey Google, **stop in 30 minutes**."

- iPhone: in the **Clock** app, tap **Timers**, set the time, tap **When Timer Ends**, choose **Stop Playing**, and tap **Start**.

TIP

Keep a backup alarm for important mornings

If the internet is down, a station alarm may not play. For a doctor's appointment or an early flight, set a plain alarm on your phone as well.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The morning news or soft music to wake up to, a gentle fade to sleep at night, and nothing to tune or switch off by hand.

PART 5

Northeast Ohio Radio

The Cleveland and Akron stations I could confirm, which app carries each one, and how to hear the Browns, Cavs and Guardians.

CHAPTER 19

Northeast Ohio Stations and Their Apps

Here are Northeast Ohio stations whose call letters, frequency, format and owner I could confirm in November 2026. Knowing the owner tells you which free app will have the station: iHeartMedia stations play in **iHeartRadio**, Audacy stations play in **Audacy**, and the rest play on their own websites and in directory apps.

GOOD TO KNOW

Lineups change

Radio stations change formats, nicknames and owners more often than you'd think. If a station on this list sounds different one morning, search its call letters in TuneIn or on the web to see what's new. This isn't every station in the area — just the ones I could double-check.

iHeartMedia stations — iHeartRadio app

Station	Frequency	Format
WTAM	1100 AM and 106.9 FM	News and talk; Cavaliers and Guardians
WMMS	100.7 FM	Rock; Cavaliers and many Guardians games
WGAR	99.5 FM	Country
WHLK "The Lake"	106.5 FM	Adult hits
WAKS	96.5 FM	Contemporary hits

Audacy stations — Audacy app

Station	Frequency	Format
WKRK "92.3 The Fan"	92.3 FM	Sports talk; Browns
WNCX	98.5 FM	Classic rock; Browns
WDOK "Star 102"	FM ("Star 102")	Adult contemporary (soft favorites)
WQAL "Q104"	FM ("Q104")	Hot adult contemporary (pop hits)

Other local stations

Station	Dial	Format and owner	Where to listen
WKSU	89.7 FM	NPR news; Ideastream Public Media	Ideastream app, NPR app, ideastream.org
WCLV	90.3 FM	Classical; Ideastream Public Media	Ideastream app, ideastream.org
WKNR "850 ESPN Cleveland"	850 AM	Sports talk, ESPN Radio; Good Karma Brands; Browns	Station website, directory apps
WZAK	93.1 FM	Urban adult contemporary; Urban One	Station website, directory apps
WQMX	94.9 FM	Country; Rubber City Radio Group (Akron)	Station website, directory apps

TIP

Nicknames are shared; call letters aren't

Many cities have a "Star" station or a "Q" station. When you search an app or ask a speaker, the call letters (WDOK for Star 102, WQAL for Q104) are the surest way to get the Cleveland station rather than a namesake in another city.

Save your favorites everywhere at once

1. Pick your three or four favorite stations from the tables above.
2. Follow them in the app that carries them (heart or follow button), so they sit at the top of **Your Library** or **Favorites**.
3. Try each one on your smart speaker by call letters. If one plays the wrong station, see Chapter 14.
4. Write them on the Cheat-Sheet in Chapter 26, with the exact words that work on your speaker.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No more hunting through apps: you'll know that WTAM is in iHeartRadio, 92.3 The Fan is in Audacy, and WKSU is in the NPR and Ideastream apps — and your speaker will find them on the first try.

CHAPTER 20

Ballgames: Why a Game Won't Stream

This is the most common radio puzzle: the game is on the car radio, but when you open the app at home, the station plays something else, or the app says the game isn't available. Nothing is broken. Pro sports leagues sell online broadcast rights separately from over-the-air radio, so the station's stream may not be allowed to carry the game.

Where to hear our teams (2026)

Team	Radio	Online
Browns	850 ESPN Cleveland (WKNR), 98.5 WNCX, 92.3 The Fan (WKRK); Spanish on 1300 AM La Mega	Browns app or website (only within the Cleveland area); NFL+ (paid) carries radio of every game
Cavaliers	WTAM 1100 AM / 106.9 FM and 100.7 WMMS (iHeartMedia)	Check the iHeartRadio app; the team's website lists online options
Guardians	WTAM 1100 (all 162 games in 2026) and WMMS 100.7 (most games)	Check the iHeartRadio app; the team's website lists online options

Schedules and rights deals change from season to season, and when the Cavs and Guardians play at the same time, one of them moves to the other station. The team's official website has a "how to listen" page for each season.

When the app won't play the game

1. **Turn on a regular radio.** Over the air, the game is always free within range. This is the easiest answer at home.
2. **Try the team's own app.** The Browns say live game audio in their app works within the Cleveland area. The app checks your location, so allow it when asked.
3. **On a phone, try turning Wi-Fi off.** The Browns suggest this when the app thinks you're out of the area; your phone's cellular connection often gives a more accurate location.
4. **Out of town?** A league's paid service, such as NFL+ for football, is the usual way to hear the home broadcast from far away.

