BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

# Your Phone Camera Better Photos & Videos

Focus, zoom, portrait and night modes, video and scanning — for iPhone, Samsung Galaxy and Google Pixel

**A plain-English guide to the camera in your pocket**

Take your time — you can't break it

*Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech*

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

*For iPhone (iOS 26 & 27), Samsung Galaxy & Google Pixel · facts current November 2026*

# What's Inside

This is your phone camera manual. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there's no test, and you can't fall behind. Every feature comes with what it actually does *for you*, plus slow, step-by-step directions for iPhone, Samsung Galaxy and Google Pixel. It was checked in November 2026 against iOS 26 and iOS 27 and the current Samsung and Pixel camera apps; if a button sits in a slightly different spot on your phone, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

# Getting to Know Your Camera

Which camera app you have, the fastest ways to open it, and a calm tour of the screen. By the end of this part you'll take a good photo and know exactly where it went.

CHAPTER 1

# A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. The camera is the part of your phone you'll probably use most — for the grandkids, the garden, the birthday cake, the car accident you hope never happens, and the prescription label you want to read in bigger print. It's also the part that confuses a lot of people, because the screen is full of little symbols and the phone seems to have a mind of its own.

I'm Bill. For more than 30 years I've helped folks feel at home with their technology, and here in Portage County a good share of my visits end with someone saying, "I had no idea the camera could do that." I wrote this manual the way I'd explain it sitting next to you: slowly, in plain English, one button at a time. When I use a word you might not know, I'll stop and explain it right there.

## Who this manual is for

It's written for the three phones most people around here carry: an **iPhone**, a **Samsung Galaxy**, or a **Google Pixel**. Each has its own camera app, but they work in very nearly the same way. When the steps differ, I'll give you each one separately, clearly labeled. If you have a different Android phone (Motorola, OnePlus and others), the Samsung and Pixel steps will get you most of the way there.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this manual does for you

By the end you'll open the camera in a second, take sharp, bright photos, use portrait and night modes with confidence, record steady videos the family will actually want to watch, and use the camera as a handy scanner for forms and receipts. You'll also know how to keep your location and your personal papers private.

## The big promise: you can't break it

Here's the most important thing in this manual: **you cannot hurt your phone by trying camera buttons.** A photo you don't like can be deleted. A setting you change can be changed back. Every camera app starts fresh in its normal photo mode most of the time, so even if you wander into a strange mode, closing the camera and opening it again usually puts you right back where you started. So tap, explore and practice. Pictures of your kitchen table are perfect practice.

And you're never stuck alone. If you'd like a hand, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question.

***— Bill***

CHAPTER 2

# Which Camera App You Have

Every phone comes with a camera app already installed. You don't need to download anything to take great photos. Here's what yours is called and what it looks like.

| Your phone | The camera app and where photos go |
|---|---|
| **iPhone** | The app is simply called **Camera**. Its icon is a gray square with a black camera on it. The photos you take go to the **Photos** app (the colorful flower). |
| **Samsung Galaxy** | Also called **Camera**, with a white icon showing a red or black lens. Your photos go to the **Gallery** app, and often to Google Photos too if it's set up. |
| **Google Pixel** | Called **Pixel Camera** (you may just see "Camera" under the icon). Your photos go to the **Google Photos** app (the pinwheel). |

## Which version of the phone software you have

Phone makers update their camera apps every year, so a button may sit in a slightly different spot than you remember. This manual was checked in November 2026 against:

- **iPhone:** iOS 26 and iOS 27. Apple redesigned the Camera app in iOS 26 to make it simpler, with the main modes along the bottom and extra tools tucked into a menu you open with a tap or a swipe up.
- **Samsung Galaxy:** One UI 8.5 and One UI 9, the newest Samsung software.
- **Google Pixel:** the current Pixel Camera app on Pixel phones running Android 16 or Android 17.

