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Microsoft Teams

Joining meetings, calling family and Teams Free — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for seniors and families

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

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For Microsoft Teams Free & joining any Teams meeting · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to Microsoft Teams: joining a meeting someone sent you, and using the free personal version, Microsoft Teams Free, to chat and call with family. It also covers what happened to Skype, how to fix sound and camera trouble, turning on captions, privacy settings and the scams that use Teams. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Microsoft changes its screens from time to time, so if a button is in a slightly different spot, look nearby for the same name.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What Microsoft Teams is, which version you have, what happened to Skype, and what Teams Free costs. Start here, even if you only ever plan to join a meeting someone sends you.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe a doctor's office, a church committee or a grandchild's school sent you a "Teams meeting" link. Maybe you used Skype for years and woke up one day to find it gone, replaced by something called **Microsoft Teams Free**. Or maybe a son or daughter just said, "Get Teams, Mom, so we can all talk on Sunday." Whatever brought you here, 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. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain Teams sitting beside you at the kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, and without assuming you already know the words. When a term like "lobby" or "organizer" comes up, I'll stop and explain it.

What this guide will do for you

- Show you how to join a Teams meeting from a link — in the app, in a web browser, or by phone — even if you don't have a Microsoft account.
- Explain Microsoft Teams Free, the personal version that took Skype's place in 2025.
- Walk you through chatting, sharing photos and making video calls with family.
- Fix the two most common problems: "I can't hear" and "they can't see me."
- Turn on live captions, so you can read what people are saying.
- Set your privacy so only people you know can reach you, and spot the scams that use Teams.

The big promise: you can't break it

You can't hurt your computer or phone by pressing buttons in Teams. If you leave a meeting by mistake, you can click the link again and rejoin. If your camera comes on when you didn't want it to, one click turns it off. The only things that call for real care are your password and anyone asking to take control of your computer, and I'll mark those clearly.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

More doctors, clubs, schools and families use Teams every year. Being able to join with confidence means you don't miss the appointment, the meeting or the grandchildren's faces — and you don't have to wait for someone to come over and set it up.

And I'm only a phone call away

If anything in this guide leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. I can help over a remote connection that *you* start, which is a nice fit for Teams questions. There's no such thing as a silly question.

So let's begin with the simplest question: what *is* Teams?

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Microsoft Teams Is (and Which One You Have)

Microsoft Teams is Microsoft's app for video meetings, phone-style calls and text chat. It runs on Windows computers, Macs, iPhones, iPads and Android phones and tablets, and it also works inside a web browser with nothing to install. Under one name, there are really two kinds of Teams, and knowing which one you're looking at clears up a lot of confusion.

The two kinds of Teams

Kind	What it is
Teams for work or school	Run by an employer, school, hospital or government office. You sign in with an account they give you, or you join their meetings as a guest. Most meeting links you receive come from this kind.
Microsoft Teams Free	The personal version for family and friends. You sign in with your own free Microsoft account (the same one you might use for Outlook.com, Xbox or a Windows computer). This is where former Skype users ended up.
Teams with Microsoft 365	Teams Free with longer, bigger meetings, included when you pay for Microsoft 365 Personal or Family. Same app, higher limits (Chapter 4).

GOOD TO KNOW

You don't need either one just to join

To join a meeting someone sent you, you don't need any Teams account at all. You can join as a **guest** by typing your name. Chapters 5 through 8 show you how.

Words you'll see

Word	Meaning
Meeting	A video or audio get-together that you join from a link, usually at a set time.
Call	A direct video or voice call to one person or a small group, like a phone call.
Chat	Typed messages back and forth, like text messages. Photos and files can go in a chat too.
Organizer	The person who set up the meeting. They control who gets in.
Lobby	A waiting area. If the organizer uses it, you wait there until they let you in.
Guest	Someone joining a meeting without signing in. You just type your name.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you know whether a link came from someone's work Teams or from family on Teams Free, you'll know what to expect: a work meeting may make you wait in the lobby, while a family call is more relaxed.

CHAPTER 3

What Happened to Skype

For more than twenty years, Skype was how many families made free video calls. Microsoft, which owned Skype, retired it on **May 5, 2025**. The Skype app stopped working for calls and chats, and Microsoft invited Skype users to move to **Microsoft Teams Free** instead.

If you used Skype

- Your Skype sign-in was a Microsoft account. You can sign in to Teams Free with that **same email and password**.
- When you sign in to Teams Free with your Skype account, your Skype contacts and chat history can appear in Teams.
- Microsoft kept that Skype history for people who moved to Teams Free before **December 1, 2025** and had been active on Skype in the months before it closed.
- Chats you had in Skype with someone's *work* Teams account didn't carry over.
- Skype for Business, a different product used by companies, wasn't part of this change.

HEADS UP

The Skype export window has closed

Microsoft let people download a copy of their old Skype chats and files. It extended that deadline into June 2026, and that window has now passed. If you never moved and didn't download your history, it may no longer be available. Signing in to Teams Free with your old Skype account is still the first thing to try.

Skype Credit and Skype phone numbers

Some people paid for Skype Credit to call landlines and cell phones, or had a Skype phone number. Those paid features don't carry over to Teams Free, which calls other Teams users, not regular phone numbers. Microsoft's Skype help pages explain what happened to leftover credit and which refunds were possible. If you still have a balance, sign in at support.microsoft.com and look for the Skype section, or call me and we'll look together.

SCAM ALERT

"Your Skype money is waiting" messages are fake

Scammers love a big change like this. If an email, text or caller says you can recover Skype credit, unlock an old account or get a refund by paying a fee, giving a code or installing an app, it's a scam. Go to support.microsoft.com yourself instead of using any link sent to you.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing that Teams Free *is* the new home for Skype means you don't have to start over. Your Skype sign-in still works, and many of your old contacts may already be there waiting.