HEADS UP

Skip the "free game stream" sites

Websites promising every game free, live, from anywhere are often full of pop-ups, fake "Your computer is infected" warnings, or requests for a card number. Chapter 23 explains these tricks. Stick to the station, the team's own app, and the league's own service.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Instead of fighting with an app in the bottom of the ninth, you'll know in a second where the game is — and that the battery radio in the drawer always gets it.

PART 6

Data, Safety and Fixes

When the stream won't play, how much phone data radio uses, the fake apps and sites to avoid, and setting up radio for a parent.

CHAPTER 21

When the Stream Won't Play

Streams stop for ordinary reasons: the Wi-Fi hiccuped, the app needs an update, or the station changed its stream. Work down this list; most problems are fixed in the first three steps.

Fix it in order

1. **Try another station.** If every station is silent, the problem is your internet or device. If only one is, the problem is probably that station's stream — try it in a different app (Chapter 2).
2. **Check the volume and the speaker.** Is the phone on silent, or playing to a Bluetooth speaker in another room? Is the smart speaker's light showing it's muted?
3. **Close the app and open it again.** On an iPhone, swipe up from the bottom and hold, then swipe the app away. On Android, tap the square or three-line button and swipe it away.
4. **Check the internet.** Can you open a web page? If not, unplug your internet box and router for 30 seconds, plug them back in, and wait a few minutes.
5. **Update the app.** Open the App Store or Google Play, search for the app, and tap **Update** if you see it.
6. **Restart the device.** Turn the phone off and on, or unplug the smart speaker or Wi-Fi radio for 10 seconds.
7. **Ballgame?** It may be a rights blackout, not a fault. See Chapter 20.

It plays, but it keeps cutting out

- Move the speaker or radio closer to the Wi-Fi router, or away from microwaves and thick walls.
- On a phone away from home, a weak cellular signal causes gaps. It usually clears up when you move.
- Some apps have a **streaming quality** or **data saver** setting; a lower setting can play more smoothly on a weak connection.

TIP

It stopped working after a change?

If the radio stopped after you got a new router, changed the Wi-Fi password, or unplugged it to move it, the device probably needs to be connected to Wi-Fi again. Smart speakers do this in their app (Alexa or Google Home); a Wi-Fi radio does it from its own setup menu.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A calm, step-by-step list instead of guessing — and most of the time, the radio's back in five minutes.

CHAPTER 22

How Much Phone Data Radio Uses

At home on Wi-Fi, radio doesn't touch your phone plan. Away from home, it uses **cellular data**. Audio uses far less than video, but a long day adds up.

A rough guide

A typical station stream (128 kilobits per second, a common quality) works out to about **58 MB an hour**. Some apps and stations use a little more or less.

How much you listen	About how much data
1 hour	About 60 MB
1 hour a day for a month	About 1.7 GB
A 4-hour drive	About 230 MB
8 hours a day for a month	About 14 GB

If your plan has unlimited data, you don't need to worry. If it has a monthly limit, such as 5 GB, an hour a day on the road is fine, but leaving a ballgame stream on all afternoon, every day, could run you over.

Check how much the radio app used

1. **iPhone:** open **Settings** > **Cellular** and scroll down. Each app shows how much data it used, with a switch to stop it using cellular data at all.
2. **Android:** open **Settings** and search for **data usage**. Tap **App data usage** to see each app's share. Wording differs between phone makers.

TIP

Save data with the car radio

In the car, the regular radio is free and uses no data. Use the app only when you're out of the station's range (Chapter 17).

HEADS UP

Leaving it playing by accident

If you leave a station playing in your pocket or in the car after you get out, it keeps using data. If your bill jumped, check the app list above and turn off cellular data for the app if you only listen at home.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No surprise overage charges — and the confidence to listen on the road when you want to.

CHAPTER 23

Fake Radio Apps and "Free Stream" Scams

Real radio is free and doesn't need your card number. Scammers count on people not knowing that. Here are the tricks to watch for.

Copycat apps

App stores have many apps with names like "Radio FM Live" or "Ohio Radio Stations." Some are fine; others are stuffed with ads or push expensive weekly subscriptions.

- Check the **maker's name** under the app's title: iHeartRadio is made by iHeartMedia, Audacy by Audacy, NPR by NPR, Ideastream Public Media by Ideastream.
- Be wary of any radio app that asks for a **subscription** or **free trial** the moment you open it, before you've played anything.
- If an app you don't recognize is already on the phone, you can delete it. On an iPhone, press and hold its icon, then **Remove App** > **Delete App**. On Android, press and hold, then **Uninstall**.

SCAM ALERT

"Pay to keep listening"

No real Northeast Ohio station charges you to hear its live stream. If an app or website says your "free listening has ended" and asks for a card number or a gift card, close it. If you already paid, call your bank or card company and ask about disputing the charge. Cancel any subscription in your phone's subscriptions list (Chapter 6 shows where).