GOOD TO KNOW

### If your screen looks a little different

Older phones and older software put a few buttons in different places, but the ideas in this manual — tap to focus, hold still, use the right mode — work on every phone made in the last several years. If you can't find a button I describe, look for a small arrow or a row of three dots near the top or bottom of the camera screen. That's usually where extra tools hide.

## Finding your phone's software version

- **iPhone:** open **Settings** > **General** > **About**, and look at **iOS Version**.

- **Samsung:** open **Settings** > **About phone** > **Software information**, and look at **One UI version**.
- **Pixel:** open **Settings** > **About phone**, and look at **Android version**.

CHAPTER 3

# Opening the Camera in a Second

The best photo is the one you actually get. A grandchild's first steps or a deer at the bird feeder won't wait while you unlock the phone and hunt for an app. Learn one quick way to open the camera and you'll catch far more moments.

## On an iPhone

Apple gives you several ways. Pick the one that feels easiest and practice it a few times:

- Tap the **Camera** app on the Home Screen.
- From the **Lock Screen** (the screen you see before unlocking), **swipe left**. The camera opens without unlocking the phone.
- On the Lock Screen, **touch and hold** the small camera symbol in the bottom-right corner.
- Open **Control Center** (swipe down from the top-right corner) and tap the camera symbol.
- On iPhones with a **Camera Control** button on the side, **click it once**. More on that button in Chapter 5.
- Just ask Siri: "Open Camera."

GOOD TO KNOW

**The camera from the Lock Screen is private**

When you open the camera from the Lock Screen without unlocking, anyone holding the phone can take a picture, but they can only see the photos taken in that moment — not the rest of your library. Your other pictures stay locked away.

## On a Samsung Galaxy

- Tap the **Camera** app on the Home screen.
- From the Lock screen, **touch and drag the camera symbol** in the bottom-right corner up or toward the middle.
- **Press the side button twice quickly** (the button on the right edge you use to turn the screen off). On most Galaxy phones this opens the camera from anywhere. If it doesn't, the setting is in **Settings** > **Advanced features** > **Side button**.

## On a Google Pixel

- Tap the **Camera** app on the Home screen.

- If your Lock screen shows a camera symbol in a bottom corner, **touch and hold it** or drag it to open the camera.
- **Press the power button twice quickly.** If nothing happens, look in **Settings** > **System** > **Gestures** > **Quickly open camera** and turn it on.

TIP

### Practice the quick open five times

Right now, lock your phone and open the camera with the quick method five times in a row. It feels silly, but it turns into habit — and habit is what catches the moment.

CHAPTER 4

# The Camera Screen, Piece by Piece

The first time you open the camera, the screen can look busy. Really, it's just five things. Once you know them, everything else is extra.

| What you see | What it does |
|---|---|
| **The picture (viewfinder)** | The big live picture in the middle. What you see here is what you'll get. |
| **The shutter button** | The big round white button at the bottom. Tap it to take a photo. In video mode it turns red and starts or stops recording. |
| **The mode names** | A row of words just above (or below) the shutter: **Photo**, **Video**, **Portrait** and others. Swipe left or right on the screen, or tap a word, to switch. |
| **The zoom numbers** | Small circles such as **.5**, **1x**, **2** or **3**. Tap one to switch lenses and zoom in or out. |
| **The little picture (thumbnail)** | The tiny square in the bottom corner shows your last photo. Tap it to see the photo full size. |
| **Flip camera** | A round arrow symbol near the shutter. Tap it to switch to the front camera for a selfie, and tap again to switch back. |

## Where the extra tools live

Flash, timer, picture shape and other tools are tucked away so they don't clutter the screen:

- **iPhone (iOS 26 and 27):** the Flash and Live Photo buttons sit above the picture. For more, **swipe up** from the mode names at the bottom, or tap the small menu button at the top of the screen. A row of tools appears: Flash, Live, Timer, Exposure, Styles and Aspect, among others.
- **Samsung:** the quick tools (flash, timer, picture shape) are in a row at the top of the screen. Some phones show a small arrow or a button with lines to expand them. The **gear** symbol opens all camera settings.
- **Pixel:** tap the **settings** symbol (a small gear or slider button) in the corner, or swipe down on the picture, to see flash, timer and picture shape. More settings are behind it.

