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Nintendo Switch & Switch 2

Setup, accounts, parental controls and online play — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for families and grandparents

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Nintendo Switch 2, Switch, OLED & Lite · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your Nintendo Switch manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Whether you're setting up a Switch for a grandchild, keeping an eye on how much a child plays, or picking up a controller yourself, every feature comes with what it actually does *for you* and slow step-by-step directions anyone can follow. It covers the Nintendo Switch 2 and the original Switch family (Switch, Switch OLED and Switch Lite). If a screen looks a little different on yours, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting to Know the Switch

What a Nintendo Switch is, which model is which, and the handful of buttons and parts that run everything. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe a Nintendo Switch is on a grandchild's wish list this year. Maybe one just came home in a shopping bag and you've been asked to "get it working." Or maybe you'd like to try a game or two yourself — bowling, golf, a gentle puzzle — and you aren't sure where to begin. Whichever brought you here, this guide is for **you**.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting next to you on the couch: patiently, in plain English, with no gamer slang. If I use a word you don't know, I'll stop and explain it right then.

You truly can't break it by exploring

A game console looks complicated, but it's really a small computer built to be used by children. That means it's sturdy, forgiving and full of "are you sure?" questions before anything important happens. Pressing the wrong button won't delete anyone's game or spend money by itself. And there is always one button that brings you back to safe ground — the **HOME** button, which you'll meet in Chapter 3.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

A Switch can be a wonderful bridge between generations. When you know how the controls, the accounts and the parental settings work, you can say "yes" to playing together, set sensible limits with confidence, and stop worrying about surprise charges or strangers online.

What this guide covers

- Telling the **Switch 2** apart from the original **Switch**, **Switch OLED** and **Switch Lite**.
- Setting it up, connecting it to the TV and getting it on Wi-Fi.
- **Nintendo Accounts** and **family groups** — the grown-up side that keeps kids safe.
- **Parental controls**: daily time limits, bedtimes, age ratings, chat and spending.
- Buying games, the **Nintendo Switch Online** membership, and sharing games in the family.
- Moving everything from an old Switch to a new Switch 2.
- Easier-to-see settings, scams aimed at gamers, and simple fixes.

And I'm only a phone call away

This guide will carry you a long way on your own. But if you ever get stuck — say, the TV won't show a picture or the parental controls app won't link — call me at **(330) 200-8042**. No question is too small, and there's no such thing as a silly one.

So grab the box, find a comfortable chair, and let's get to know this thing together.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Which Switch Is Which

Nintendo has made several Switch models since 2017, and they look alike at a glance. Knowing which one you have matters, because a few things — like connecting to a TV or moving to a new console — work differently on each.

The four models, side by side

Model	What it is	Plays on the TV?	U.S. list price (Nov. 2026)
Nintendo Switch 2	The newest model (launched June 2025). Bigger 7.9-inch screen, magnetic Joy-Con 2 controllers, a **C** button for GameChat.	Yes, with its dock	$499.99
Nintendo Switch – OLED Model	The original Switch with a brighter 7-inch OLED screen.	Yes, with its dock	$399.99
Nintendo Switch	The original 2017 design, 6.2-inch screen.	Yes, with its dock	$339.99
Nintendo Switch Lite	A smaller, handheld-only Switch. The controllers are built in.	**No**	$229.99

Prices are Nintendo's suggested prices in the U.S. as of November 2026. Nintendo raised the Switch 2 from $449.99 to $499.99 on September 1, 2026; the original Switch models went up in August 2025. Stores often bundle a game for a little more, and holiday sales come and go, so treat these as a starting point.

HEADS UP

A Switch Lite can't connect to a TV

The Switch Lite is a lovely, lighter handheld — but it has no dock and can't show games on the television. If the plan is for the family to play together on the big screen, choose a Switch 2 (or an original Switch or OLED) instead. The Lite also needs separate controllers for most two-player games on the same console.

Switch 2 plays most original Switch games

If a grandchild already has a library of Switch games, good news: the Switch 2 can play the vast majority of them, both cartridges and downloads. A small number of older games don't work or behave differently, and Nintendo keeps a compatibility list on its website. The reverse isn't true — games made only for Switch 2 won't run on an original Switch.

How to tell which one you're holding

- **Switch 2:** the controllers snap on with magnets, the screen is noticeably larger, and there's a small extra button marked **C** on the right controller. The box says "Nintendo Switch 2."
- **Switch Lite:** one solid piece — the controls don't come off at all.
- **Switch OLED:** a wide adjustable kickstand on the back and "OLED" on the box.
- **Original Switch:** controllers slide on along rails, with a thin kickstand on the back.

TIP

Not sure? Check the settings screen

Open **System Settings** (the gear-shaped icon on the main screen), scroll down to **System**, and look near the bottom for the system information. When you call me, telling me the model saves us both a lot of guessing.

FROM BILL

Buying one as a gift?

Before you buy, ask the parents two quick questions: will the child play mostly on the TV or on the go, and do they already own Switch games? Those two answers point clearly to the right model. And buy from a store you know — not a too-good-to-be-true website (more on that in Chapter 21).

CHAPTER 3

The Parts, the Buttons & the Three Ways to Play

Let's take a slow tour. Once you know these few pieces, the rest of the Switch makes sense.

The pieces in the box

Piece	What it does
The console	The tablet-like screen. It's the actual computer — everything is stored here.
Joy-Con controllers	The two small controllers on the left and right sides. On Switch 2 they're called **Joy-Con 2** and attach with magnets.
The dock	A stand that connects the console to your TV (not included with Switch Lite).
AC adapter	The power plug. The Switch 2 has its own adapter; Nintendo says the original Switch adapter can't power a Switch 2 dock for TV play.
HDMI cable	The cable from the dock to the TV.
Joy-Con grip and straps	A holder that turns the two Joy-Con into one regular-feeling controller, and wrist straps for games where you swing your arm.

