BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Netgear Nighthawk & Orbi

Setup, the apps, passwords, subscriptions, updates and scams — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for every Netgear owner

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Netgear Nighthawk routers and Orbi mesh systems · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to the Netgear Wi-Fi equipment in your home: a single **Nighthawk** router or an **Orbi** mesh system with satellites. It covers the Nighthawk and Orbi apps, setup, the three different passwords, everyday jobs like guest Wi-Fi and pausing a device, Netgear's paid Armor and Smart Parental Controls subscriptions, firmware updates, older models that no longer get updates, and the fake "Netgear support" scams to watch for. Read it in any order and at your own pace. If a screen in your app looks a little different, the idea is still the same.

Part 1 — Getting Started

1 A Note from Bill
2 Nighthawk or Orbi: Which Do You Have?
3 Modem, Router, Satellites: How It Fits Together
4 Three Different Passwords
5 The Nighthawk and Orbi Apps
6 Your NETGEAR Account and Two-Step Sign-In

Part 2 — Setting Up

7 Setting Up a New Orbi
8 Setting Up a Nighthawk Router
9 Where to Put the Router and Satellites
10 Adding or Re-Syncing a Satellite
11 Without the App: routerlogin.net and orbilogin.com

Part 3 — Everyday Use

12 Finding and Changing Your Wi-Fi Name and Password
13 Seeing What's Connected
14 Pausing the Internet for a Device
15 Guest Wi-Fi for Visitors
16 Checking Your Internet Speed
17 Restarting the Right Way

Part 4 — Netgear's Subscriptions

18 Netgear Armor: What It Is
19 Armor Prices, Trials and Warranty
20 Canceling or Pausing a Subscription
21 Smart Parental Controls
22 Do You Need a Subscription?

Part 5 — Keeping It Safe and Up to Date

23 Firmware Updates
24 Older Models and End of Support
25 Changing and Recovering the Admin Password
26 Security Settings Worth Checking
27 Fake Netgear Support and Other Scams

Part 6 — Fixing Problems & Getting Help

28 When the Internet Stops Working
29 Factory Reset: The Last Resort
30 Getting Real Help from Netgear
31 Words You'll Hear
32 When to Call Bill
33 Your Netgear Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Getting Started

Which Netgear system you have, how the pieces fit together, the three different passwords, and the two apps that run everything.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. I'm Bill, and for more than 30 years I've helped people make technology behave. Here in Portage County, Netgear equipment turns up in a lot of homes. Some people bought a **Nighthawk** router at the store to replace the one the internet company rented them. Others have an **Orbi** system, with a main unit and one or two matching "satellites" that spread Wi-Fi through the whole house. Either way, it's the box that every phone, tablet, TV and computer in your home depends on.

That makes it worth understanding, even a little. When you know which app runs it, which password is which, and what Netgear's subscription offers really are, you stop feeling at the mercy of a blinking box.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

It explains your Netgear router or Orbi mesh system in plain English, then walks you slowly through the jobs that matter: changing the Wi-Fi password, setting up guest Wi-Fi, pausing a device, installing updates, deciding whether you need Netgear Armor or Smart Parental Controls (and canceling them if you don't), knowing when an older model is too old to keep, and spotting the fake "Netgear support" scams that target router owners.

Who this guide is for

- Anyone who owns a Netgear Nighthawk router or an Orbi mesh system, new or old.
- Anyone who was just charged for "Netgear Armor" and wants to know what it is.
- Family members who set up Wi-Fi for a parent and want clear steps to leave behind.
- Anyone shopping for new Wi-Fi equipment who's considering Netgear.

The big promise: you can't break it

Almost everything in the Nighthawk and Orbi apps can be changed back. Looking around the app, checking which devices are connected, turning guest Wi-Fi on and off, and running a speed test are all safe. Two things deserve a slower hand, and this guide flags them clearly: changing your **Wi-Fi password** (every device has to be reconnected) and a **factory reset** (it erases all your settings). Neither harms the equipment, but both take some time to recover from.

You're never stuck alone

Take this at your own pace and in any order. And if you get stuck, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. Sometimes ten minutes with someone beside you is all it takes.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Nighthawk or Orbi: Which Do You Have?

Netgear sells two families of home Wi-Fi equipment, and each one has its own app. The first job is figuring out which family yours belongs to.

Nighthawk: one router

Nighthawk is Netgear's name for its single-box routers. They're usually black, often with antennas or a tall, angular shape. One Nighthawk router does the whole job from one spot. Netgear also uses the Nighthawk name on some mobile hotspots, cable modems and range extenders, and many of those are managed in the same Nighthawk app.

Orbi: a mesh system

Orbi is Netgear's mesh Wi-Fi. You get a main **router** plus one or more **satellites** that look almost identical. The router connects to your modem; the satellites sit around the house and pass the Wi-Fi along, so you get one network name that works in every room. Orbi units are usually white or gray towers.

How to tell for sure

1. Look at the front or top of the box for the word **Nighthawk** or **Orbi**.
2. Turn it around or tip it up and find the **label**. It shows the model number (for example RS300, RBR750 or RBE970), the serial number, and the Wi-Fi name and password it came with.
3. Write the model number in the "Keep this handy" table at the end of this guide (see Chapter 33, *Your Netgear Cheat-Sheet*).

Netgear's current lineup

Family	Current models (Wi-Fi 7)	What it suits
Nighthawk router	RS300, RS700S and others	Smaller homes or apartments; one central spot
Orbi 370 series	Dual-band mesh	Average homes on a budget
Orbi 770 series	Tri-band mesh	Larger homes, many devices
Orbi 870 / 970 series	Tri- and quad-band mesh	Big homes and very fast fiber plans

GOOD TO KNOW

What it costs, roughly

As of November 2026, Netgear's own store listed an Orbi 370 set with one router and two satellites at about $290 on sale, an Orbi 770 three-pack at about $570 on sale, and the Nighthawk RS700S at about $600. The top Orbi 970 systems run well over $1,000. Prices and sales change often, so treat these as a rough guide.

TIP

Orbi Pro is different

If your label says **Orbi Pro**, that's Netgear's small-business line. It's managed with Netgear's **Insight** app rather than the regular Orbi app, so some steps in this guide won't match.