TIP

### Choosing which iPhone tools show up

On iOS 27 you can choose which tools stay above the picture. Swipe up from the modes, tap **Edit**, then tap the tools you use most to add them. **Reset to Essentials** puts it back the way it came.

GOOD TO KNOW

### The green dot is a good thing

On an iPhone, a small **green dot** appears at the top of the screen whenever the camera is in use. Android phones show a similar green camera symbol. It's a privacy feature: if you ever see it when you're not using the camera, an app is using it, and you can find out which one.

CHAPTER 5

# The iPhone Camera Control Button

Recent iPhones have an extra button on the right side, low down when you hold the phone upright. Apple calls it the **Camera Control**. It's a real shortcut once you know it, and it's the source of a lot of accidental photos until you do. Apple puts it on the iPhone 16 and iPhone 17 families and later (it's not on the lower-cost "e" models), so if your iPhone doesn't have it, skip ahead to the next chapter.

## The two basic moves

1. **Click** the Camera Control (press it firmly, like a regular button) to open the camera.
2. **Click again** to take a photo.
3. **Click and hold** to record a video. Let go to stop.

## The light press: zoom and brightness with one finger

The button also responds to a **light press** — touching it gently without clicking all the way — and to sliding your finger along it, like a tiny touchpad.

1. With the camera open, **lightly press twice**. A small menu of settings slides out next to the button.
2. **Slide your finger** along the button to move between the choices: Exposure (brightness), Depth (background blur), Zoom, Cameras, Styles and Tone.
3. **Lightly press once** to pick one.
4. **Slide your finger** again to adjust it — for example, slide to zoom in and out.
5. **Click** to take the photo.

## Taming the button if it gets in your way

If you keep opening the camera by accident when you pick up the phone, you can make it need two clicks instead of one:

1. Open **Settings** > **Camera** > **Camera Control**.
2. Under the launch choices, tap **Double Click**.

In the same place you'll find accessibility options to change how hard you have to press for a light press, or how fast a double press needs to be. Those are worth adjusting if your fingers find the button too touchy.

TIP

### Keep focus locked while you shoot

In **Settings** > **Camera** > **Camera Control**, you can turn on **Lock Focus and Exposure**. Then a light press and hold on the button locks the focus and brightness on your subject (you'll see **AE/AF Lock**) for as long as your finger stays on it. Handy for a grandchild on a swing.

GOOD TO KNOW

### A long press does something different

On iPhones with Apple Intelligence, pressing and holding the Camera Control can open **Visual Intelligence**, which looks at what's in front of the camera and tells you about it. It's covered in Bill's Apple Intelligence & Siri manual. Here, we'll stick to photos.

CHAPTER 6

# Your First Good Photo (and Where It Went)

Let's take a real picture together. Choose something nearby with good light — a houseplant by a window is perfect.

1. Open the camera. Make sure the word **Photo** is highlighted at the bottom. If it isn't, tap it.
2. Hold the phone with **both hands**, elbows tucked against your sides. Two hands are steadier than one.
3. Point the phone at the plant and look at the screen, not the plant.
4. **Tap the screen on the plant.** A small box appears there. That tells the phone "this is what matters" — it focuses there and sets the brightness for it.
5. Gently tap the **shutter button**. On an iPhone you can also press either **volume button**, which many people find steadier. Most Samsung and Pixel phones do the same out of the box.
6. Hold still for a moment after you tap. Moving too soon is the most common cause of a blurry photo.

## Seeing the photo you just took

Tap the **little picture** in the bottom corner of the camera screen. Your photo opens full size. Swipe left and right to see others. To go back to the camera, swipe down on the photo or tap the back arrow.