The buttons that matter most

Button	What it does
HOME (a little house)	On the right controller. Press it any time to go back to the main screen. This is your "take me home" button.
A and B	**A** chooses or confirms. **B** goes back one step. Most menus work with just these two.
POWER	A small round button on the top edge of the console. Press once to put it to sleep or wake it up. Hold it for a few seconds for power options.
Volume	Two buttons on the top edge of the console, next to POWER.
+ and –	Small plus and minus buttons that usually open a game's menu or pause it.
C (Switch 2 only)	On the right Joy-Con 2. Starts **GameChat**, Nintendo's voice and video chat.
Capture (a square)	On the left controller. Takes a picture of the screen.

TIP

HOME is your front porch

If you ever press something and the screen changes to something you don't recognize, press **HOME**. You'll land on the main screen with all the games laid out in a row, and nothing will have been lost — the game simply waits in the background.

Three ways to play

- **TV mode:** the console sits in the dock and the game shows on your television. Players hold the Joy-Con or a separate controller.
- **Tabletop mode:** stand the console up on its kickstand on a table and hand each player a Joy-Con. Handy at the kitchen table or on a trip.
- **Handheld mode:** both controllers attached, held in your hands like a big phone.

Switch Lite only does handheld mode. All the other models do all three — you can lift the console out of the dock mid-game and keep playing on the screen.

Taking the controllers off and putting them back

1. **Switch 2:** hold the console, press the small release button on the back of a Joy-Con 2, and pull the controller gently away. To reattach, bring it near the side of the console and the magnets will guide it into place with a click.
2. **Original Switch and OLED:** press the small round button on the back of the Joy-Con and slide it upward along the rail. To reattach, slide it down the rail from the top until it clicks.
3. The controllers charge whenever they're attached to the console and the console is charging.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Console" just means the game machine

You'll hear people say "console" a lot. It simply means the game machine itself — here, the Switch's screen-and-computer unit, as opposed to the controllers or the dock.

PART 2

Setting It Up

Turning it on for the first time, getting the picture onto your TV, and connecting to Wi-Fi. Set aside about an hour, with your Wi-Fi password handy.

CHAPTER 4

Turning It On the First Time

The very first start-up walks you through a short series of questions on the screen. You answer with the controllers. Nothing here is permanent — most of it can be changed later in **System Settings**.

Before you begin

- Your **Wi-Fi name and password**. Write them down before you start.
- About an hour, because the console will download an update and possibly some games.
- If you're moving from an older Switch to a new Switch 2, **stop and read Chapter 18 first**. The transfer only happens during this first setup, and it's much easier to do it now.
- A grown-up's email address, for the Nintendo Account (Chapter 7).

The first-time setup, step by step (Switch 2)

1. Plug the AC adapter into a wall outlet and connect its USB-C cable to the console.
2. Attach both Joy-Con 2 controllers to the sides of the console.
3. Press the **POWER** button on the top edge. Setup must start in handheld mode — that is, on the console's own screen, not on the TV.
4. Choose your **language** and **region**, then accept the agreement.
5. Connect to the internet: pick your Wi-Fi network's name and type the password with the on-screen keyboard (press the letters with **A**).
6. If an update is offered, let it run. The console may restart on its own — that's normal.
7. If you have an older Switch to move over, choose **Start System Transfer** here (see Chapter 18). Otherwise, skip it.
8. Choose your **time zone**.
9. Create a user and link a Nintendo Account when asked (Chapter 7 explains this). You can also do it later.
10. When the main screen appears — the **HOME Menu** — you're done.

TIP

The original Switch is almost the same

On a Switch, OLED or Lite, the steps are nearly identical: power, language, region, Wi-Fi, time zone, user. The words on each screen tell you what's next — read them slowly and press **A** to go on or **B** to step back.

Parental controls come up during setup

Near the end, the console asks whether you'd like to set up parental controls. If this Switch is for a child, I suggest choosing the **smartphone app** option, which unlocks daily time limits and bedtimes. Chapter 10 walks you through it. You can also skip it now and come back.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Ten calm minutes at setup saves months of "just five more minutes" debates. When the limits live in the console, it's the Switch that says "time's up" — not you.

CHAPTER 5

Connecting to the TV

The **dock** is the stand that links the console to your television. You set it up once, behind or beside the TV, and then you just drop the console in to play on the big screen.

Setting up the dock (Switch 2)

1. Open the cover on the back of the dock.
2. Plug the USB-C end of the **Switch 2 AC adapter** into the dock's power port, and the other end into a wall outlet.
3. Plug one end of the **HDMI cable** (the one in the box) into the dock's HDMI port and the other into an open HDMI socket on your TV. Note which number it is — HDMI 1, HDMI 2 and so on.
4. Close the cover on the back of the dock.
5. Slide the console into the dock with its screen facing the same way as the front of the dock.
6. On the TV remote, press **Input** or **Source** and choose the HDMI number you used. The Switch picture should appear, and the console's own screen goes dark.

HEADS UP

Use the Switch 2's own power adapter

Nintendo says the original Switch AC adapter can't power a Switch 2 dock for TV mode. If the TV stays blank, the wrong adapter is one of the first things to check. Nintendo also suggests plugging straight into the wall rather than a power strip while you're troubleshooting.

Setting up the dock (original Switch and OLED)

The idea is the same. Open the back of the dock, plug the Switch AC adapter into the port marked for it and the HDMI cable into the HDMI port, run the HDMI cable to the TV, close the cover and set the console in the dock with the screen facing front. Then pick the right input on the TV.

If there's no picture on the TV

1. Check the TV's input. Press **Input** or **Source** and step through each HDMI choice slowly.
2. Make sure the console is seated all the way down in the dock.
3. Unplug the AC adapter from the dock and the wall for 30 seconds, then plug it back in — power first, then HDMI.
4. If there's a soundbar or receiver between the Switch and the TV, connect the Switch straight to the TV for a test.
5. Still blank? Chapter 22 has more, or give me a call.