CHAPTER 4

What Teams Free Costs and Its Limits

Microsoft Teams Free costs nothing. All you need is a free Microsoft account. There's no trial that runs out and no card to enter. It does have a few limits, which most families never bump into.

Teams Free, as of November 2026

What	Teams Free	With Microsoft 365 Personal or Family
Group meetings	Up to 60 minutes	Up to 30 hours
People in a meeting	Up to 100	Up to 300
One-on-one calls	Up to 30 hours	Up to 30 hours
Cloud storage for shared files	5 GB	Uses your Microsoft 365 storage
Price	Free	Paid subscription

TIP

The 60-minute limit, in plain words

A group meeting on Teams Free ends after an hour. If your family's Sunday call runs long, someone can simply start a new meeting and everyone rejoins. A call between just two people can run much longer.

Do you need Microsoft 365?

Probably not for Teams alone. Microsoft 365 Personal and Family are subscriptions that mainly give you Word, Excel, Outlook and lots of OneDrive storage; longer Teams meetings come along as a bonus. As of November 2026 in the U.S., Personal is $9.99 a month or $99.99 a year, and Family, for up to six people, is $12.99 a month or $129.99 a year. If you already pay for one, you already have the bigger Teams limits — just sign in with that account.

HEADS UP

Joining is always free

Joining someone else's meeting never costs anything, no matter what plan they have. If a website or caller says you must pay to join a Teams meeting or to "activate" Teams, close it. That isn't how Teams works.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can keep in touch with the whole family on video for free, and you'll know the real limits instead of being surprised when a call ends at the hour.

PART 2

Joining a Meeting

Every way to get into a Teams meeting someone sent you: from the link, as a guest, in a web browser, by phone, or on a phone or tablet — and what to do when the link doesn't work.

CHAPTER 5

Join a Meeting from a Link

Most Teams meetings arrive as a link in an email, a text message or a calendar invitation. The link is your ticket in. You don't need to remember a meeting number or password for most Teams meetings; clicking the link does the work.

What the invitation looks like

Look for words like **Join the meeting now**, **Click here to join the meeting** or simply **Join**, usually under a heading that says **Microsoft Teams**. Below it you may see a **Meeting ID** and **Passcode**, and sometimes a phone number for joining by phone (Chapter 8).

Joining, step by step

1. A few minutes before the meeting, open the email, text or calendar entry with the invitation.
2. Click or tap the join link.
3. Your computer may offer to open the Teams app, or to **Continue on this browser**. Either is fine. If you don't have the Teams app, choose the browser (Chapter 7).
4. If you aren't signed in, type your name the way you'd like others to see it, such as "Mary Smith."
5. On the next screen — the **pre-join screen** — you'll see a preview of your camera. Use the camera and microphone switches to turn them on or off before you go in.
6. Click **Join now**.
7. If the organizer uses a lobby, you'll see a message that someone will let you in soon. Wait; don't close the window (Chapter 12).

TIP

Join five minutes early

Joining a little early gives you time to allow the camera and microphone, fix the sound and settle in. Most organizers don't mind an early guest waiting in the lobby.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your browser may ask for permission

The first time, your web browser asks whether Teams may use your **camera** and **microphone**. Choose **Allow**. If you choose Block by mistake, Chapter 21 shows how to undo it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you've joined from a link once or twice, every Teams meeting feels the same: click, type your name, check your camera, join. No account, no fuss.

CHAPTER 6

Join as a Guest Without an Account

You can join a Teams meeting from any device **without signing in to any Teams account**. This is called joining as a **guest**. It's the easiest way to join a meeting from your doctor, a lawyer's office, a school or a club.

1. Click the join link in your invitation.
2. If a sign-in screen appears and you don't have an account, look for a choice to join **without signing in**, or simply choose **Continue on this browser**.
3. Type your name.
4. Choose your camera and sound settings, then click **Join now**.
5. Wait in the lobby if asked. The organizer will let you in.

What guests can and can't do

- Guests can see and hear the meeting, turn their camera and microphone on and off, and usually use the meeting chat and raise a hand.
- Some features are limited for guests, and the organizer decides whether guests can present or share their screen.
- Some workplaces don't allow guests at all. If the link tells you that you can't join, contact the person who sent it and ask for another way in.

HEADS UP

Use your real name

Organizers often let in only the names they expect. If you type a nickname, you may wait in the lobby a long time. Use the name the office knows you by.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You don't need to make an account, remember a password or install anything just to see your doctor or sit in on a meeting. Your name is enough.

CHAPTER 7

Join in a Web Browser (No Download)

If you'd rather not install anything, Teams works right inside a web browser on a Windows computer or a Mac. The browser is the program you use for websites — Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Safari or Firefox.

Which browser to use

Microsoft Edge and **Google Chrome** work best for Teams. Microsoft also lists Safari and Firefox for joining, but if a button is missing or the video won't start in one of those, try Edge or Chrome instead. Edge comes with every Windows computer.

Joining in the browser, step by step

1. Open the invitation and click the join link. If it opens in a browser you don't like, copy the link and paste it into Edge or Chrome.
2. If a box asks to open the Teams app, choose **Cancel**, then click **Continue on this browser**.
3. When the browser asks to use your microphone and camera, click **Allow**.
4. Type your name, set your camera and microphone, and click **Join now**.

TIP

Close other video tabs

If the video stutters, close other browser tabs that play video or music. A browser meeting shares your computer's attention with everything else that's open.

GOOD TO KNOW

Phones and tablets usually need the app

On an iPhone, iPad or Android phone, the join link normally sends you to the free Teams app instead of the browser. Chapter 9 covers that.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Joining in the browser means no installing, no updates and nothing left behind on your computer. It's a good choice for a one-time meeting.

CHAPTER 8

Join by Phone (Dial-In)

Some Teams invitations include a regular phone number so you can join with just your voice, from any phone, even a landline. It's handy when the internet is down, you're in the car (parked, please), or you simply prefer a phone call.