## Where your photos are kept

| Phone | Look here |
|---|---|
| **iPhone** | In the **Photos** app, in your Library, newest at the bottom. |
| **Samsung** | In the **Gallery** app, under Pictures, newest at the top. |
| **Pixel** | In the **Google Photos** app, on the Photos tab, newest at the top. |

GOOD TO KNOW

### Organizing and backing up is its own subject

Albums, sharing with family, backing up to the cloud and freeing up space are all covered in Bill's *Managing Phone Photos* manual. This manual is about *taking* the pictures.

TIP

### Deleting a bad shot

Open the photo, tap the **trash can**, and confirm. It goes to a "Recently Deleted" or Trash folder for a while before it's gone for good, so a slip of the finger isn't a disaster. *Managing Phone Photos* explains how to get one back.

PART 2

# Sharper, Brighter Photos

The handful of habits that make the biggest difference: a clean lens, a steady hand, tapping to focus, using zoom wisely, and working with the light instead of against it.

CHAPTER 7

# Two Free Fixes: A Clean Lens and a Steady Hand

Before any setting or mode, two simple things fix more blurry, hazy photos than anything else. Neither costs a penny.

## Wipe the lens

Your phone lives in pockets and purses and gets handled all day. A thin film of fingerprint oil on the little camera lenses on the back makes every photo look foggy, and makes lights at night look like they have halos around them.

1. Turn the phone over and find the camera lenses — the small round glass circles, usually in a corner.
2. Wipe them gently with a soft, clean cloth: an eyeglass cloth is ideal, a soft cotton shirt is fine.
3. Don't use paper towels, tissues with lotion, or anything rough, and never spray cleaner directly on the phone.
4. Do the same for the small front camera above the screen, which you use for selfies and video calls.

> **TIP**
> **Make it a habit**
> Give the lens a quick wipe each time you open the camera for something that matters — a party, a trip, a family picture. It takes two seconds and it's the single easiest improvement in this manual.

## Hold the phone steady

Phones take photos in a fraction of a second, but indoors and in the evening the camera needs a little longer to gather light. Any shake during that moment shows up as blur.

- **Use two hands.** Hold the phone by its edges, not by the corners where your finger might cover a lens.
- **Tuck your elbows** against your sides, or rest your arms on a table, a fence or the back of a chair.
- **Breathe out and hold** as you take the picture, the way a photographer would.

- **Press gently.** A hard jab on the shutter button moves the phone. Try the volume button instead, or the iPhone Camera Control.
- **Wait a beat after you tap.** Keep still until the photo appears in the little square in the corner.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Watch your fingers

On phones with three lenses spread across the back, it's easy to cover one with a fingertip. If part of the picture suddenly looks dark or pink, check where your fingers are.

CHAPTER 8

# Focus and Brightness: Just Tap

Your phone guesses what you want to photograph and sets the focus (sharpness) and exposure (brightness) automatically. It's usually right. When it isn't — the background is sharp but your grandson is fuzzy, or a face is lost in shadow — one tap fixes it.

## Tap to focus

1. Open the camera in Photo mode.
2. **Tap the screen on the thing that matters most** — a face, a flower, the writing on a sign.
3. A small square or circle appears where you tapped. The phone focuses there and adjusts brightness for that spot.
4. Take the photo.

## Make the picture brighter or darker

After you tap to focus, you can nudge the brightness yourself. This is handy for a face in front of a bright window, or a sunset that looks washed out.

- **iPhone:** after tapping, a small **sun** symbol appears beside the focus square. Put your finger on the screen and **drag up** to brighten or **down** to darken.
- **Samsung:** after tapping, a small **brightness slider** (a sun symbol) appears near the focus circle. Drag it to brighten or darken.
- **Pixel:** after tapping, sliders for brightness appear near the bottom of the picture. Slide the one with the sun symbol.

## Locking focus and brightness

If you're waiting for the right moment — a child about to blow out candles — you can lock the focus so the phone doesn't change its mind.

- **iPhone: touch and hold** the spot on the screen until you see **AE/AF Lock** at the top. Tap anywhere on the screen to unlock it.
- **Samsung and Pixel: touch and hold** the spot until a lock symbol appears. Tap elsewhere to release it.