TIP

Write down the HDMI number

Jot the HDMI number on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 24. When someone else in the family uses the TV and switches the input, that one number is all you need to get the Switch back.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Playing on the TV turns a solo gadget into a family activity. Grandparents can watch, cheer, or pick up a second controller and join in.

CHAPTER 6

Wi-Fi & Keeping It Up to Date

A Switch works without the internet for playing games you already have on cartridges. But you'll want Wi-Fi for downloads, updates, parental controls and online play.

Connecting (or reconnecting) to Wi-Fi

1. From the HOME Menu, choose **System Settings** (the gear icon).
2. Choose **Internet**, then **Internet Settings**. The console looks for nearby networks.
3. Pick your network's name from the list.
4. Type your Wi-Fi password with the on-screen keyboard and confirm.
5. The console tests the connection. When it's done, choose **OK**.

Nintendo suggests keeping the console within about 10 feet of the router while you set up Wi-Fi, for a strong signal. After that it usually works fine farther away.

Checking for a system update

1. Open **System Settings**.
2. Scroll all the way down and choose **System**.
3. Choose **System Update**. The console checks and installs anything new.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why updates matter

Updates fix problems, close security holes and add features. Some newer games and features also need an up-to-date console before they'll start. Most of the time the Switch updates itself overnight while it's asleep and connected to Wi-Fi.

STAY SAFE

Only update from System Settings

Real Switch updates come through the console itself. Nobody needs your password, a website download or a phone call to "update your Switch." If someone offers, it's a scam (Chapter 21).

PART 3

Accounts & the Family

The grown-up side of the Switch: the Nintendo Account, the family group that ties parents and children together, and the users on the console.

CHAPTER 7

Your Nintendo Account

A **Nintendo Account** is a free sign-in, like an email account, that belongs to a person rather than a console. It holds the games that person has bought, their friends list, their online membership and their saved progress in the cloud. If the console is ever lost or replaced, the account is how everything comes back.

Who needs one?

- **Every parent or grandparent who will manage the Switch** needs their own adult account. It's required for the parental controls app.
- **Each child** who plays should have their own child account, created by the adult (Chapter 8).
- You don't need one just to pick up a controller and play a cartridge someone else owns.

Creating an adult account

1. On a computer, tablet or phone, go to **accounts.nintendo.com**.
2. Choose **Create a Nintendo Account**.
3. Enter your email address, a password, a nickname, your birthday and your region, and agree to the terms.
4. Nintendo emails you a code. Type it in to confirm the address.
5. That's it — you'll use this email and password to sign in on the Switch and in the apps.

> **TIP**
> **Use an email you actually check**
> Purchase receipts, parental-consent requests and sign-in codes all go to this address. A shared family email that nobody reads is how important messages get missed.

Add a second lock: 2-step verification

2-step verification means that signing in takes your password *plus* a six-digit code from an app on your phone. Even if someone steals the password, they can't get in. It's free and well worth it on any account with a credit card attached.

1. Install the free **Google Authenticator** app on your phone (App Store or Google Play).
2. Sign in at **accounts.nintendo.com**.

3. Choose **Sign-in and security settings**, then next to **2-Step Verification** choose **Edit**.
4. Choose **2-Step Verification setup**. Nintendo may email you a code to confirm it's you.
5. Open Google Authenticator, tap the **+** to add an account, and scan the square code shown on the Nintendo page.
6. Type the six-digit code the app shows into the Nintendo page and submit.
7. Nintendo shows you **backup codes**. Write them down or print them and keep them somewhere safe, then confirm that you've saved them.

HEADS UP

Keep those backup codes

If you get a new phone and lose the authenticator app, the backup codes are your way back in. Put them in the same safe place as your other important papers.

GOOD TO KNOW

Passkeys work too

Nintendo also lets you sign in with a **passkey** — a sign-in stored on your phone that you unlock with your face, fingerprint or phone PIN instead of typing a password. Nintendo notes a passkey works only on the device it was set up on, so keep your password as a backup.

CHAPTER 8

Family Groups & Child Accounts

A **family group** links up to eight Nintendo Accounts together. The grown-ups in the group can supervise the children's accounts — set spending limits, approve chat friends and see what's been played. Family groups also let you share a Nintendo Switch Online family membership and lend games to each other (Chapters 15 and 16).

Roles in a family group

Role	What it means
Admin	The adult who created the group. Only the admin can add members.
Parent/guardian	An adult who can supervise children's accounts. The admin can give this role to another adult.
Supervised account	A child's account (or any account a parent manages). Its spending and some features are controlled by the parents.
Member	Everyone else — for example, a teenager or another adult sharing the membership.

Creating an account for a child

1. Sign in at **accounts.nintendo.com** with the adult account that will be the admin.
2. Choose **Family group**.
3. Choose **Create family group** (the first time) or **Add a member**.
4. Choose **Create an account for a child**.
5. Enter the child's birthday and your own password.
6. The first time, U.S. law requires a parent's consent. Nintendo asks for a credit card and makes a one-time **$0.50** charge to confirm an adult is present.
7. Choose a nickname, a **sign-in ID** (the child's username: at least 6 characters, lowercase, no spaces) and a password of at least 8 characters.
8. Agree to the user agreement and privacy policy, then choose **Submit** and **OK**.
9. Write down the sign-in ID and password. You'll need them to link the child's user on the Switch.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why the 50-cent charge?

A federal law called COPPA protects children's privacy online and requires a parent's verifiable consent before a child's account is created. A tiny credit-card charge is one of the ways companies confirm that consent. It's a one-time charge from Nintendo itself, made only inside your Nintendo Account settings — never something a caller or texter should ask you for.

Inviting another adult (or an older child)

1. In **Family group**, choose **Add a member**, then **Invite someone to your family group**.
2. Read the note about only inviting people you know, and confirm.
3. Type the email address of their Nintendo Account and submit.
4. They open the invitation email, click the link, sign in and choose **Join family group**.
5. Once they've joined, you can give them a role — for example, make a second parent a **parent/guardian** so they can help manage the controls.