CHAPTER 3

Modem, Router, Satellites: How It Fits Together

Home internet usually involves two or three boxes, and it helps to know which one does what. When something goes wrong, this is how you'll know which box to look at.

Box	What it does
Modem (or fiber box)	Brings the internet into the house from Spectrum, AT&T or whoever your provider is. Often rented from them.
Router	Your Nighthawk, or the Orbi router. Creates your Wi-Fi network and hands the internet to every device.
Orbi satellite	Repeats the Orbi Wi-Fi farther away from the router. Same network name, same password.
Your devices	Phones, tablets, TVs, computers, doorbells, printers. They connect to the Wi-Fi.

The cable that matters most

An Ethernet cable runs from your **modem** to the **Internet** port on your Nighthawk or Orbi router. That port is usually a different color or labeled clearly. If that cable comes loose, every device in the house loses the internet even though the Wi-Fi name still shows up.

Some boxes do both jobs

A few Netgear models are a **modem and router in one**, such as Netgear's cable Orbi and cable Nighthawk models. If yours plugs straight into the round cable-TV wire on the wall, it's one of these. Internet providers' own gateways often combine both jobs too.

HEADS UP

Two routers can fight

If your internet company's box also makes Wi-Fi and you added a Netgear router behind it, you may have two Wi-Fi networks and devices bouncing between them. That setup can work, but it's a common cause of "the Wi-Fi keeps dropping." It's a good job for a second pair of eyes.

TIP

Bought your own equipment?

If you're thinking about returning your provider's rented gear and using your own Netgear modem or router, Bill's guide *Buying Your Own Modem & Router* covers the money side and which providers allow it.

CHAPTER 4

Three Different Passwords

This is the single most confusing thing about Netgear equipment, so let's settle it once. There are **three separate passwords**, and they do three different jobs. Netgear says so itself.

Password	What it's for
Wi-Fi password	What you type on a phone, tablet or TV to join your Wi-Fi. Guests need this one (or the guest one).
Admin password	Opens the router's own settings, in the app or at routerlogin.net or orbilogin.com. The username is usually **admin**.
NETGEAR account password	Your online account with Netgear (your email address plus a password). The apps ask for it, and it holds your registration and subscriptions.

Where each one comes from

- **Wi-Fi:** printed on the router's label at first; you probably changed it during setup.
- **Admin:** set during setup in the app. On older routers the factory default was username **admin** and password **password**, which should never be left that way.
- **NETGEAR account:** created when you first opened the Nighthawk or Orbi app.

TIP

Write all three down

Use the "Keep this handy" table in Chapter 33, *Your Netgear Cheat-Sheet*, or your password manager. Most calls I get about locked-out routers come down to not knowing which password is being asked for.

STAY SAFE

Never share the admin password

Guests need the Wi-Fi password, and nobody else needs the admin password. A real Netgear agent will never ask for your NETGEAR account password over the phone.

CHAPTER 5

The Nighthawk and Orbi Apps

Netgear runs its home Wi-Fi through two free phone apps. Use the one that matches your equipment: the **Nighthawk** app for Nighthawk routers (and most Netgear extenders and hotspots), the **Orbi** app for Orbi mesh systems. They look and work much alike.

What the apps do for you

- Set up a new router or Orbi system step by step.
- Show and change your Wi-Fi name and password.
- List every device connected to your Wi-Fi, and pause any of them.
- Turn on guest Wi-Fi and share it.
- Run an internet speed test.
- Check for and install firmware updates.
- Sell and manage Netgear's subscriptions: Armor and Smart Parental Controls.

Getting the app

1. On an iPhone or iPad, open the **App Store**. On Android, open the **Google Play Store**.
2. Search for **Netgear Nighthawk** or **Netgear Orbi**.
3. Check that the developer listed is **NETGEAR** before you tap **Get** or **Install**.
4. Open the app and sign in with your NETGEAR account, or tap **Create Account** if you don't have one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Yes, the apps want an account

Netgear's setup steps have you create a NETGEAR account before you can set up an Orbi, and the Nighthawk app asks you to sign in too. The account is used for product registration, security updates and warranty. It is separate from the router's admin password (see Chapter 4, *Three Different Passwords*).

HEADS UP

Lookalike apps

App stores carry "router helper" apps from other companies that use Netgear's name. They aren't needed and some push paid support. Stick to the apps published by NETGEAR.

CHAPTER 6

Your NETGEAR Account and Two-Step Sign-In

Your NETGEAR account ties together your equipment, its registration and warranty, and any subscriptions you pay for. Protecting it protects your home network, because the apps can change router settings from anywhere.

Turn on two-step sign-in

Netgear accounts support **two-factor authentication (2FA)**: after your password, you also enter a code. Once it's on, you can mark your own phone as a **trusted device** so it doesn't ask for a code every single time.

1. Open the Nighthawk or Orbi app.
2. Open the menu and look for **Account Management** (some versions call it **Account** or **Profile**).
3. Find the two-factor or two-step setting and follow the prompts to add your phone number or an authenticator app.
4. When asked whether to trust this device, say yes on your own phone only.

Good account habits

- Use a password you don't use anywhere else.
- Keep the email address on the account current; that's where reset links go.
- If you get a NETGEAR password-reset email you didn't ask for, don't click it. Open the app yourself instead.

SCAM ALERT

Check phone numbers in "Netgear" emails

Netgear owners have reported emails that look like account or password-reset messages but list a phone number that isn't Netgear's. Real support numbers come from **netgear.com**, never from an email, text or pop-up. See Chapter 27, *Fake Netgear Support and Other Scams*.

PART 2

Setting Up

Setting up a new Orbi or Nighthawk, placing it well, adding satellites, and using the browser pages when the app isn't an option.

CHAPTER 7

Setting Up a New Orbi

The Orbi app walks you through setup one screen at a time. Plan on 20 to 30 minutes, and do it on a day when you don't need the internet for anything urgent.

Before you start

- Your phone, charged, with the **Orbi** app installed (see Chapter 5, *The Nighthawk and Orbi Apps*).
- Your NETGEAR account email and password, or a few minutes to create one.
- The Ethernet cable from the box, and a spot near your modem for the Orbi router.
- If you're replacing an old router, its Wi-Fi name and password. Reusing them saves reconnecting every device.