TIP

### Keeping your brightness on an iPhone

On an iPhone, the Exposure tool (swipe up from the modes, then tap **Exposure**) sets brightness until you close the camera. To keep that choice every time, go to **Settings** > **Camera** > **Preserve Settings** and turn on **Exposure Adjustment**.

GOOD TO KNOW

### The newest Pro phones have even more

Apple says the iPhone 18 Pro models can focus manually at a set distance and follow a moving subject. Most people never need these, and every iPhone's simple tap-to-focus works beautifully.

CHAPTER 9

# Zoom Without the Blur

Most phones now have two or three separate lenses on the back: a wide one for everyday shots, an "ultra wide" for fitting in a whole room or landscape, and on many models a "telephoto" that brings faraway things closer. The zoom numbers on the screen switch between them.

| You tap | What you get |
|---|---|
| **.5 or 0.5x (Samsung often shows .6)** | Ultra wide. Fits more in — the whole family around the table, a big room, a tall building. Things at the edges can look stretched. |
| **1x** | The main lens. Sharpest in most light. Use it whenever you can. |
| **2x, 3x, 5x and up** | Zoomed in. On phones with a telephoto lens, one of these numbers is a true optical zoom and looks sharp. Beyond it, the phone enlarges the picture digitally. |

## How to zoom

- **Tap a zoom number** to jump straight to that lens. This is the sharpest way to zoom.
- **Pinch** two fingers apart on the screen to zoom in, together to zoom out.
- **Touch and hold** a zoom number to open a sliding dial, then drag it for fine control.
- On iPhones with the Camera Control, lightly press twice, choose **Zoom**, and slide your finger along the button.

HEADS UP

### Big zoom numbers look grainy

Zooming past your phone's built-in telephoto (often 3x or 5x) makes the picture blotchy, the way a photocopy of a photocopy looks. If you can, **walk closer** instead. For birds at the feeder or a grandchild on a far-off stage, a moderate zoom and a steady hand beat the maximum zoom every time.

TIP

### Zoom out for group photos indoors

If you can't back up far enough to fit everyone in, tap **.5**. Keep people away from the very edges of the picture, where the ultra-wide lens stretches faces.

CHAPTER 10

# Flash, HDR and Shooting Toward the Light

Light is what a camera really records, so working with it is the secret to better photos. The good news: modern phones handle most tricky light on their own.

## The flash: usually leave it on Auto

The flash is set to **Auto** out of the box, so the phone decides when it's needed. Phone flashes are small and harsh. They're useful for a quick snapshot in a dark room, but they flatten faces and can turn eyes red. In dim light, the phone's night feature (Chapter 14) usually gives a more natural picture.

- **iPhone:** tap the **lightning-bolt** button above the picture to switch between Auto, On and Off. If you don't see it, swipe up from the modes and tap **Flash**. To always show the button, go to **Settings** > **Camera** > **Indicators** and turn on **Flash**.
- **Samsung:** tap the **lightning-bolt** symbol in the row of tools at the top and pick Off, Auto or On.
- **Pixel:** open the camera's quick settings (the small settings button or swipe down on the picture) and choose the flash option.

HEADS UP

### Flash at concerts, churches and museums

Flash is often not allowed, rarely helps from a distance, and is distracting to others. Turn it **Off** in those places and let the phone's low-light features do the work.

## HDR: bright skies and dark faces in one picture

**HDR** stands for "high dynamic range." It means the phone quickly takes several pictures at different brightness levels and blends them, so you can see both the blue sky and the shady porch. On today's iPhones, Galaxy and Pixel phones this happens automatically. You don't need to turn anything on.

## When the sun is behind your subject

A person standing in front of a bright window or a sunny sky often comes out as a dark shape. Try these, in this order:

1. **Tap their face** on the screen so the phone sets brightness for them.
2. If they're still too dark, **drag the brightness up** (Chapter 8).