FROM BILL

Grandparents can be in the family group too

If you're the grandparent who bought the Switch, you don't have to be the one in charge. Often it works best for a parent to be the admin and invite you as a member, so you can share the online membership and borrow games without managing the rules. Talk it over with the parents first.

CHAPTER 9

Users on the Console

On the Switch itself, each person who plays gets a **user** — a little profile picture on the HOME Menu. Each user keeps their own saved games. Linking a user to a Nintendo Account is what connects that person's purchases, friends and parental supervision.

Adding a user

1. From the HOME Menu, open **System Settings**.
2. Choose **Users**, then **Add User**.
3. Pick a picture (a character or a Mii) and type a nickname.
4. When asked, choose to link a Nintendo Account and sign in with that person's sign-in ID or email and password. For a child, use the child account you made in Chapter 8.

TIP

One user per person

It's tempting to let everyone play on Grandma's user. But saved games belong to a user, so when two children share one, they end up overwriting each other's progress — which leads to tears. A separate user for each person avoids that.

GOOD TO KNOW

Parental controls cover the whole console

Most parental controls (time limits, age ratings) apply to **everyone** who uses that Switch, not just one user. Nintendo suggests setting them with the youngest player in mind. The exceptions are spending limits and GameChat, which are set per child account.

Locking adults' purchases behind a password

If a grown-up's account with a credit card is on the family Switch, make sure the eShop asks for a password before every purchase. Nintendo lets you choose this inside the Nintendo eShop: select your user icon in the upper-right corner to open your account information, look for the password setting, and choose to always require the password. That way a child playing on the same console can't buy anything on your card. (Children's own spending is controlled separately — see Chapter 13.)

PART 4

Parental Controls

Daily time limits, bedtimes, age-appropriate games, safe chat and no surprise charges — set up once from your own phone.

CHAPTER 10

The Parental Controls App

Nintendo offers a free phone app called **Nintendo Switch Parental Controls**. Once it's linked to the console, you can see what the children played and for how long, set a daily limit and a bedtime, and approve chat requests — all from your own phone, even when you're not in the house.

What the app can do that the console can't

Control	On the console	In the app	In your Nintendo Account
Block games by age rating	Yes	Yes	—
Limit talking with other players	Yes	Yes	—
Daily play-time limit and bedtime	—	**Yes**	—
See what was played and for how long	—	**Yes**	—
GameChat approvals (Switch 2)	—	**Yes**	—
Stop purchases in the eShop	—	—	**Yes**

What you need

- A smartphone or tablet: iPhone or iPad on **iOS 16 or newer**, or Android **8.0 or newer**.
- An adult Nintendo Account (age 18 or older) — see Chapter 7.
- The Switch connected to the internet.
- The app is free. Your phone's normal data charges may apply.

Linking the app to a Switch 2

1. On your phone, download **Nintendo Switch Parental Controls** from the App Store or Google Play. (Typing **p.nintendo.com** into your phone's browser takes you straight to it.)
2. Open the app and tap **Start**, then **Next**.
3. Choose whether to send usage data (either is fine), then tap **Sign In / Create Account** and sign in with your adult Nintendo Account.
4. Tap **Select this account**, then **Next**. The app shows a six-digit **Link Code**.
5. On the Switch 2, open **System Settings** and scroll down to **Parental Controls**.
6. Choose **Set Up Parental Controls**, then **App Has Been Installed**.

7. Type the six-digit Link Code and choose **OK**, then **Link**.
8. Choose **OK** on both the console and your phone. You're linked.

TIP

Already set controls on the console?

If you see **Change Settings** instead of **Set Up Parental Controls**, choose **Change Settings**, enter your PIN, then choose the option to set up in the free smartphone app and continue with the Link Code.

Your parental controls PIN

During setup you choose a **PIN** of 4 to 8 digits. The Switch asks for it whenever someone tries to get around a restriction or change certain settings. Choose a number the children won't guess (not a birthday), and write it on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 24 — kept somewhere they won't find it.

Two parents can share the job

Up to two parents or guardians in the same family group can manage the controls, each from their own phone. One app can also watch over up to eight consoles — handy if each grandchild has their own.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You don't have to stand over anyone's shoulder. The app quietly keeps track, enforces the rules you picked, and lets you check in from anywhere — so screen-time conversations can be calm and based on facts, not guesses.

CHAPTER 11

Play-Time Limits & Bedtime

This is the feature most families want first: a daily limit on how long the Switch can be played, and a bedtime after which it can't be played at all.

Setting a daily limit and a bedtime

1. Open the **Nintendo Switch Parental Controls** app on your phone and pick the console.
2. Look for **Play-Time Limit** in the console's settings and tap it.
3. Choose how long the console can be used each day.
4. To give weekends a different limit, turn on the option to set days individually.
5. Set a **bedtime** (and, on newer versions, a morning start time) if you'd like the console to be off limits overnight.
6. Choose what happens when time runs out: just show a reminder on the screen, or **suspend the software** so the game stops.
7. Save your changes. The console picks them up over the internet.

What happens when time is up

- If you chose a reminder, a notice appears on the screen and the child can keep playing — the app records that they went over.
- If you chose to suspend the software, the console goes to sleep and the game can't be continued until the next day or until you lift the limit. Players can usually pick up right where they left off.
- From the app, you can extend the day's limit by 5, 15 or 30 minutes or an hour, or switch the limit off just for today.

GOOD TO KNOW

The limit is for the whole console

The play-time limit applies to the console, so it counts everyone who plays on it — including you. The app still shows each user's time separately, so you can see who played what.

TIP

Warn before you suspend

Some games only save at certain moments. A reminder-only limit for the first week or two lets children learn to save and wrap up when the notice appears. Switch to suspending later if the reminders get ignored.

FROM BILL

Agree on the rules together

Limits work best when the child helps set them. Sit down together, open the app, and agree on a daily time and a bedtime everyone can live with. The app becomes the referee, not the bad guy.