Check the invitation first

Look in the invitation under **Dial in by phone** or **Join by phone** for a phone number and a **Phone conference ID** — a string of numbers ending with the pound sign (#). If there's no phone number in the invitation, phone joining isn't offered for that meeting. That's common for meetings set up on Teams Free. Ask the organizer for another way, or join with the app or browser.

Joining by phone, step by step

1. Dial the phone number from the invitation. Choose a local or toll-free number if several are listed.
2. When the recording asks, key in the **Phone conference ID**, then press #.
3. If you're asked for your name, say it after the tone.
4. If the organizer uses a lobby, you may hear a message to wait until someone lets you in.
5. To hang up and leave, simply end the call.

TIP

Use the phone for sound, the computer for pictures

If your computer's speakers or microphone aren't cooperating, you can join on the computer to see everyone, mute the computer, and dial in on the phone for the sound. Just mute your computer's microphone and speakers so you don't hear an echo.

HEADS UP

Long-distance charges

The meeting number is an ordinary phone number. Your phone company's usual rates apply. A toll-free number, if offered, avoids long-distance charges.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Dialing in means a weak internet connection, a missing camera or an unfamiliar app can't keep you out of an important meeting.

CHAPTER 9

Join from an iPhone, iPad or Android

On a phone or tablet, Teams meetings open in the free **Microsoft Teams** app. If it isn't installed yet, the join link offers to take you to the App Store (iPhone and iPad) or Google Play (Android).

1. Tap the join link in your email or text.
2. If you don't have Teams, tap the button to **get the app**. In the App Store or Google Play, make sure the app is **Microsoft Teams** from **Microsoft Corporation**, then install it.
3. Go back to the invitation and tap the link again.
4. Choose **Join as a guest** if you don't want to sign in, or sign in with your Microsoft account.
5. Type your name, allow the microphone and camera when your phone asks, and tap **Join now**.

TIP

Prop it up and plug it in

Lean the phone or tablet against something steady at eye level, and plug it into the charger. Video calls use battery quickly, and nobody wants an hour of your ceiling.

SCAM ALERT

Only install Teams from the official store

Get Teams from the App Store, Google Play, or microsoft.com typed in yourself. Fake "Teams" downloads from links in emails or pop-ups are a known trick for planting harmful software.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A phone or tablet is often the easiest way to join: the camera, microphone and speaker are all built in and already work.

CHAPTER 10

When the Meeting Link Doesn't Work

Few things are more frustrating than clicking a link at 10:58 for an 11:00 meeting and getting nowhere. Here's what to try, in order. Most problems are fixed by step 2 or 3.

1. **Check the date and time.** Make sure the meeting is today and hasn't ended. A link for a meeting that's over may say it's no longer available.
2. **Try a different way in.** If the app didn't open, click the link again and choose **Continue on this browser**. If the browser struggled, try Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome.
3. **Copy and paste the whole link.** Some email programs break long links. Copy the full link and paste it into your browser's address bar.
4. **Sign out or join as a guest.** If Teams opens but says you don't have access, you may be signed in with the wrong account. Try joining as a guest in the browser instead.
5. **Restart.** Close Teams or the browser completely, then try once more. Restarting the computer clears many stuck problems.
6. **Check the internet.** Open any website. If nothing loads, the problem is your connection, not Teams.
7. **Dial in by phone**, if the invitation has a number (Chapter 8).
8. **Let the organizer know.** A quick email or call — "The link won't open for me" — often gets you a fresh link.

HEADS UP

"You can't join this meeting"

Some workplaces block guests or people from outside their organization. That isn't something you can fix on your end. The organizer can send a different link or arrange a phone call instead.

SCAM ALERT

A "Teams update required" page is a red flag

If a meeting link sends you to a page saying you must download an update, a codec or a "Teams plugin" before you can join, stop. Real Teams meetings open in the app or browser without a special download. Close the page and ask the sender, by phone, whether the invite is real.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Having a plan in your pocket keeps a balky link from turning into a missed appointment. Most of the time, switching to the browser or pasting the link fixes it in under a minute.

PART 3

Inside the Meeting

Once you're in: the buttons that matter, waiting in the lobby, raising your hand, reading live captions, and looking your best on camera.

CHAPTER 11

The Meeting Buttons: Mute, Camera, Leave

When you're in a Teams meeting, a row of buttons sits along the top of the window on a computer, or along the bottom on a phone or tablet. If you don't see them, move your mouse or tap the screen once. You only need a handful of them.

Button	What it does
Mic	Mutes and unmutes your microphone. A line through the microphone means others can't hear you.
Camera	Turns your video on and off. A line through the camera means others can't see you.
Chat	Opens the typed chat for this meeting, where people share links and comments.
People	Shows who's in the meeting and who's waiting in the lobby.
Raise	Raises a virtual hand so the organizer knows you'd like to speak.
More (...)	Three dots. Opens extra choices: captions, video effects, settings and more.
Leave	The red button. Leaves the meeting. On a phone it may look like a red phone.

Good habits in a meeting

- **Mute when you're not talking.** It keeps the dog, the TV and the dishwasher out of everyone's ears.
- **Unmute before you speak.** If people look puzzled, check the microphone button first.
- **Leave with the red button**, not by closing the window, so Teams finishes cleanly.

TIP

Check before you speak

Get in the habit of glancing at the microphone button before you start talking. It saves the familiar "You're on mute!" moment for everyone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With just three buttons — microphone, camera and Leave — you can take part in any Teams meeting without feeling lost. Everything else is optional.

CHAPTER 12

The Lobby, Raising Your Hand and Meeting Chat

A Teams meeting can feel a bit formal at first, especially one from a doctor's office or an organization. These three features help it run smoothly.

Waiting in the lobby

The **lobby** is a waiting room. If the organizer has it turned on, you'll see a message that someone in the meeting will let you in soon. The organizer gets a notice that you're waiting. That's all normal; just wait. If nobody lets you in after ten minutes past the start time, call or email the organizer.