The setup, step by step

1. Unplug your modem for a minute, then plug it back in and let it start up.
2. Connect the Ethernet cable from the modem to the **Internet** port on the **Orbi router** (the unit marked as the router, not a satellite), and plug in the router's power.
3. Open the Orbi app, sign in or create your NETGEAR account, then tap **Set up an Orbi** (or **Get Started**).
4. Follow the prompts. The app may ask you to scan the QR code on the router's label.
5. Choose your Wi-Fi name and password, and set the router's admin password when asked.
6. Place each satellite where the app suggests and plug it in. The app finds and connects it.
7. Let the app finish any firmware update. Don't unplug anything while it says it's updating.

> **TIP**
>
> **Keep the old name and password**
>
> If you give the Orbi the same Wi-Fi name and password your old router used, most of your devices, including smart TVs, printers and doorbells, rejoin on their own. That alone can save an hour.

GOOD TO KNOW

A cable Orbi is set up a little differently

Orbi models with a built-in cable modem (such as the CBK40) connect to the coax wire, and your cable company has to activate the modem part. Netgear has a separate setup article for those.

CHAPTER 8

Setting Up a Nighthawk Router

A Nighthawk router sets up much like an Orbi, minus the satellites. The Nighthawk app does the heavy lifting.

1. Turn off or unplug your modem for a minute, then plug it back in.
2. Connect an Ethernet cable from the modem to the Nighthawk's **Internet** port (often yellow or labeled), and plug in the router.
3. Wait a couple of minutes for the router's lights to settle.
4. On your phone, join the Wi-Fi name printed on the router's label, using the password on the label.
5. Open the **Nighthawk** app and sign in with your NETGEAR account (or create one).
6. Follow the prompts to name your Wi-Fi, set its password, and set the admin password.
7. Let the app check for a firmware update and install it.

Where to put it

A single router reaches farthest when it sits in the middle of the house, up off the floor, out in the open. If your modem is stuck at one end of the house in the basement, that's a reason people choose Orbi instead. Chapter 9, *Where to Put the Router and Satellites* has more.

TIP

Replacing a provider's Wi-Fi box

If your internet company's gateway also makes Wi-Fi, the Nighthawk can still go behind it. Many people then turn off the provider box's Wi-Fi so there's only one network. Your provider can tell you how on its equipment.

HEADS UP

Leave it plugged in during updates

Netgear warns not to interrupt a firmware update. Pulling the plug halfway through can leave the router unable to start.

CHAPTER 9

Where to Put the Router and Satellites

Where the boxes sit matters more than which model you bought. Wi-Fi is a radio signal, and walls, floors, metal and water all soak it up.

For any Netgear router

- Out in the open, not inside a cabinet, closet or entertainment center.
- Up off the floor, on a shelf or table.
- Away from microwaves, cordless phone bases, fish tanks and big mirrors.
- As central as the modem's cable will reasonably allow.

For Orbi satellites

- About halfway between the router and the area that needs better Wi-Fi, not in the dead spot itself.
- Within a good signal of the router. A satellite can only pass along what it receives.
- One per floor works well in a two-story home.
- If your home has Ethernet wiring, some Orbi models can use a wired connection to a satellite for the fastest, steadiest link.

Let the app tell you

The Orbi app shows how well each satellite connects to the router. If it reports a weak or fair connection, move the satellite a little closer to the router and check again. The colored light on the satellite tells you the same thing (see Chapter 10, *Adding or Re-Syncing a Satellite*).

TIP

Test where you actually sit

Run a speed test (see Chapter 16, *Checking Your Internet Speed*) from your favorite chair, the kitchen and the bedroom. That tells you more than any map.

CHAPTER 10

Adding or Re-Syncing a Satellite

Orbi satellites that came in the box usually connect during setup. An add-on satellite you bought later, or one that lost its connection, can be joined with the **Sync** buttons.

Syncing with the buttons

1. Plug in the satellite and wait until its light shows it's ready to sync (solid white on many models).
2. Press the **Sync** button on the back of the **satellite**.
3. Within **two minutes**, press the **Sync** button on the back of the **router**.
4. Watch the satellite's light. When it shows a good connection, move it to its final spot.

What the satellite's light is telling you

Light	What it means
Pulsing white	Starting up. Wait.
Solid white	Ready to sync. Press the Sync buttons.
Blue	Synced, good connection. The light turns off after a few minutes.
Amber	Synced, but only a fair connection. Move it closer to the router.
Magenta	Sync failed, or it lost the router. Move it closer and try again.

GOOD TO KNOW

Models differ a little

Colors and timings vary between Orbi generations. If yours doesn't match the table, search Netgear's support site for your model number plus "LED."

TIP

Use the app for add-ons

In the Orbi app, look for an option to add a satellite. The app guides the same sync process and tells you when it's done.

CHAPTER 11

Without the App: routerlogin.net and orbilogin.com

Every Netgear router also has settings pages you can open in a web browser on a computer connected to its Wi-Fi or by cable. They hold some settings the apps don't, and they're the way in when the app won't connect.

How to get there

1. Connect your computer to your Netgear Wi-Fi (or plug it in with a cable).
2. Open a web browser and type **routerlogin.net** for a Nighthawk or **orbilogin.com** for an Orbi into the address bar, then press Enter.
3. If that doesn't open, try the router's address, often **192.168.1.1**.
4. Sign in with the **admin** username and your admin password (see Chapter 4, *Three Different Passwords*).

GOOD TO KNOW

These addresses only work at home

routerlogin.net and orbilogin.com lead to the box on your own shelf, so they only open when you're connected to that router. They are not websites on the open internet.

SCAM ALERT

Don't trust "routerlogin" lookalike sites

If you search the web for "routerlogin" you may land on pages run by other companies that ask you to call a support number or pay for help. Type the address yourself, at home, on your own Wi-Fi.

TIP

Menus have English names

Most settings live under a **Basic** or **Advanced** tab. Firmware updates, for example, are usually under **Advanced > Administration**.

PART 3

Everyday Use

The jobs you'll actually do: Wi-Fi passwords, seeing who's connected, pausing a device, guest Wi-Fi, speed tests and restarting the right way.