CHAPTER 12

Age Ratings, Chat & GameChat

Every game sold in the U.S. carries an **ESRB rating** — a letter on the box that tells you what age it's meant for. The Switch can block games above a rating you choose, and can limit how children talk with other players.

The ratings you'll see

Rating	What it means
E — Everyone	Suitable for all ages.
E10+ — Everyone 10+	May have more cartoon action or mild language.
T — Teen	Generally for ages 13 and up.
M — Mature 17+	Intended for adults.

Nintendo's ready-made restriction levels

Level	Blocks games rated	Talking with others
Child	E10+, T and M	Restricted
Pre-Teen	T and M	Restricted
Teen	M	Allowed

You can pick one of these in the app (or on the console under **System Settings** > **Parental Controls**), or choose custom settings. If a game you've decided is fine gets blocked, entering your PIN on the console lets it play.

GameChat on Switch 2

GameChat is Nintendo's voice chat — and video chat with a compatible camera — on the Switch 2. Players start it by pressing the **C** button. It needs a paid Nintendo Switch Online membership (Chapter 15).

- For players **under 16** and anyone with a supervised account, GameChat won't work until a parent has linked the parental controls app and set up GameChat controls for that child.
- In the app, you approve which friends the child may chat with.
- Video chat (it needs a compatible USB camera) must be approved for each session, and you choose how much of the picture friends see: face only, no background, or no filter. You can also turn the camera off entirely.

- The app shows when the child used GameChat, for how long and with which friends. It does **not** let you listen to the conversations.
- GameChat also requires a phone number on the Nintendo Account to verify identity. For children under 16, the parent registers the number on their own account.

STAY SAFE

Friends only, and people you know

Online, a "friend" is just someone who accepted a friend request. Talk with children about only adding people they know in real life — classmates, cousins, Grandpa. You'll see each GameChat request in the app before it's allowed, which gives you a natural moment to ask "who's this?"

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

GameChat can be a lovely way for a grandparent in another state to play and talk with a grandchild. Because you approve each friend, it's a safe, contained way to stay close.

CHAPTER 13

No Surprise Charges

Spending limits are set in the **Nintendo Account** website, not in the app or on the console. This is the setting that stops a child from buying games or add-ons on the family credit card.

Turning off purchases for a child

1. On a computer or phone, sign in at **accounts.nintendo.com** with your parent/guardian account.
2. Choose **Family group** to see the supervised accounts.
3. Choose the child's account.
4. Check **Spending Restrictions** to block purchases and automatic renewals on the Switch 2, Switch and the Nintendo Store website.
5. If you'd also like the eShop to hide games above the child's age, check **Age-Based Content Restrictions**.
6. Choose **Save changes**.

GOOD TO KNOW

The account must be supervised

You can only set these restrictions on a supervised account in your family group. Child accounts you create are supervised automatically. An older child's existing account can be set as supervised from the Family group page — they'll get an email and have to accept.

Giving a set amount instead

Some families prefer an allowance. Leave spending restrictions on, and when the child earns a game, a parent buys it for them — or temporarily lifts the restriction for one purchase and turns it back on. Nintendo eShop gift cards from a store you trust are another tidy way to give a fixed amount.

HEADS UP

Check for subscriptions

Some games sell add-ons, extra levels or memberships. A quick look at the receipts in your email, or at your account's purchase history, now and then catches anything unexpected early.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With spending switched off, you can hand over the controller without wondering what the next credit card statement will say.

PART 5

Games, Memberships & Sharing

The different ways games are sold, what the Nintendo Switch Online membership gets you, and how families share games between consoles.

CHAPTER 14

Buying Games: Cartridges, Game-Key Cards & Downloads

Switch games come three ways. Knowing the difference saves a disappointed face on gift day.

The three kinds

Kind	How it works
Game card (cartridge)	A small card that holds the whole game. Slide it into the slot on the top of the console and play — no internet needed. Can be lent, swapped or resold like a book.
Game-key card (Switch 2)	Looks like a cartridge, but holds **no game data**. It's a key: the first time you put it in, the Switch 2 downloads the full game. After that it plays offline, but the card must stay in the slot.
Digital download	Bought in the **Nintendo eShop** on the console (or Nintendo's website) and downloaded. Tied to the Nintendo Account that bought it, with no card to lose.

Spotting a game-key card in the store

Nintendo marks game-key card boxes with a small **key** symbol on the front, and the box lists how much storage the download needs. For a game-key card you'll need Wi-Fi the first time and enough free space on the console (Chapter 19). A Nintendo Account isn't required for that download.

HEADS UP

Gift tip: check the box

If the child's home has slow internet, or the console is almost full, a regular cartridge is the easier gift. A game-key card needs a big download before the first play — not ideal on Christmas morning with everyone waiting.

Buying in the Nintendo eShop

1. From the HOME Menu, select **Nintendo eShop** (the orange shopping-bag icon).
2. Choose the user whose account should own the game.
3. Search or browse, then select the game.

4. Check the price, the age rating and the storage size, then choose to purchase.
5. Pay with eShop funds, a saved card or a gift card code. Enter your password if asked.
6. The game downloads and its icon appears on the HOME Menu.

TIP

"Nintendo Switch 2 Edition" explained

Some original Switch games have a **Switch 2 Edition** with improvements on the new console. If you already own the original, there's often a lower-priced **upgrade pack** instead of buying the game again. Read the store page carefully so you don't pay twice.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the three kinds lets you choose the right gift for the household — and avoid a game that can't be played until a long download finishes.

CHAPTER 15

Nintendo Switch Online

Nintendo Switch Online is Nintendo's paid membership. You don't need it to play most games by yourself or with people in the same room. You do need it for most online play with people far away, for GameChat, and for cloud backups of saved games.