If you're the organizer

1. During your meeting, select **People** (or **Participants**).
2. Under **Waiting in lobby**, choose **Admit** next to each person, or admit everyone at once.
3. To change who has to wait, open **Meeting options** from the same People panel and look for **Who can bypass the lobby**.

Raising your hand

In bigger meetings, select **Raise** (a hand icon) to show you'd like to speak. A little hand appears next to your name. Select it again to lower your hand when you're done.

The meeting chat

Select **Chat** to open a typed conversation for everyone in the meeting. It's a good place to say "I can't hear you" without interrupting, or to copy down a link someone shares.

HEADS UP

Be careful with links in a meeting chat

In a meeting with people you don't know, treat links in the chat like links in an email. Don't click one that asks you to sign in or download something.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing about the lobby means you won't hang up thinking the meeting is broken, and the raised hand and chat let you take part without talking over anyone.

CHAPTER 13

Turn On Live Captions

Live captions are words that appear on the screen as people talk, like the subtitles on a TV. They're one of Teams' most helpful features for anyone who finds voices hard to follow, and they're included in Teams Free at no cost.

Turning captions on

1. Join the meeting or call.
2. Select **More** (the three dots) in the meeting buttons.
3. Choose **Language and speech**, then **Show live captions**. On some versions this reads **Turn on live captions**.
4. Captions appear near the bottom of the meeting window, with the speaker's name beside their words.

Turning captions off

Use the same steps and choose **Hide live captions**.

Good to know about captions

- **Only you see them.** Turning on captions doesn't change anything for anyone else.
- **They aren't saved.** When the meeting ends, the captions are gone.
- **Speech is processed by Microsoft** to turn it into text.
- **The spoken language matters.** Captions follow the language people are speaking. Changing the spoken-language setting can change it for everyone in the meeting, so leave it alone unless the meeting is in another language.
- Translating captions into a different language is a paid feature for organizers, not part of Teams Free.

TIP

Captions aren't perfect

Names, accents and people talking at once can trip captions up. Use them alongside the sound, not instead of it, and ask someone to repeat anything important.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Captions mean you can follow the doctor's instructions or the grandkids' chatter even when the sound is soft, someone mumbles, or a hearing aid isn't cooperating.

CHAPTER 14

Blur Your Background and Look Your Best

Teams can **blur** what's behind you, or replace it with a picture, so people see you and not the laundry pile. A few simple changes to light and camera height help even more.

Before you join

1. On the pre-join screen (right before **Join now**), make sure your camera is on.
2. Select **Background effects** (or **Effects**).
3. Choose **Blur**, or pick one of the background pictures.
4. Check the preview, then select **Join now**.

During a meeting

1. Select **More** (the three dots).
2. Choose **Video effects** or **Background effects**.
3. Pick **Blur** or a background, then apply it.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the effects button is grayed out

Background effects need your camera to be on. Turn the camera on first. Very old computers may not offer effects at all, and video filters are available only in the desktop app.

Simple ways to look better on camera

- **Face a window or lamp**, so the light is on your face, not behind you.
- **Raise the camera to eye level.** A few books under a laptop works wonders.
- **Sit an arm's length away**, so people see your face and shoulders.
- **Look at the camera** now and then when you speak; to others, it feels like eye contact.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A blurred background and good light let you join from any room without tidying first, and help family see your face clearly.

PART 4

Teams Free for Family

Using the free personal version to stay close: getting set up, finding family, chatting, making video calls and hosting a family get-together.

CHAPTER 15

Setting Up Microsoft Teams Free

To chat and call with family, rather than just join other people's meetings, you'll want Teams Free with your own sign-in. It takes about ten minutes. All you need is a **Microsoft account**: an email address and password you use with Microsoft. If you used Skype, Outlook.com, Hotmail or an Xbox, you already have one.

Getting the app

- **iPhone or iPad:** open the App Store and search for **Microsoft Teams**. Check that it's from Microsoft Corporation.
- **Android:** open Google Play and search for **Microsoft Teams**, from Microsoft Corporation.
- **Windows or Mac:** type **microsoft.com/microsoft-teams** into your browser yourself and choose the free download for home use. You can also use Teams in a browser at **teams.live.com**.

Signing in the first time

1. Open Teams and choose **Sign in**.
2. Type your Microsoft account email (or your old Skype sign-in) and select **Next**.
3. Enter your password, or approve the sign-in on your phone if Microsoft asks.
4. If asked, confirm your name and add a profile picture. Family will see this name.
5. If Teams asks whether to sync your phone's contacts, choose what feels right. Syncing makes it easier to find family who already use Teams; you can skip it.

GOOD TO KNOW

What about the "Chat" button on Windows 11?

Early Windows 11 computers had a small built-in Teams chat on the taskbar. Microsoft has since removed that mini version. Today you use the regular Teams app instead.

HEADS UP

Work and personal accounts side by side

If you also have a work or school Teams account, the app can hold both. Check the picture or name in the top corner to see which account you're using before you message family.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One free sign-in gives you video calls, chat and photo sharing with everyone in the family, on whatever phone, tablet or computer each of you happens to have.

CHAPTER 16

Finding and Inviting Family

Teams Free only works with people you've connected with. There are three easy ways to bring family in, whether or not they already use Teams.

Way 1: Type their phone number or email

1. Open **Chat** and start a new chat (look for a pencil or **New chat** button).
2. In the **To** box, type the person's email address or cell phone number.
3. Type a friendly message and send it.
4. If they already use Teams, they'll get it right away. If not, Teams sends them an email or text with an invitation to join.

Way 2: Send an invite link

1. In **Chat**, select **Invite to Teams**.
2. Choose to copy the link. Teams confirms **Link copied to clipboard**.
3. Paste the link into a text message or email to your family member.

Way 3: Sync your phone's contacts

On the Teams app for iPhone or Android, you can let Teams look through your phone's address book for people who already use Teams. This is a phone-only feature.

TIP

Call buttons missing?