CHAPTER 12

Finding and Changing Your Wi-Fi Name and Password

Your Wi-Fi name (Netgear also calls it the **SSID**) is what shows in the list of networks on a phone. Your Wi-Fi password is what lets a device join. You'll look these up far more often than you change them.

Just looking it up

- Open the Nighthawk or Orbi app and tap **WiFi Settings** (or the **WiFi** tile). The name and password are shown there.
- Never changed it? It's printed on the router's label.
- An iPhone or Android phone that's already connected can also show or share the password from its own Wi-Fi settings.

Changing it in the Nighthawk app

1. Connect your phone to your Netgear Wi-Fi and open the **Nighthawk** app.
2. Tap **WiFi Settings**. If asked, sign in with the router's admin password.
3. Choose the network to change, then type the new name and password.
4. Tap **Save**.

Changing it in the Orbi app

1. Open the **Orbi** app.
2. Tap **WiFi Settings**.
3. Type the new network name and password.
4. Tap **Save**. The router passes the change to the satellites automatically.

HEADS UP

Every device has to reconnect

When you change the password, every phone, TV, printer, doorbell and thermostat drops off and has to be joined again with the new password. Do it when you have time, and make a list of your smart devices first. Changing only the name (or only the password) has the same effect.

TIP

A good Wi-Fi password

Make it long and easy to say aloud, like three or four unrelated words with a number: *maple-bucket-river-42*. Long beats complicated.

CHAPTER 13

Seeing What's Connected

The Nighthawk and Orbi apps keep a **Device List** of everything connected to your Wi-Fi. It's a simple way to spot a device you don't recognize, or to check that the TV or doorbell is actually online.

1. Open the Nighthawk or Orbi app.
2. Tap **Device List** (some versions show a **Devices** tile on the main screen).
3. Scroll through the names. Tap one to see more about it.

Making sense of the names

- Many devices show a sensible name, like "Living-Room-TV" or "Marys-iPhone."
- Some show only the maker ("Espressif," "Amazon," "Roku") or a string of letters and numbers. Smart plugs and cameras often look like this.
- Phones and tablets may use a **private** or random address, so the same phone can appear under a new entry over time.

TIP

Rename what you recognize

When you figure out what a device is, tap it and give it a name you'll recognize next time. In a few minutes the whole list becomes readable.

HEADS UP

Something you don't recognize?

It's usually a gadget you forgot about. If you're truly unsure, pause it (see Chapter 14, *Pausing the Internet for a Device*) and see what stops working. If nothing does and it keeps coming back, change your Wi-Fi password.

CHAPTER 14

Pausing the Internet for a Device

Pausing cuts one device off the internet until you turn it back on. It's handy for a grandchild's tablet at dinner, or for testing whether an unknown device matters. It's free and built into both apps.

In the Nighthawk app

1. Open the Nighthawk app and sign in with the router's admin password if asked.
2. Tap **Device List**.
3. Find the device and move its **Pause/Resume** slider to pause it.
4. Move the slider back to resume.

In the Orbi app

1. Open the Orbi app and tap **Device List**.
2. Find the device and move its slider to the left to pause its internet.
3. Move it back to restore the internet.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can't pause the phone you're holding

Netgear notes that you can't pause the phone or tablet you're using to make the change. That stops you from locking yourself out of the app.

TIP

Schedules and bedtimes

Pausing in the Device List is on and off by hand. Bedtimes, daily time limits and filters are part of Smart Parental Controls (see Chapter 21, *Smart Parental Controls*).

CHAPTER 15

Guest Wi-Fi for Visitors

A **guest network** is a second Wi-Fi with its own name and password. Visitors get the internet, but they don't get your main password, and their phones are kept apart from your computers and printers.

Turning it on in the Nighthawk app

1. Open the Nighthawk app and tap the **Guest WiFi** tile.
2. Choose the band to set up (2.4 GHz or 5 GHz). If you're not sure, set up 2.4 GHz; it reaches farther.
3. Turn on the **Guest WiFi Enabled** slider.
4. Type a guest network name and password, then save.

On an Orbi

The Orbi app lists guest Wi-Fi among its features; look for a **Guest WiFi** tile or setting. If you don't see it, use the browser pages: go to **orbilogin.com**, sign in as admin, select **Guest Network**, check **Enable Guest Network**, set a name and password, and click **Apply**.

Good uses for guest Wi-Fi

- Family visiting for the holidays.
- A repair person, caregiver or house sitter.
- Smart plugs, cameras and gadgets you'd rather keep away from your computer.

> **TIP**
>
> **Make it easy to share**
>
> Write the guest name and password on a card by the door, or show it on your phone. Ways Your Netgear Can Make Life Easier has a trick for guest Wi-Fi that switches itself off.

CHAPTER 16

Checking Your Internet Speed

A speed test tells you whether you're getting the internet you pay for, and whether a slow spot is the Wi-Fi or the internet company. Netgear says its apps are the simplest way to check.

1. Open the Nighthawk or Orbi app.
2. Look for **Internet Speed** or **Speed Test** on the main screen and tap it.
3. Tap the button to start the test, and wait a minute while it measures.
4. Compare the download number with the speed on your internet bill.

Reading the result

What you see	What it usually means
Close to your plan's speed	The internet is fine. A slow room is a Wi-Fi placement problem (see Chapter 9, *Where to Put the Router and Satellites*).
Much lower than your plan	Restart the modem and router (see Chapter 17, *Restarting the Right Way*) and test again. Still low? Call your internet company.
Fast near the router, slow far away	Move the router or an Orbi satellite, or consider adding a satellite.

GOOD TO KNOW

Orbi keeps a history

The Orbi app keeps a record of past speed tests, so you can see whether the internet is slower than it used to be.

TIP

A second opinion

From a computer on your Wi-Fi you can also use **speedtest.net**. Netgear suggests it too.

CHAPTER 17

Restarting the Right Way

Turning it off and on again really does fix a lot of internet trouble. The trick is doing it in the right **order**, so each box finds the one before it.

Power-cycling an Orbi or Nighthawk

1. Unplug the power from the **modem**, the **Netgear router**, and any **Orbi satellites**.
2. Wait about a minute.
3. Plug in the **modem** first and wait until its lights settle (a few minutes).
4. Plug in the **router**. Orbi devices take about two minutes to restart.
5. Plug in the satellites last.