What it costs (U.S., November 2026)

Plan	Individual (1 account)	Family (up to 8 accounts)
Nintendo Switch Online	$19.99 a year	$34.99 a year
Nintendo Switch Online + Expansion Pack	$49.99 a year	$79.99 a year

What you get

- **Online play** in games that support it.
- **GameChat** voice and video chat on Switch 2.
- **Save Data Cloud** — automatic online backups of saved progress in compatible games.
- A library of **classic games** (NES, Super NES, Game Boy).
- The **Expansion Pack** adds more classics (Nintendo 64, Game Boy Advance, SEGA Genesis, and GameCube on Switch 2) plus some add-ons and upgrade packs at no extra charge.

TIP

The family plan is the bargain

One family membership covers up to eight people in the same family group. Nintendo points out that split eight ways, it comes to under five dollars per person a year. A grandparent can join the family group and share it.

Free trial

Nintendo offers a **7-day free trial** of the individual plan. It turns into a paid monthly membership unless you cancel, so set a reminder if you only want to try it. Nintendo's fine print says the trial can be used once per account.

Turning off automatic renewal

Memberships renew themselves at the then-current price unless you turn that off. Nintendo asks that you do it at least 48 hours before the membership ends. Only the account that bought it can change it.

1. From the HOME Menu, open **Nintendo eShop** and choose the user who bought the membership.
2. Select the user icon in the upper-right corner to see the account information.
3. Choose the option to **turn off automatic renewal** and confirm.
4. Or, on a computer: sign in at **accounts.nintendo.com**, choose **Nintendo Switch Online**, pick the membership and end automatic renewal there.

HEADS UP

Turning it off is one-way

Once automatic renewal is turned off, Nintendo says it can't be switched back on for that membership. You keep everything until the end of the term, then simply buy a new membership if you want it again.

CHAPTER 16

Virtual Game Cards & Sharing in the Family

Digital games used to be stuck on one console. **Virtual game cards** change that: they let a downloaded game be moved between two of your consoles, or lent to someone in your family group — a bit like handing over a cartridge.

Where to find them

On the HOME Menu, select **Virtual Game Cards**. You'll see every digital game the account owns. Select one to load it onto this console; it downloads if needed and is ready to play.

Moving a game between your two consoles

- Up to two consoles can be linked to one Nintendo Account for virtual game cards.
- The first time, the two consoles pair using local wireless and the internet.
- After that, "eject" the card on one console and "load" it on the other. It plays on one at a time.
- Once loaded, the game plays offline, and other users on that console can play it too.
- Games made only for Switch 2 can only be loaded on a Switch 2.

Lending a game to a family member

1. Make sure you're both in the same Nintendo Account family group (Chapter 8).
2. Bring the two consoles near each other — lending uses local wireless — and make sure both are on the internet.
3. On your console, open **Virtual Game Cards**, pick the game and choose to lend it to the family member.
4. They can play it for up to **14 days**, or return it sooner.
5. When it comes back, they keep their saved progress, so they can pick up where they left off if they borrow it again or buy it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **One game per account at a time**
>
> Nintendo's U.S. page says you can lend one game per account for 14 days. Some games — such as those that come only with a Nintendo Switch Online membership — can't be lent.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Grandparents and parents can build one shared library instead of buying the same game twice — and a visiting grandchild can borrow a favorite for the holidays.

CHAPTER 17

Playing Together

The Switch is at its best when more than one person is holding a controller. There are two kinds of "together": in the same room, and online.

In the same room

- Slide the two Joy-Con off and hand one to each player. Turned sideways, each one works as a small controller in many games.
- Many family games (racing, sports, party games) support up to four players on one console, with extra controllers.
- No membership or internet is needed for this kind of play.

Connecting extra controllers

1. From the HOME Menu, select **Controllers** (the icon that looks like a Joy-Con).
2. Choose the option for changing the grip and order of controllers.
3. The screen shows a picture of which buttons to press on each extra controller. Follow it until each controller appears on the screen.
4. Press **A** when everyone is connected.

Online, with family far away

To play with someone in another house, both players need the game, a Nintendo Account, a **Nintendo Switch Online** membership and to be friends on the Switch. Most online games then offer a choice like "play with friends." On Switch 2, GameChat lets you talk while you play.

Adding a friend

1. On the HOME Menu, select your user picture in the upper-left corner.
2. Look for **Add Friend** and choose it.
3. Choose to search using a **friend code**, then type the other person's code (they'll find theirs on their own profile page).
4. Send the request. Once they accept, you're friends.

STAY SAFE

Children's friend requests

Share friend codes only with family and people you know in real life. Parents can see and manage a child's friends, and must approve GameChat friends in the parental controls app (Chapter 12).

FROM BILL

Games that suit grandparents

Bowling, golf, tennis and similar sports games, gentle puzzle games and cooperative games where everyone works together are good places to start. Ask the grandchildren to teach you — they'll love it.

PART 6

Moving to a Switch 2 & Keeping Progress Safe

How to bring everything from an old Switch to a new Switch 2, and how saved games, storage and memory cards work.

CHAPTER 18

Moving Everything to a New Switch 2

If a child is upgrading from an original Switch, Nintendo's **system transfer** copies the users, saved games, settings and downloaded games to the new Switch 2. There's one important rule: **the transfer happens during the new console's first-time setup**. Plan it before you unwrap.

Two ways to transfer

Method	When to use it
Side by side (local)	Both consoles sit next to each other and talk directly. Nintendo recommends this when you have both consoles at the same time.
Through Nintendo's server	The old Switch uploads everything, then is **erased**. You download it onto the Switch 2 later — handy if you're trading in or giving away the old one first. The data waits on the server for up to a year, until a **Download Deadline** date the screen shows you.

Before you start

- Put both consoles on Wi-Fi and on their chargers. An internet connection is required.
- Update the old Switch: **System Settings** > **System** > **System Update**.
- Make sure every user on the old Switch is linked to a Nintendo Account, and that everyone who uses it knows the transfer is happening — it moves **all** users at once.
- If games are stored on a microSD card in the old Switch, Nintendo suggests moving as much as you can to the console's own storage first.