If you can't see the video and audio call buttons in a new chat, the other person may not have accepted your invitation yet. Give them a ring and ask them to open the invite.

SCAM ALERT

Only accept people you know

Strangers can send Teams message requests too. If you don't recognize the name, don't accept, and never reply to a stranger asking for money, gift cards or a "quick favor." Chapter 24 shows how to block them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Sending one invitation by text is often all it takes to get a grandchild, a cousin or an old friend connected — they don't even need to know what Teams is first.

CHAPTER 17

Chatting: Messages, Photos and Group Chats

Chat in Teams works much like text messages on your phone. You type, press Enter or the send arrow, and the other person sees it. You can chat with one person or start a group chat for the whole family.

Send a message

1. Select **Chat**.
2. Pick the person from your list, or start a new chat.
3. Click in the message box at the bottom and type.
4. Press **Enter** on a computer, or tap the **send** button on a phone.

Share a photo

1. In the chat, select the button for attaching a file or photo (often a paper clip or a plus sign).
2. Choose the photo from your phone's gallery or your computer's Pictures folder.
3. Add a few words if you like, and send.

GOOD TO KNOW

Where shared photos are kept

Files and photos you share in Teams Free count toward its 5 GB of free cloud storage. Most families never reach that, but very long videos fill it faster.

Start a family group chat

1. Start a new chat.
2. In the **To** box, add each family member, one after another.
3. Give the group a name, such as "The Millers," if Teams offers to.
4. Send a first message. Everyone in the group sees every message.

TIP

React instead of replying

Hover over or press and hold a message to add a quick reaction, such as a heart or a thumbs-up. It's a friendly way to say "I saw this" without typing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A family group chat keeps the news, the photos and the "what time is dinner?" in one place, instead of scattered across a dozen texts and emails.

CHAPTER 18

Video and Audio Calls with Family

A Teams Free **call** is like a phone call, but with video if you want it, and it's free between any two Teams users anywhere in the world. You can call one person or a small group.

Make a call

1. Select **Chat** and open the chat with the person you want to call. If you've never chatted, start a chat first (Chapter 16).
2. At the top of the chat, select **Video call** (the camera) or **Audio call** (the phone).
3. Wait for them to answer. When they do, you'll see and hear each other.
4. When you're finished, select **Leave** or the red hang-up button.

Calling a group

Calling from a group chat calls everyone in it. Teams asks you to confirm first. A call from a group chat can include up to **20 people**. For a bigger crowd, start a meeting instead (Chapter 19).

Answering a call

When someone calls you, Teams rings and shows their name. Choose the camera button to answer with video, the phone button to answer with voice only, or the red button to decline.

HEADS UP

Teams Free doesn't call regular phone numbers

Teams Free calls other Teams users. It doesn't dial landlines or cell phones the way Skype Credit used to. To call a regular phone, use your phone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Video calls let grandparents see first steps, new haircuts and report cards in person — for free, with no long-distance charges, whether the family lives in Kent or Kenya.

CHAPTER 19

Hosting a Family Meeting

When you want to gather more people, or invite someone who doesn't use Teams yet, start a **meeting**. You become the **organizer**, and you get a link anyone can use to join, even as a guest.

Start a meeting right now

1. In Teams, select **Meet** (or the **Calendar** section) and choose **Meet now**.
2. Give the meeting a name if you like, such as "Sunday call."
3. Copy the meeting link Teams offers, and send it by text or email to everyone you want.
4. Select **Start meeting** or **Join now**. People appear as they click the link.

Schedule one for later

1. Open the **Calendar** section and choose to schedule a meeting.
2. Add a title, date and start time.
3. Add people by email, or copy the link to send yourself.
4. Save. The link stays the same, so you can share it ahead of time.

Your controls as organizer

During the meeting, select **People** (or **Participants**) and then **Meeting options** to decide who waits in the lobby, who can present and who can share their screen. Some options need a Microsoft 365 Personal or Family subscription.

TIP

Remember the hour

On Teams Free, a group meeting ends after 60 minutes. Tell everyone up front, and if you're having fun, start a fresh meeting and send the new link.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A meeting link is the simplest way to gather the whole family — even the cousin who "doesn't do apps" can join from a browser by typing their name.

PART 5

Fixing Sound, Video and Connection Trouble

Calm, in-order fixes for the problems that come up most: no sound, a microphone nobody can hear, a camera that shows a black box, and video that freezes or stutters.

CHAPTER 20

"I Can't Hear Anyone" and "They Can't Hear Me"

Sound trouble is the most common Teams problem by far, and it's almost always something small: a muted button, the wrong speaker chosen, or the computer not giving Teams permission to use the microphone. Work down the list below in order. Most people are fixed by step 3.

If you can't hear other people

1. **Check your volume.** Turn up the volume on your computer, phone or tablet, and on any speakers or headset you're using. Make sure the device itself isn't muted.
2. **Check which speaker Teams is using.** If you have headphones or a headset plugged in or connected by Bluetooth, the sound may be going there instead of the speakers. Unplug them, or pick the right speaker (see "Choosing the right speaker and microphone" below).
3. **Ask someone else to talk.** If you can hear one person but not another, the problem is on their end, not yours. A quiet word in the meeting chat — "I can't hear Tom" — lets them know.
4. **Leave and rejoin.** Select **Leave**, then click the meeting link again. It clears many stuck sound problems in under a minute.
5. **Restart the device.** Close Teams completely, restart the computer or phone, and try again.

If other people can't hear you

1. **Look at the microphone button.** A line through it means you're muted. Select it once to unmute.
2. **Check for a mute switch on your headset** or a mute key on your keyboard. Many headsets and laptops have one.
3. **Pick the right microphone** in Teams' device settings (below). Teams may be listening to a webcam microphone across the room, or to headphones you aren't wearing.
4. **Give Teams permission to use the microphone** (below). This is the usual culprit when the microphone stopped working after an update or never worked at all.
5. **Close other apps** that might be using the microphone, such as Zoom or another call, then restart Teams.