HEADS UP

Restart is not reset

Unplugging is a **restart**, and it erases nothing. The small **Reset** hole on the back is a **factory reset**, and it erases all your settings. Don't press it to fix a slow connection. See Chapter 29, *Factory Reset: The Last Resort*.

TIP

Mark the plugs

Put a small sticker on each power cord: "modem," "router," "satellite." When something goes wrong, anyone in the house can follow the order.

GOOD TO KNOW

Restarting from away

If you're not home, a restart needs someone there to unplug the boxes. The app's Anywhere Access feature (see Ways Your Netgear Can Make Life Easier) lets you check on the network from away.

PART 4

Netgear's Subscriptions

What Netgear Armor and Smart Parental Controls actually do, what they cost, how to cancel, and how to decide whether you need either one.

CHAPTER 18

Netgear Armor: What It Is

Netgear Armor is a paid security service, **powered by Bitdefender**, that runs in your router and on your devices. The apps offer it during setup and on the **Security** tile, and many new routers come with a free trial. Plenty of people discover it only when the first renewal charge shows up, so it's worth knowing what it is.

What Armor does

- **Network protection in the router:** blocks known harmful websites and watches for attacks on the devices in your home, including smart TVs and cameras that can't run antivirus.
- **Bitdefender software for your devices:** with a subscription you can install Bitdefender protection on Windows and Mac computers and on phones and tablets.
- **Monitoring features:** Netgear's current feature list includes breach and dark web monitoring.
- **Since January 2025, warranty and support:** Armor now bundles an extended warranty and 24/7 priority tech support for eligible Netgear routers.

Putting the Bitdefender software on a computer

1. On the Windows or Mac computer, open a web browser and go to **armor-install.com**.
2. Sign in with your NETGEAR account when asked, and follow the prompts.
3. For a phone or tablet, use the Nighthawk or Orbi app instead: open the **Security** tile and look for the option to protect another device.

HEADS UP

One antivirus at a time

Netgear says the Bitdefender software needs other security software removed before it installs. If you already pay for Norton, McAfee or another antivirus, decide which one to keep, rather than running two.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you cancel, the software goes too

Netgear says you can't keep the Bitdefender software after an Armor subscription ends.

CHAPTER 19

Armor Prices, Trials and Warranty

Here's what Armor costs in the United States as of November 2026, from Netgear's own Armor page. Netgear says the price depends on your region, and the app shows the price and any promotion for your area.

Plan	Price (U.S.)	What's added
Free trial	30 days	Try Armor before paying
Armor	$8.33 a month, billed yearly (just under $100 a year)	Network and device protection, extended warranty, 24/7 priority support
Armor Plus	$12.50 a month, billed yearly ($149.99 a year)	Everything in Armor, plus unlimited VPN for up to 50 devices, ad blocking and anti-tracking

The warranty part, in plain English

In the United States and Canada, Netgear says an Armor subscription extends your router's hardware warranty to two years, up to a maximum of three years from purchase. The warranty extras apply to eligible Netgear routers bought in the U.S., U.K. or Canada within the last three years.

Where to see what you're paying for

1. Open the Nighthawk or Orbi app.
2. Open the **Menu** and tap **My Subscriptions**.
3. Tap a service to see the plan, the renewal date and whether **Auto renew** is on.

TIP

Put the renewal date on your calendar

Armor renews automatically each year. Write the date down a week ahead so you can decide on purpose, not by surprise.

GOOD TO KNOW

Old prices you may see

Older articles and forum posts quote lower Armor prices from earlier years. Go by what the app or netgear.com shows today.

CHAPTER 20

Canceling or Pausing a Subscription

If you don't want Armor or Smart Parental Controls, you can stop the renewal yourself in a few taps. How it works depends on how long ago you paid and where you bought it.

Stop it from renewing (most people)

1. Open the Nighthawk or Orbi app.
2. Open the **Menu** and tap **My Subscriptions**.
3. Tap the service (Armor or Smart Parental Controls).
4. Turn off the **Auto renew** toggle.

Netgear says the service keeps working until the end of the period you've paid for, and you aren't charged again when it ends.

Paid in the last 30 days and want your money back?

Netgear says a refund is possible within 30 days of purchase, but **it isn't automatic**. You cancel at **my.netgear.com** under **Services**, then fill in Netgear's cancellation and refund form. Access ends as soon as the refund is requested.

Bought it through Bitdefender?

If you bought Armor from the Bitdefender store, turning off the app toggle may not be enough. Sign in to your Bitdefender account at **store.bitdefender.com**, open **My Products**, and stop automatic renewal there.

Just want a break?

If Armor is blocking a site you trust or getting in the way, you can pause it rather than cancel: in the app, go to **Menu > Settings > Security** and turn off **Enable NETGEAR Armor**. Turn it back on afterward.

SCAM ALERT

Nobody needs to cancel it for you

If a caller offers to cancel or refund your "Netgear subscription" and asks for remote access, a card number or gift cards, it's a scam. You can do all of this yourself in the app.

CHAPTER 21

Smart Parental Controls

Netgear Smart Parental Controls (Netgear abbreviates it SPC) is Netgear's service for managing children's and grandchildren's internet time on Nighthawk and Orbi routers. It works from the **Parental Controls** tile in the app.

What it costs

Plan	Price
Basic	Free, with limited features.
Premium	$7.99 a month or $69.99 a year in the U.S., each with a 30-day free trial.

Premium adds the fuller features, such as time limits and filters, and includes the **My Time by NETGEAR** app for kids' devices at no extra charge. Prices differ by country; check the app before you subscribe.

Pausing from Parental Controls

1. Open the Nighthawk or Orbi app and tap the **Parental Controls** tile.
2. Select the person's profile or device.
3. Tap the **pause** icon. Tap **play** to resume.

HEADS UP

Careful with the Home profile

Netgear warns that pausing the **Home** profile pauses **every device on the network**, including yours. Pause the child's profile instead.

GOOD TO KNOW

What happened to Circle?

Older Netgear routers offered parental controls through a service called **Circle**. Netgear has since moved to Smart Parental Controls, and some owners report that old Circle rules stopped working. Bill's guide *Parental Controls on Wi-Fi* compares the options.