The side-by-side transfer, step by step

On the new Switch 2

1. Turn it on and follow the setup screens. Connect to Wi-Fi and accept the update when offered.
2. When you reach the System Transfer screen, select **Start System Transfer**.
3. If you have a microSD Express card to use, insert it as shown; otherwise select **Skip**.
4. Select **Sign In to a Nintendo Account** and sign in with the same account that's linked to a user on the old Switch. Select **Next**.
5. With both consoles nearby, select **Done**.

On the old Switch

1. Open **System Settings** > **System** > **System Transfer to Nintendo Switch 2**.
2. Select **Next**, then **Done** when the Switch 2 is nearby and ready.
3. Choose whether to re-download games and transfer screenshots and videos, then select **Next**.
4. Wait for the two to connect. On the Switch 2, select **Start Download** when it appears.
5. The Switch 2 restarts and finishes on its own. Select **OK** on the old Switch when it says the data has been sent.

What moves and what doesn't

Moves over	Doesn't move
All users, their Nintendo Accounts, friends and play history	Bluetooth headphone pairings
Saved games	Custom controller button settings
Digital games (they re-download on the Switch 2)	Time, time zone, region and language (you set these again)
Screenshots and videos in the console's memory	
Parental controls and the link to the parental controls app	

HEADS UP

Saves may leave the old console

After a side-by-side transfer, saves for games that support cloud backup stay on the old Switch as well. But users not linked to a Nintendo Account, and saves for games without cloud backup, are **moved** — deleted from the old Switch. And there's no transfer back from a Switch 2 to an original Switch. If a younger sibling is inheriting the old console, set up their own user there afterward.

TIP

Already finished setup on the Switch 2?

Nintendo says a full system transfer can only happen during first-time setup. If you've already set up the Switch 2, you can move individual users' saves instead, or download cloud backups if you have Nintendo Switch Online. Or call me and we'll sort out the best path.

CHAPTER 19

Saved Games, Storage & Memory Cards

Two different things live on a Switch: the **games** themselves and each player's **saved progress**. Games can always be downloaded again from the account that bought them. Saved progress is the precious part.

Protecting saved progress

- **Save Data Cloud** — included with Nintendo Switch Online — backs up saves automatically for compatible games. It's the simplest safety net.
- Each user's saves stay with that user on that console, so link every user to a Nintendo Account.
- Before selling or giving away a console, make sure saves are backed up or transferred first.

Running out of space

The Switch 2 has 256 GB of built-in storage, part of which the system uses. The original Switch models have much less. Big downloads fill them up quickly. You have two choices: delete games you aren't playing (you can download them again any time) or add a memory card.

Which memory card?

Console	Card to buy
Switch 2	Needs a **microSD Express** card. Ordinary microSD cards won't work for storing games on Switch 2. Look for "microSD Express" on the package.
Switch, OLED, Lite	Use a regular **microSDXC** card.

HEADS UP

Buy the right card

A regular microSD card from an old Switch can't be used to hold games on a Switch 2. It's an easy and frustrating mistake, so double-check the word **Express** before you buy. Buy from a well-known store; counterfeit memory cards are common online.

Deleting a game you're not playing

1. On the HOME Menu, highlight the game.
2. Press the **+** or **–** button to open its options.
3. Look for the data management choice and pick the option to archive or delete the software.
4. **Archive** removes the game but keeps the icon and the saves, so it's easy to re-download later. That's usually the better choice.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With saves backed up and space under control, a new console, a lost Switch or a full memory never means starting a beloved game over from the beginning.

PART 7

Comfort, Safety & Simple Fixes

Making the screen easier to see and read, spotting the scams aimed at gamers and their families, and the calm fixes for the most common hiccups.

CHAPTER 20

Easier to See, Read & Hear

Small text on a handheld screen is hard on anyone's eyes. The Switch 2 has a full set of accessibility settings that make the menus larger, bolder and clearer, and can even read them aloud.

Where to find them (Switch 2)

From the HOME Menu, open **System Settings** and choose **Accessibility**.

Setting	What it does
Text Size	Choose standard, large or maximum text in the menus.
Bold Text	Makes letters thicker and easier to read.
High Contrast	Darkens grays and sharpens the difference between text and background.
Zoom	Turn it on, then press the **HOME** button twice quickly to magnify the screen. Press twice again to stop zooming.
Convert Text to Speech	The console reads menu text aloud. You can change the voice, speed and volume.
Color options	Show the screen in grayscale or with inverted colors.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menus, not games

Nintendo notes that text size and bold text change the console's own menus, not what appears inside a game. Many games have their own text-size, subtitle or difficulty options in their settings menu — check there too.

On an original Switch

The original Switch, OLED and Lite have fewer options, but you'll still find a zoom setting and other display choices in **System Settings**. Look under **System** and **Themes**, and try the **Basic Black** theme if a darker background is easier on your eyes.

Hearing it better

- Use the **volume buttons** on the top of the console in handheld mode, or the TV's volume in TV mode.
- Wired headphones plug into the headphone jack on the console. Bluetooth headphones can be paired in **System Settings** under the Bluetooth audio option.
- Turn on subtitles inside games that offer them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With bigger, clearer text and a quick zoom, grandparents can join in without squinting — and players with low vision can use the menus on their own.

CHAPTER 21

Scams Aimed at Gamers & Their Families

Game consoles and the accounts behind them are a favorite target for scammers, because children are trusting and the accounts often have a credit card attached. The good news: nearly every one of these tricks has the same few warning signs.

SCAM ALERT

"Pay with eShop gift cards"

No real company, government office or tech support line asks to be paid with gift cards. The Federal Trade Commission says it plainly: anyone who demands payment by gift card is a scammer. If someone on the phone, in a text or inside a game asks for the numbers on the back of a Nintendo eShop card, stop and hang up.