6. **Update Teams and your computer.** Microsoft recommends the latest version of Teams and the latest Windows or Mac updates (Chapter 22).

Choosing the right speaker and microphone

1. In the Teams app on a computer, select **Settings and more** (the three dots near your picture), then **Settings**.
2. Choose **Devices**.
3. Under the audio settings, use the drop-down menus to pick your **Speaker** and **Microphone**.
4. If people say you sound faint, look for the microphone sensitivity setting on the same page.

During a meeting you can reach the same choices from **More** (the three dots) and then the device or audio settings. On the pre-join screen, the settings next to the microphone switch let you pick your devices before you go in.

Giving Teams permission to use the microphone

Device	Where to look
Windows 11	Open **Settings** > **Privacy & security** > **Microphone**. Make sure **Microphone access** is on and that **Let desktop apps access your microphone** is on. Then restart Teams.
Mac	Open **System Settings** > **Privacy & Security** > **Microphone**, and switch on **Microsoft Teams**. Quit and reopen Teams.
Web browser	Look for a small camera or lock symbol at the left or right end of the address bar, select it, and set the microphone to **Allow**. Reload the page.
iPhone or iPad	Open the **Settings** app, scroll down to **Teams**, and switch on **Microphone**.
Android	Open **Settings** > **Apps** > **Teams** > **Permissions**, and allow the microphone. Names vary a little by phone maker.

TIP

Practice with a family member first

Before an important appointment, make a short Teams call to a son, daughter or friend and ask, "Can you hear me? Can you see me?" Five minutes of practice the day before is far less stressful than fixing sound at the start of a doctor visit.

GOOD TO KNOW

The phone is your backup

If the sound simply won't cooperate and the invitation lists a phone number, you can dial in for the sound and keep the computer for the pictures (Chapter 8).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing these few checks turns "Teams is broken" into a two-minute fix, so you stay in the conversation instead of hanging up in frustration.

CHAPTER 21

"They Can't See Me": Fixing the Camera

If people see a black box, a gray screen or just your initials instead of your face, the camera isn't getting through. As with sound, the fix is usually simple. Try these in order.

1. **Turn the camera on in Teams.** A line through the camera button means it's off. Select it once.
2. **Check for a privacy shutter.** Many laptops and webcams have a little sliding cover over the lens, or a keyboard key with a camera symbol that switches the camera off. Slide it open or press the key.
3. **Close other apps that use the camera**, such as Zoom, FaceTime or the Camera app. If another program is using the camera, Teams can't.
4. **Pick the right camera.** In **Settings** > **Devices**, check that the camera you want is chosen, especially if you have a plug-in webcam.
5. **Give Teams permission** to use the camera (below).
6. **Restart Teams**, or restart the computer, and try again.
7. **Update Teams and your computer** (Chapter 22).

Giving Teams permission to use the camera

Device	Where to look
Windows 11	Open **Settings** > **Privacy & security** > **Camera**, and turn on **Let apps access your camera**. If it's already on, turn it off and back on again. **Settings** > **Bluetooth & devices** > **Cameras** lists your cameras and can run a troubleshooter.
Mac	Open **System Settings** > **Privacy & Security** > **Camera**, and switch on **Microsoft Teams**. Quit and reopen Teams.
Web browser	Both the computer *and* the browser must allow the camera. If the browser is blocking it, Teams opens normally but shows no video.
iPhone or iPad	Open **Settings**, scroll down to **Teams**, and switch on **Camera**.
Android	Open **Settings** > **Apps** > **Teams** > **Permissions**, and allow the camera.

If you chose "Block" in the browser by mistake

It happens to everyone: the browser asks to use your camera and microphone, and you click **Block**. Here's how to undo it in Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome.

1. With the Teams page open, look at the left end of the address bar, where the web address is, for a small lock or settings symbol. Select it.
2. Find **Camera** and **Microphone** in the list and change each one to **Allow**.
3. Reload the page (or close it and click the meeting link again).

In Safari on a Mac, choose **Safari** > **Settings** > **Websites**, then **Camera** and **Microphone**, and set the Teams site to **Allow**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Test the camera outside Teams

On Windows, open the **Camera** app from the Start menu. On a Mac, open **Photo Booth**. If you can see yourself there, the camera works and the problem is a Teams setting. If you can't, the problem is the camera itself or its cover.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Family and doctors can see your face again, and you'll know exactly where to look the next time a camera stops working after an update.

CHAPTER 22

Frozen Video, Choppy Sound and Keeping Teams Up to Date

When faces freeze, voices sound robotic or a call drops, the cause is usually the internet connection, not Teams. Video calls need a steady connection in both directions. These steps help.

Smoothing out a choppy call

1. **Move closer to your Wi-Fi router**, or connect the computer to the router with a network cable if you can.
2. **Pause the heavy users.** Someone streaming a movie or downloading a big game in the same house can crowd out your call.
3. **Close other video tabs and apps** on your own device.
4. **Turn your camera off for a few minutes.** Sending video uses the most internet. Audio alone often stays clear when video can't.
5. **Leave and rejoin** the meeting.
6. **Restart your router** if the whole house is slow: unplug it, wait 30 seconds, plug it back in, and give it a few minutes.

> TIP
> **Plug in the laptop**
> Some laptops slow themselves down to save battery. Plugging into the charger for a long call keeps the video smoother and saves you from a dead battery halfway through.

Keeping Teams up to date

Microsoft fixes sound, camera and security problems in Teams updates, so an up-to-date app solves many mysteries on its own.

- **On a Windows computer or Mac**, Teams normally updates itself in the background. Closing Teams completely and reopening it now and then lets updates finish. In the app, the **Settings and more** menu (the three dots near your picture) is where to look if you want to check for an update yourself.
- **On an iPhone or iPad**, open the App Store, tap your picture at the top, and update **Microsoft Teams** if it's listed.