CHAPTER 22

Do You Need a Subscription?

Your router works perfectly well without Armor or Smart Parental Controls. The Wi-Fi, guest network, device pause, speed test and firmware updates are all free. The subscriptions are add-ons, and whether they're worth it depends on your household.

Armor may be worth it if…

- You'd use the Bitdefender software on several computers and phones instead of buying antivirus separately.
- You value the extended warranty and priority phone support on a newer, expensive router.
- You have many smart gadgets and want the router itself watching for trouble.

You can probably skip it if…

- You already pay for antivirus you're happy with. (Windows and Mac also have built-in protection.)
- Your router is old or out of warranty anyway.
- Your internet company already includes a security service with your plan.

Smart Parental Controls may be worth it if…

- Grandchildren stay often and you want bedtimes and time limits that work on every device.
- You'd rather set rules once at the router than on each tablet and game console.

TIP

Free alternatives worth knowing

Pausing a device in the Device List is free (see Chapter 14, *Pausing the Internet for a Device*). Phones and tablets also have their own free screen-time controls, such as Screen Time on iPhone and Google Family Link on Android.

FROM BILL

My honest take

There's no wrong answer here. Decide during the free trial, not after the first charge, and turn Auto renew off if you're not sure (see Chapter 20, *Canceling or Pausing a Subscription*).

PART 5

Keeping It Safe and Up to Date

Firmware updates, older models that no longer get fixes, the admin password, a few security settings worth checking, and the scams that target Netgear owners.

CHAPTER 23

Firmware Updates

Firmware is the software inside your router. Netgear releases updates that fix security holes and bugs, and Netgear publishes security advisories every month. Keeping firmware current is the most important thing you can do to keep your home network safe.

Updating a Nighthawk in the app

1. Connect your phone to your Netgear Wi-Fi and open the **Nighthawk** app. Sign in if asked.
2. Enter the router's admin password if prompted.
3. Tap the picture of your router, scroll down and tap **CHECK FOR UPDATES**.
4. If an update is available, tap **UPDATE**. Leave the router alone until it finishes and restarts.

Updating an Orbi in the app

1. Open the **Orbi** app.
2. Go to **Menu > Settings > Router Settings**.
3. Tap **Check for Updates**. If the button changes to **Update Firmware**, tap it.
4. Wait while the router and satellites update and restart.

Automatic updates

Orbi systems update themselves automatically in the middle of the night, between about **1:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m.** local time. Netgear suggests checking that the router's time zone is right (at orbilogin.com under **Advanced > Security > Schedule**) so updates don't land at a bad hour. On many Nighthawk models, automatic updates are set in the browser pages under **Advanced > Administration > Router Update**.

HEADS UP

Never unplug during an update

Netgear warns that interrupting an update can corrupt the firmware. If the lights look odd for a few minutes, that's normal. Give it at least 10 minutes before you worry.

TIP

Check twice a year

Even with automatic updates on, open the app and tap Check for Updates when the clocks change in spring and fall. Orbi satellites occasionally miss an automatic update.

CHAPTER 24

Older Models and End of Support

Every router eventually stops getting updates. Netgear calls that **End-of-Support**, shown as **EoS** in its monthly security advisories. Once a model reaches it, Netgear says no further security updates are planned, and it strongly recommends retiring the device and upgrading.

Popular models marked EoS in 2026 advisories

Model	Common name
R7000, R7000P	Nighthawk AC1900 / AC2300 era routers
R7800, R9000	Nighthawk X4S and X10
RAX20, RAX28, RAX30, RAX40, RAX45	Early Nighthawk Wi-Fi 6 routers
RAX120, RAX200	High-end Nighthawk Wi-Fi 6 routers
MR60, MR70	Nighthawk Mesh systems

This is not a complete list. To check your own model, look up its model number on Netgear's support site, or search Netgear's latest monthly security advisory for it.

Why it matters

The FBI has warned that criminals take over **end-of-life routers** and use them to hide their activity, and it advises replacing them. A router that still works fine can still be unsafe if it no longer gets fixes.

GOOD TO KNOW

The 2026 FCC router rule

In March 2026 the FCC restricted **new** foreign-made router models. The FCC has said people who already own a router don't need to do anything, and previously approved models can still be sold and used. It isn't a reason to throw out a working, supported Netgear.

FROM BILL

Replacing an old one

If your router is on Netgear's EoS list, it's time to plan a replacement. I can help you pick one that fits your home and move everything over in one visit.

CHAPTER 25

Changing and Recovering the Admin Password

The **admin password** protects your router's settings. If someone else knows it, they can change your Wi-Fi, see your devices or turn off your security. Netgear recommends changing it from the default.

Changing it in the browser pages

1. On a computer connected to your Netgear Wi-Fi, go to **routerlogin.net** (Nighthawk) or **orbilogin.com** (Orbi) and sign in as **admin**.
2. Select **Advanced > Administration > Set Password**.
3. Type the old password, then the new password twice.
4. Check **Enable Password Recovery** if you see it, and pick two security questions (see Ways Your Netgear Can Make Life Easier).
5. Click **Apply**.

Forgot the admin password?

- If you set up password recovery, enter a wrong password three times and the router offers a recovery screen: type the router's serial number and answer your two questions.
- Netgear says the recovery screen doesn't work in the Safari browser, so use Chrome or Firefox on a computer.
- If you never set up recovery, the only way back in is a **factory reset** (see Chapter 29, *Factory Reset: The Last Resort*), which erases all settings.

STAY SAFE

Admin password, not Wi-Fi password

Guests only ever need the Wi-Fi password. Keep the admin password to yourself and one trusted family member.

CHAPTER 26

Security Settings Worth Checking

Netgear's apps make sensible choices for you. A few settings are still worth a once-a-year look, because they decide who can reach your network.

Your quick checklist

1. **Firmware is current** (see Chapter 23, *Firmware Updates*).
2. **Admin password changed** from any default (see Chapter 25, *Changing and Recovering the Admin Password*).
3. **Wi-Fi security** is set to WPA2 or WPA3, never "None" or WEP. The FTC calls WPA3 the newest and best, with WPA2 still fine.
4. **Guest Wi-Fi** is used for visitors and gadgets instead of handing out your main password.
5. **Two-step sign-in** is on for your NETGEAR account (see Chapter 6, *Your NETGEAR Account and Two-Step Sign-In*).