SCAM ALERT

Too-good-to-be-true Switch deals online

Nintendo has warned about fake websites that copy its look and advertise deeply discounted consoles. You pay, and either nothing arrives or your card details are stolen. Buy from Nintendo's own store or a retailer you already know, and type the address yourself instead of clicking an ad.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "Nintendo" emails

Scammers send emails dressed up to look like they're from Nintendo — sometimes even showing Nintendo's real sending address — warning that your account is locked or a purchase went through. Don't click the link. Go to **accounts.nintendo.com** yourself to check. If you already typed your password into a linked page, change it right away and turn on 2-step verification (Chapter 7).

SCAM ALERT

"Free games" and "free currency" generators

Websites and videos promising free eShop codes, free games or free in-game coins usually want the child's account sign-in, a download, or a "small verification fee." There are no free code generators. Teach children that a real gift never asks for a password.

The warning signs, in one list

- **Hurry.** "Act now or your account will be deleted."
- **Gift cards or odd payment.** Gift cards, wire transfers, cryptocurrency.
- **Asking for a password or sign-in code.** Nintendo doesn't need you to read a code to anyone.
- **A link in a message** instead of you going to the website yourself.
- **A deal that's far better than any store.**

Teach the children three rules

1. Never share your password or sign-in code with anyone — not a friend, not someone who says they work for Nintendo.
2. Never type your Nintendo Account into a website someone sent you.
3. If anything online asks for money, a gift card or a password, come get a grown-up first.

> **FROM BILL**
>
> **When in doubt, check with someone you trust**
>
> If something about a message, a call or a deal feels off, stop and check before you act. I'd much rather get a call about something that turns out to be nothing. (330) 200-8042.

CHAPTER 22

Fixing Common Hiccups

Most Switch problems are solved by one of a few simple moves. Try them in order, slowly.

The restart fixes a surprising amount

1. Press and hold the **POWER** button on the top edge for about three seconds.
2. Select **Power Options**.
3. Select **Restart**. The console turns off and back on.

If the screen is frozen and nothing responds

Hold the **POWER** button down for a full twelve seconds to force the console off. Wait a moment, then press POWER once to turn it back on. Anything not yet saved in the game may be lost, but saved progress and the console's data are safe.

Quick fixes by problem

Problem	Try this
No picture on the TV	Check the TV input, reseat the console in the dock, unplug the dock's power for 30 seconds and try again. On Switch 2, use the Switch 2 power adapter. See Chapter 5.
A controller won't respond	Attach it to the side of the console for a moment — that charges it and re-pairs it. Then detach it and try again.
Wi-Fi keeps dropping	Restart the console, then restart your router (unplug it for 30 seconds). Moving the console closer to the router helps.
"Not enough space"	Archive games you aren't playing, or add the right memory card (Chapter 19).
A game won't start	Check for a system update (Chapter 6) and make sure the cartridge is pushed all the way in.
An error code appears	Write the code down exactly. Nintendo's support site (support.nintendo.com) has a page for most codes.
Forgot the parental controls PIN	Nintendo's support site has steps to find or reset it. If the parental controls app is linked, start with the app.

HEADS UP

Unplug from the wall, not the console

When you unplug to reset, pull the adapter from the wall outlet. Repeatedly yanking the small USB-C plug out of the console or dock wears the socket.

TIP

Write down what happened

If you need to call me or Nintendo, it helps to know which model it is, what you were doing, and any error code on the screen. A phone photo of the screen is perfect.

PART 8

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 TV.

CHAPTER 23

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can handle most of a Switch on your own. 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

- **Setting up a gift before the big day** — accounts, family group, parental controls and updates done ahead of time, so the child can just unwrap and play.
- **Moving from an old Switch to a Switch 2**, especially when there are several children's saves to protect.
- **The parental controls app won't link**, or you'd like a second parent or grandparent added to share the job.
- **The TV won't show a picture** and you've tried the steps in Chapter 5.
- **A suspicious message, call or charge** involving a Nintendo Account.
- **Wi-Fi is weak where the Switch sits** — I can test and fix the signal.
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person set it up** and show you the ropes. That's always reason enough.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace — no rushing, no talking down, and no gamer jargon. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I'll always tell you honestly when a purchase or a membership isn't worth your money. I bring 30+ years of professional experience to every visit, and Bill's Home Tech serves Portage County, Ohio. I can often help over a remote session, or come to your home.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is free to keep and share.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

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

Thank you for taking the time to understand the Switch. You'll find it's a lot more fun when you know how it works — and a wonderful excuse to play together.

— Bill

CHAPTER 24

Your Nintendo Switch Cheat-Sheet

Print just this page and keep it near the TV. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

To do this	Do this
Lost or confused	Press the **HOME** button (the little house).
Choose / go back	**A** chooses, **B** goes back.
No picture on the TV	TV remote > **Input/Source** > the Switch's HDMI number.
Restart	Hold **POWER** 3 seconds > **Power Options** > **Restart**.
Frozen	Hold **POWER** 12 seconds, then turn back on.
Time limits and bedtime	Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app on your phone.
Stop purchases	accounts.nintendo.com > **Family group** > child > **Spending Restrictions**.
Bigger text (Switch 2)	**System Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Text Size**.
Zoom (Switch 2)	Turn on in Accessibility, then press **HOME** twice quickly.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Model	_____
The Switch is on HDMI number	_____
Wi-Fi name and password	_____
Parent's Nintendo Account email	_____
Child sign-in IDs	_____
Parental controls PIN (keep private)	_____
Online membership renews on	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Press **HOME** and try again.
2. Restart the console (hold POWER, Power Options, Restart).
3. Check the TV input, the dock's power and the Wi-Fi.
4. Note any error code and look it up at support.nintendo.com.
5. Call Bill at (330) 200-8042 — that's what I'm here for.

Money-smart and safe habits

- Turn on **Spending Restrictions** for every child account.
- Choose the **family** Nintendo Switch Online plan if more than two people will use it.
- Check whether the online membership is set to renew, and decide on purpose.
- Never pay anyone with gift cards, and never share a password or sign-in code.
- Turn on **2-step verification** for any grown-up account with a card attached.