- **On Android**, open Google Play, tap your picture, choose **Manage apps & device**, and update Teams if it's listed.
- **In a web browser**, there's nothing to update. Teams on the web is always the current version; just keep the browser itself up to date.
- **Keep your computer updated too**, with Windows Update or macOS Software Update.

SCAM ALERT

Never update Teams from a pop-up or a link

Teams updates come from inside the app, the App Store, Google Play or Microsoft itself. A web page or email that says "You must install this Teams update to join" is a known trick for planting remote-control software. Close it and join from the original link or the app (Chapter 25).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A steady connection and an up-to-date app mean fewer frozen faces, fewer "Can you repeat that?" moments and fewer dropped calls with the people you love.

PART 6

Privacy, Safety and Scams

Who can find and call you on Teams Free, how to handle messages from strangers, the scams that use Teams, and what to do if you forgot your password or got locked out.

CHAPTER 23

Privacy Settings in Teams Free

Teams Free lets people find you so family can connect easily. The same openness means a stranger who knows your email address or phone number might find you too. A few settings put you in charge of who can find you, what they see and who can call.

What's set up when you start

When you first use Teams Free, other Teams users can usually search for you by your **email address**, your **phone number** or your **profile name**. That's how a grandchild who types your email finds you right away. You can turn any of those off.

Choose how people can find you

1. In Teams, select **Settings and more** (the three dots near your picture), then **Settings**. On a phone, tap your picture, then **Settings**.
2. Choose **Privacy**.
3. Under **Manage how people can find you**, switch off any of the ways you don't want people to use to search for you, such as your phone number.

If you turn off your contact details, people who have never chatted with you won't find your profile in a search. Family you're already chatting with keep reaching you as usual.

Choose who can call you

On the same **Privacy** page, look for **Manage how people can call you**. You can choose **Everyone** or **My contacts**. Check which one is selected on your device. **My contacts** is the calmer choice: only people you've connected with can ring you.

Choose what your profile shows

Also under **Privacy**, the profile settings let you decide whether your email address and phone number appear on your profile card for others to see. Showing them helps family know it's really you; hiding them keeps them private from people you've only just met in a meeting.

TIP

A sensible setup for most families

Leave your email searchable so family can find you, switch off phone-number search if you'd rather not be found that way, and set calls to **My contacts**. You can change any of it later.

GOOD TO KNOW

Work meetings are different

These settings are for your personal Teams Free account. When you join a meeting from a doctor's office or a company as a guest, they see only the name you typed and whatever you show on camera.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You stay easy to reach for the people who matter and hard to reach for everyone else, which takes a lot of the worry out of being online.

CHAPTER 24

Message Requests, Blocking and Reporting

When someone you've never chatted with sends you a message in Teams Free, it usually shows up as a **request** instead of a regular chat. You get to look before you let them in. And if anyone bothers you, you can block them and report them.

Handling a message request

1. Open **Chat**. A message from someone new appears as a request.
2. Select it to **preview** what they wrote. Previewing doesn't let them in.
3. If you know and trust the person, choose **Accept**. They can then message you and see some of your profile, such as your name.
4. If you don't know them, choose **Block**. They can't message you or see your status.
5. If you're added to a group chat you don't want, choose **Delete**; you can block the person who started it at the same time.

A request stays waiting in your chat requests until you decide, so there's no rush. Teams may also show a warning when it thinks a message from outside could be spam or phishing — take that warning seriously.

Blocking someone

1. Open **Chat**.
2. On a phone or tablet, press and hold the person's name (or swipe left on it and tap **More**), then tap **Block**. On a computer, open the chat and use the **More options** (three dots) menu beside their name.
3. Confirm.

A blocked person can't start a one-on-one chat with you, add you to group chats, call you or add you to communities, and you stop seeing their messages.

Unblocking someone

Go to **Settings** > **People** > **Blocked contacts**, find the person and choose **Unblock**.

Reporting a message

1. Press and hold the message (or hover over it on a computer and open its **More options**).
2. Choose **Report a concern**.
3. Pick the kind of problem, such as spam or a scam, and choose **Report**.

You can report messages in one-on-one chats, group chats, communities and meeting chats.

SCAM ALERT

"Hi, is this Mary?" from a stranger

A friendly message from someone you don't know, a wrong-number opener, or a "Microsoft support" name you didn't contact are all classic starts to a scam. Don't reply. Block, report and move on.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Strangers never get a foot in the door unless you open it, and anyone who bothers you can be shut out in a few taps.

CHAPTER 25

Scams That Use Teams

Because so many people trust Teams, scammers use it too. The good news is that the tricks follow a few patterns. Once you know them, they're easy to spot. This chapter pairs well with Bill's guide to remote support and fake tech support.

Scam 1: Fake "IT support" or "Microsoft support" in a Teams chat

Someone messages or calls you on Teams with a name like "Help Desk," "IT Support" or "Microsoft Security." Often your email has just been flooded with junk mail, and they offer to fix it. Then they ask you to read them a code, approve a "remote control" request, or open **Quick Assist** or another program so they can "take a look." Microsoft's own security researchers have described exactly this pattern in 2026. Once they're in, they can take over the computer, steal passwords or install harmful software.

SCAM ALERT

The rule that stops it

Microsoft doesn't contact you out of the blue to fix your computer, and it never asks for gift cards. Only let someone into your computer if **you** started the conversation by calling a number you looked up yourself, or someone you already know and trust, like Bill. If a Teams message asks for a code or control of your screen, say no, block and report it.

Scam 2: Fake meeting invitations

An email that looks like a Teams invitation — "You've been invited to a meeting about your invoice," or "Urgent: HR meeting" — but the button leads to a fake sign-in page that steals your Microsoft password, or to a page that says you must download an "update" or "plugin" to join.

- **Ask yourself if you expected it.** A real invitation usually comes from someone you know, about something you know about.
- **A Teams link never needs your password to join as a guest.** If a link jumps straight to a Microsoft sign-in page you didn't expect, close it.
- **Don't download anything to join.** Real Teams meetings open in the app or a browser (Chapter 10).
- **Check with the sender by phone**, using a number you already have, not one in the email.