Anywhere Access and the end of Remote Management

Netgear's apps let you manage your router while you're away from home through a feature called **Anywhere Access** (it used to be called Remote Management). Netgear says it's a secure connection through the Netgear cloud that opens no ports on your router, and you must sign in with your NETGEAR account. It's on by default. The older browser-based **Remote Management** feature is being removed from most Netgear routers through firmware updates.

TIP

If you never use it

If you never manage your router from away, you can turn Anywhere Access off in the app under **Menu > Settings > Anywhere Access**. Then a strong NETGEAR account password matters a little less, though it's still worth having.

GOOD TO KNOW

More on home network safety

Bill's guide *Securing Your Home Network* goes deeper on WPS, UPnP and smart gadgets, for every brand of router.

CHAPTER 27

Fake Netgear Support and Other Scams

Router owners are a favorite target for tech-support scammers. The trick usually starts with a web search: you type "Netgear support number" or "routerlogin help," click a convincing ad or website, and call a number that belongs to a scammer, not Netgear.

What Netgear itself says

- Searches for support can turn up fraudulent sites that imitate Netgear's support pages.
- Netgear does **not** call customers to ask them to install remote-access software such as **AnyDesk**, or to pay on the spot for support.
- Netgear will never ask to take control of your computer or phone.
- If that happens, hang up and call Netgear's real number, **1-888-NETGEAR** (1-888-638-4327).

How the scam usually goes

1. You search for help and call a number from a search result, ad or pop-up.
2. A friendly "technician" says your router is hacked, infected or out of date.
3. They ask you to install a remote-access app so they can "look."
4. They show you scary screens, then ask for a few hundred dollars for a "security package," often by card, gift card or wire.

SCAM ALERT

The rule that stops it

Never call a support number from a search result, pop-up, email or text. Get it from **netgear.com** typed by you, from the box or from the app. And never let someone you didn't already know connect to your computer.

STAY SAFE

If you already let them in

Turn off the computer's Wi-Fi or unplug it. Call your bank or card company to dispute the charge. Change your important passwords from a different device. Report it at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**. Then have the computer checked by someone you trust.

HEADS UP

Pop-ups that say your router is infected

A web page that shouts your router or computer is infected and shows a phone number is a scam. Close the browser. Your router doesn't send warnings through web pop-ups.

PART 6

Fixing Problems & Getting Help

What to do when the internet stops working, the factory reset as a last resort, getting real help from Netgear, and when to call Bill.

CHAPTER 28

When the Internet Stops Working

When the internet goes out, work through this ladder **one rung at a time**, from the top. Check whether things work again after each step. Most outages are fixed in the first four.

1. **Is it everything, or one device?** If only one phone or TV is stuck, restart that device and turn its Wi-Fi off and on. The router is probably fine.
2. **Is it an outage?** Check your internet company's app or website on your phone's cellular data, or call the number on your bill.
3. **Check the cables.** Make sure the cable from the modem to the Netgear's Internet port is snug at both ends, and every power plug is in.
4. **Restart in order:** modem first, then the router, then satellites (see Chapter 17, *Restarting the Right Way*).
5. **Look at the lights.** A modem with no internet light means the problem is on the provider's side. An Orbi satellite showing magenta has lost the router (see Chapter 10, *Adding or Re-Syncing a Satellite*).
6. **Open the app.** The Nighthawk or Orbi app often says plainly whether the router sees the internet.
7. **Check for a firmware update** once things are back (see Chapter 23, *Firmware Updates*).
8. **Still stuck?** Call your internet company if the modem has no connection, or Netgear support if the modem is fine and the router isn't.

Specific troubles

What you see	What it usually means
Wi-Fi name shows, but no internet	The router has lost the modem or the provider. Cables, then restart in order.
Wi-Fi name has vanished	The router is off, restarting or updating. Wait 10 minutes, then check its power.
Slow in one room only	Placement. Move the router or a satellite (see Chapter 9, *Where to Put the Router and Satellites*).
Slow everywhere	Run a speed test (see Chapter 16, *Checking Your Internet Speed*). Low result: restart, then call the provider.
One device won't connect	Forget the network on that device and rejoin with the password.
A satellite keeps dropping	Move it closer to the router, or re-sync it (see Chapter 10, *Adding or Re-Syncing a Satellite*).

What you see	What it usually means
Can't sign in to the app	Check which password it wants (see Chapter 4, *Three Different Passwords*).

TIP

Keep your phone's data on

When the Wi-Fi is down, your phone can still reach your provider's outage page and the Netgear app over cellular data.

HEADS UP

Don't reach for the reset button first

A factory reset feels decisive, but it erases everything and rarely fixes an internet outage. Save it for the end (see Chapter 29, *Factory Reset: The Last Resort*).

CHAPTER 29

Factory Reset: The Last Resort

A **factory reset** puts your router back exactly as it came out of the box. It's the right move when you've forgotten the admin password with no recovery set up, when you're giving the router away, or when Netgear support asks you to.

HEADS UP

What a reset erases

Netgear says a factory reset deletes all your personalized settings, including the admin username and password, your Wi-Fi name and password, and security settings. Every device in the house will need to rejoin, and you'll set the router up again from scratch.

How to do it

1. Leave the router plugged in and turned on.
2. Find the small **Reset** (or **Restore Factory Settings**) hole on the back or bottom.
3. Press and hold the button inside with a straightened paper clip. Netgear's general guide says about **seven seconds**; its Orbi and Nighthawk password article says **15 seconds**. Check your model's page if unsure.
4. Release it and let the router restart. This takes a few minutes.
5. Set it up again in the Nighthawk or Orbi app (see Chapter 7, *Setting Up a New Orbi* or Chapter 8, *Setting Up a Nighthawk Router*).

After the reset

- Use the same Wi-Fi name and password as before so your devices reconnect on their own.
- If you subscribe to Armor or Smart Parental Controls, reactivate them in the app afterward.
- Install any firmware update the app offers.

TIP

Giving the router away?