SCAM ALERT

Fake virus warnings on stream sites

Unofficial "watch or listen to every game free" sites often throw up a loud warning that your computer is infected, with a phone number to call. It's a lie. Don't call. Close the browser — if it won't close, restart the computer. Microsoft and Apple don't put phone numbers in pop-ups.

SCAM ALERT

Fake prize calls "from the station"

Stations do run contests, but a real station won't ask you to pay a fee, buy a gift card or give a bank account number to collect a prize. If someone calls saying you've won, hang up and call the station's number from its own website.

STAY SAFE

If you clicked or paid

Don't be embarrassed — these tricks are designed to fool careful people. Stop, don't give any more information, and call your bank if money or a card number was involved. Bill can check the device with you afterward.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You'll know the one rule that beats all of these: local radio is free, so anyone asking you to pay for it is suspect.

CHAPTER 24

Setting Up Radio for a Parent

Family members often set up a radio for a parent or grandparent who doesn't want to learn an app. The goal is simple: one action, and the right station plays.

The simplest setups

Setup	What they do	Good for
Smart speaker	Say "Alexa, play WTAM"	Anyone comfortable speaking to it
Smart speaker + routine	Say "Alexa, good morning" or nothing at all, on a schedule	A daily habit
Wi-Fi radio with presets	Press preset 1	Someone who wants buttons
Plain FM radio	Turn the knob	When the station comes in clearly

Setting it up for them

1. Pick the two or three stations they actually listen to (Chapter 19).
2. Set up the speaker in **your** phone's Alexa or Google Home app if you'll be the one managing it, or in theirs if they'll want to change things.
3. Test the exact words, out loud, from where they'll sit. Change them if the speaker mishears.
4. Make a schedule routine (Chapter 18) so the morning station starts by itself.
5. Write the words on a card next to the speaker in large print: "Alexa, play WKSU." "Alexa, stop." "Alexa, louder."

> **TIP**
>
> **Show them how to turn it back up**
>
> If the speaker sometimes gets turned all the way down and "stops working," show them "Alexa, volume five" or "Hey Google, volume 50 percent." Put it on the card.

GOOD TO KNOW

Hearing the radio clearly

For anyone who finds speech hard to follow, a bigger speaker placed at ear level, closer to their chair, often helps more than turning the volume up. Talk to a hearing professional about hearing concerns.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Peace of mind for the family, and a familiar voice in the kitchen every morning for the person you love — without a single app for them to learn.

PART 7

Getting Help

When a hand is worth it, and your one-page radio cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 25

When to Call Bill

Most of this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But some jobs go faster with a second pair of hands, and there's no shame in asking.

When a hand is worth it

- **Setting up a smart speaker** for the first time, linking iHeartRadio, and making it play your stations on the first try.
- **Morning routines** so the radio comes on by itself — especially for a parent who lives alone.
- **A Wi-Fi radio that won't connect**, or one that suddenly lost its stations.
- **Whole-house radio**: the same station on several speakers at once.
- **Car setup**: pairing the phone and getting the radio apps onto the CarPlay or Android Auto screen.
- **After a scare**: you tapped a pop-up, paid for a fake app, or gave a card number, and you want the device checked and subscriptions canceled.
- **Choosing what to buy**, honestly — including when the radio you already have is the right answer.

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 at no charge; 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 reading. I hope your favorite station is playing in the kitchen again soon.

— Bill

CHAPTER 26

Your Radio Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide, boiled down to one page you can keep by the speaker.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
Live radio online	Free. You never need a card number to hear a local station.
iHeartRadio app	WTAM, WMMS, WGAR, WHLK, WAKS (iHeartMedia stations).
Audacy app	92.3 The Fan, 98.5 WNCX, Star 102, Q104.
NPR or Ideastream app	WKSU 89.7 (news) and WCLV 90.3 (classical).
TuneIn or Radio Garden	Almost any other station, anywhere.
Asking a speaker	Use call letters, add the city, or add "on iHeartRadio" / "on TuneIn."
Siri	Say "play **radio station** WTAM."
Ballgame won't stream	Rights rules. Use a regular radio, or the team's app in the area (Chapter 20).
Phone data	About 60 MB an hour. Car radio is free.
Power out	Battery radio for local news and weather.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
My favorite stations (call letters)	_____
Exact words that work on my speaker	_____
iHeartRadio account email	_____
Audacy / TuneIn / NPR account email	_____
Amazon or Google account (speaker)	_____
Wi-Fi network name	_____
Paid plans I have (and renewal date)	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Try a different station. All silent? It's the internet or the device.
2. Check the volume, the mute light, and where the sound is going.
3. Close the app and open it again.
4. Unplug the router and the speaker for 30 seconds.
5. Wrong station? Say the call letters and the city (Chapter 14).
6. Asked to pay to listen? Close it — it's not the real station (Chapter 23).
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.