Scam 3: Money and gift-card requests

A chat from someone claiming to be a relative with a new account, a romance that moves fast, or a "prize" that needs a fee. Teams is just the delivery truck; the scam is the same as in email or text. If anyone on Teams asks for gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency or payment-app money, it's a scam.

If you already clicked, shared a code or let someone in

1. **End it.** Close the session, hang up or leave the call. If the screen is being controlled, turn off the computer's Wi-Fi or unplug the network cable.
2. **Change your Microsoft account password** from a different, trusted device (Chapter 26), and any password you typed or shared.
3. **Call your bank** using the number on your card if you shared any card or bank details, or if money was sent.
4. **Have the computer checked** for remote-control programs they may have left behind.
5. **Report it** at **microsoft.com/reportascam**, and to the FTC at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

FROM BILL

This is exactly what I help with

If you think someone got into your computer through Teams, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. I'll help you check for leftover remote-control programs and lock your accounts back down, at your pace.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the three patterns means you can use Teams for family and appointments with confidence, instead of wondering about every message.

CHAPTER 26

Forgot Your Password or Locked Out

Teams Free uses your Microsoft account, so a forgotten Teams password is really a forgotten Microsoft account password. The same password works for Outlook.com, OneDrive and your old Skype sign-in. Remember: you never need any password to join a meeting as a guest (Chapter 6).

Reset a forgotten password

1. In any browser, go to **account.microsoft.com** (type it yourself) and choose **Sign in**.
2. Enter your email address, then choose **Forgot password?** (or **Other ways to sign in**).
3. Pick where to send a security code, such as your backup email or phone, and type the code you receive.
4. Choose a new password you haven't used before.
5. Go back to Teams and sign in with the new password.

HEADS UP

Check the little things first

Is Caps Lock on? Is it the right email address — the one you used for Skype may be an old Hotmail or Outlook address? These catch most of us at some point.

If none of your codes arrive

If your backup email and phone are out of date, Microsoft offers an **account recovery form** on its support site. You answer questions only the real owner would know, and Microsoft replies by email. You can use any email address you can check, even a relative's. Microsoft's own support agents can't send you a reset link, so anyone who calls offering to "unlock" your account is not Microsoft.

Keep it from happening again

- Add a current phone number and a backup email to your Microsoft account's security info.
- Write your sign-in email and where your password is kept in the cheat-sheet (Chapter 28).
- Sign in to your Microsoft account at least once every two years so it stays active.

SCAM ALERT

"Your Teams account will be suspended"

An email or text that warns your Teams or Microsoft account is about to be closed and asks you to "verify" through a link is phishing. Go to account.microsoft.com yourself instead.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With up-to-date security info, a forgotten password is a two-minute fix instead of a lost account — and your family chats and Skype history stay right where you left them.

PART 7

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep near the computer.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

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

Times it's well worth a call

- **Before an important appointment** — a telehealth visit, a court date or a job interview. We can do a practice join together so the sound, camera and link all work on the day.
- **Moving from Skype** — signing in to Teams Free with your old account, finding your contacts and inviting the family.
- **Setting up a family group** — getting Teams on everyone's phones, starting a group chat and showing a grandparent how to answer a video call.
- **Sound or camera that just won't work**, even after Chapters 20 and 21.
- **Privacy settings** — making sure only the people you want can find and call you.
- **Something feels off** — a strange Teams message, a fake invitation, or a worry that someone got into your computer.
- **Locked out** of your Microsoft account and the codes aren't arriving.

What I don't do

I can't change the settings on someone else's work Teams, let you into a meeting the organizer has closed, or recover Skype history that Microsoft has already deleted. I'll tell you honestly when something is out of anyone's hands. I also never need your passwords written down or your sign-in codes read to me; you'll type those yourself while I guide you.

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'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. A remote session always starts with *you* calling me — I never message you out of the blue on Teams or anywhere else.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

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

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

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

Thank you for taking the time to learn this. Every call with family and every appointment you join on your own is worth the effort. Take it one step at a time.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

Your Teams Cheat-Sheet

Keep this near the computer or with your phone. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
Joining a meeting	Click the link, type your name, set camera and mic, **Join now**. No account needed.
No app?	Choose **Continue on this browser**. Edge or Chrome work best.
Join by phone	Dial the number in the invitation, then the Phone conference ID and #.
Teams Free	Free with a Microsoft account. Group meetings up to 60 minutes and 100 people.
Skype	Retired May 5, 2025. Sign in to Teams Free with your old Skype email and password.
Captions	**More** (three dots) > **Language and speech** > **Show live captions**.
Can't hear / can't be heard	Volume, mute button, **Settings** > **Devices**, then permissions.
Camera black	Camera button, privacy shutter, close other camera apps, then permissions.
Strangers	Preview requests, then Accept or Block. Calls: **My contacts**.
Report scams	microsoft.com/reportascam and ReportFraud.ftc.gov

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Microsoft account email (Teams / Skype sign-in)	_____
Where my password is safely kept	_____
Phone or backup email that gets my codes	_____
Family members on Teams	_____
Doctor's office phone (for telehealth trouble)	_____
Device I use for Teams	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Link won't open? Try **Continue on this browser**, or paste the whole link into Edge or Chrome.
2. Stuck in the lobby? Wait; if it's ten minutes past the start, call the organizer.
3. Can't hear? Turn up the volume and check which speaker Teams is using.
4. They can't hear you? Unmute, pick the right microphone, check permissions.
5. Camera black? Open the shutter, close other camera apps, check permissions.
6. Video freezing? Turn the camera off for a bit, move closer to Wi-Fi, leave and rejoin.
7. Strange message or "IT support" asking for a code or control? Don't. Block and report.
8. Forgot your password? **Forgot password?** at account.microsoft.com.
9. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.