Reset it first, then remove it from your NETGEAR account in the app so the new owner can register it.

CHAPTER 30

Getting Real Help from Netgear

Netgear offers support for its products, but how much you get depends on how new your equipment is and whether you pay for Armor or ProSupport. Here's how to reach the real Netgear.

Where real help comes from

- **netgear.com/support**, typed into your browser yourself. Search your model number for articles, manuals and firmware.
- The **Nighthawk or Orbi app**, which links to Netgear support for your registered router.
- **my.netgear.com**, where your registered products and subscriptions are listed.
- Netgear's U.S. number, **1-888-NETGEAR** (1-888-638-4327), as listed on Netgear's own website.

Free support, then paid

New Netgear products come with complimentary technical support for a limited time after purchase. Netgear's own pages give different lengths for this (90 days on some, one year on its newest warranty page), so check the warranty page for your product and purchase date. After that, support comes with an **Armor** subscription or a paid **ProSupport** plan.

TIP

Register your router

Registering your router in the app (it happens during setup) puts the serial number and purchase date on file, which makes warranty and support calls much shorter. Keep your receipt or a photo of it.

SCAM ALERT

Free support never starts with a search ad

If a "Netgear" agent you found through a search asks for money before helping, or wants remote access, hang up. See Chapter 27, *Fake Netgear Support and Other Scams*.

CHAPTER 31

Words You'll Hear

Router talk comes with plenty of jargon. Here's a plain-English dictionary so none of it can make you feel left out.

Word	What it means in plain English
Router	The box that makes your Wi-Fi and shares the internet.
Modem	The box that brings the internet in from your provider.
Mesh	Several matching units working as one Wi-Fi network. Orbi is mesh.
Satellite	An Orbi unit that extends the router's Wi-Fi to another part of the house.
SSID	Your Wi-Fi network's name.
Admin password	The password for the router's own settings.
Firmware	The software inside the router. Updates fix bugs and security holes.
EoS (End-of-Support)	Netgear has stopped making updates for that model.
Sync	Pairing an Orbi satellite with its router.
Backhaul	The link between an Orbi router and its satellites, wireless or by cable.
Wi-Fi 6, 6E, 7	Generations of Wi-Fi. Higher numbers are newer and faster.
2.4 GHz / 5 GHz / 6 GHz	Wi-Fi radio bands. 2.4 reaches farther; 5 and 6 are faster up close.
WPA2 / WPA3	Wi-Fi security standards. WPA3 is newest.
Anywhere Access	Netgear's name for managing your router through the app while you're away.
Armor	Netgear's paid security service, powered by Bitdefender.
SPC	Smart Parental Controls, Netgear's parental controls service.

TIP

A dictionary, not a quiz

Nobody expects you to memorize these. Come back whenever a word trips you up.

GOOD TO KNOW

Same idea, different brand

Other mesh systems use different words for the same things: eero calls satellites simply "eeros," and Google calls them "points." The ideas in this guide carry over.

TIP

Look up your model

Your model number (on the label) is the key to finding the right article on Netgear's support site.

CHAPTER 32

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can absolutely do yourself. But some jobs go faster with someone beside you, and there's no shame in that.

Good reasons to call

- A new Orbi or Nighthawk to set up, with every TV, printer, doorbell and thermostat moved over.
- Wi-Fi that's weak in part of the house and you're not sure whether to move, add or replace a satellite.
- Your router is on Netgear's End-of-Support list and it's time to choose a replacement.
- You were charged for Armor or Smart Parental Controls and want help deciding or canceling.
- Two routers fighting each other: your provider's box and your Netgear.
- You're locked out of the admin pages and don't know which password is which.
- You called a "Netgear support" number and now you're worried it wasn't real.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Wi-Fi Help

My **Wi-Fi Help** service is made for exactly this: setting up or fixing your Netgear equipment, putting the router and satellites where they work best, checking your security settings and updates, and showing you how to do the everyday jobs yourself in the app.

SCAM ALERT

A real technician never cold-calls you

If someone calls out of the blue saying your router or computer has a problem and they need remote access or payment, hang up. I'll never call you unasked to "fix" something.

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book online at **billshometech.com/book**. Bill's Home Tech serves **Portage County, Ohio**, and I bring more than 30 years of professional experience to every visit. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule.

FROM BILL

What it costs

My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. The guides themselves, like this one, are free to read and share.

— Bill

CHAPTER 33

Your Netgear Cheat-Sheet

The most-used steps on one page. Keep it handy, save it or print it for the fridge.

Where things are in the app

I want to…	Go to
Wi-Fi name and password	WiFi Settings
See what's connected	Device List
Pause a device	Device List, then the device's slider
Guest Wi-Fi	Guest WiFi tile (Nighthawk); Guest WiFi or orbilogin.com (Orbi)
Speed test	Internet Speed / Speed Test
Firmware (Orbi)	Menu > Settings > Router Settings > Check for Updates
Firmware (Nighthawk)	Tap the router picture > CHECK FOR UPDATES
Subscriptions	Menu > My Subscriptions > Auto renew
Pause Armor	Menu > Settings > Security
Away-from-home access	Menu > Settings > Anywhere Access

Addresses to know

What	Where
Nighthawk settings (at home)	routerlogin.net
Orbi settings (at home)	orbilogin.com
Your account and subscriptions	my.netgear.com
Real Netgear support	netgear.com/support · 1-888-NETGEAR

Restart in order

1. Unplug the modem, router and satellites.
2. Wait a minute.
3. Plug in the modem; wait for its lights.
4. Plug in the router; wait two minutes.
5. Plug in the satellites.

Safety in five

1. Keep the firmware updated.
2. Change the admin password from any default.
3. Give visitors the guest Wi-Fi, not your main password.
4. Replace routers on Netgear's End-of-Support list.
5. Never call a support number from a search result, pop-up or email.

Keep this handy

What	Notes
Model number (on the label)	_____
Wi-Fi name	_____
Wi-Fi password	_____
Guest Wi-Fi name and password	_____
Admin password	_____
NETGEAR account email	_____
Subscription renewal date	_____
Internet company and phone	_____
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

FROM BILL

You're in charge of your Wi-Fi now

You know which app runs it, which password is which, and what the subscriptions really are. If it ever gets tricky, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.