3. Better still, **move**: turn so the light falls on their face, or step them away from the window.
4. Outdoors, put the sun to your side or behind *you*. Gentle light on a cloudy day or in open shade is the most flattering of all.

> **TIP**
>
> **The golden hour**
>
> Photographers love the hour after sunrise and the hour before sunset. The light is soft, warm and low, and nearly everything looks lovely. If you're planning a family photo outdoors, aim for then.

CHAPTER 11

# Straight Horizons and Nicer Framing

You don't need an art class to frame a good picture. Two built-in helpers and three simple ideas will lift your photos right away.

## Turn on the grid and level

A **grid** draws faint lines over the picture (they don't appear in the photo). It helps you keep the horizon straight and place your subject well. A **level** shows a small line that turns yellow or green when the phone is perfectly straight.

- **iPhone: Settings** > **Camera**, then turn on **Grid** and **Level**.
- **Samsung:** in the Camera app, tap the **gear** for Camera settings, then turn on **Grid lines** (on some models it's a choice called Grid lines under the settings list).
- **Pixel:** open the camera settings, then look for **Grid type** and choose 3 x 3. A level line appears on its own when you hold the phone flat or nearly straight.

## Three simple framing ideas

- **Get closer.** Most snapshots have too much empty space. Fill the picture with the faces or the flower. Walk forward rather than zooming when you can.
- **Put the subject a little off-center.** Place a person or the horizon on one of the grid lines instead of dead center. It looks more natural.
- **Get down to their level.** Children and pets look best photographed from their eye height. Kneel or sit for a far better picture.

## Choosing the picture shape

Photos come in shapes, called the **aspect ratio**. The standard 4:3 is right for most photos and prints well. Square (1:1) suits social media, and wide (16:9) fills a TV screen.

- **iPhone:** swipe up from the modes, tap **Aspect**, then tap 1:1, 4:3 or 16:9.
- **Samsung:** tap the ratio symbol (it shows something like **3:4**) in the top row of tools.
- **Pixel:** open the camera's quick settings and choose the ratio.

TIP

### Turn the phone sideways for most photos

Hold the phone **sideways** (horizontal) for groups, landscapes and anything you'll watch on a TV or print as a regular photo. Hold it upright for a single person standing, or for a picture you'll only look at on a phone.

CHAPTER 12

# The Timer: Getting Yourself in the Picture

Too many family albums are missing the person who takes the pictures. The timer gives you time to set the phone down and join everyone.

## Setting the timer

- **iPhone:** swipe up from the modes (or tap the menu button at the top), tap **Timer**, then choose **3**, **5** or **10** seconds. Tap the shutter and get in the frame.
- **Samsung:** tap the **timer** symbol (a small clock) in the top row of tools and choose a number of seconds.
- **Pixel:** open the camera's quick settings and choose **Timer** and a number of seconds.

1. Prop the phone up securely — against books on a table, on a fence post, or in an inexpensive phone stand or small tripod.
2. Frame the picture with everyone's spot in view, and tap the screen where people's faces will be.
3. Set the timer to **10 seconds**, tap the shutter, and walk calmly into place.
4. Many phones take several photos in a row with the timer, so you can pick the best one.

## Other ways to press the shutter from a distance

- **Apple Watch:** the **Camera Remote** app on the watch shows the iPhone's picture and lets you take the photo from your wrist.
- **AirPods:** on supported AirPods, pressing the stem can take a photo with the iPhone camera.

> **TIP**
>
> **Ask a stranger, safely**
>
> Asking a passer-by to take a family picture is perfectly normal. Open the camera first, hand it over already in Photo mode, and stay close by. Never hand over an unlocked phone to someone who seems in a hurry to walk away.

PART 3

# The Special Modes

Portraits with a softly blurred background, bright photos at night, better selfies, sweeping panoramas, close-ups, and the little moving pictures your phone takes without being asked.

CHAPTER 13

# Portrait Mode: Faces That Stand Out

**Portrait mode** keeps your subject sharp and softly blurs what's behind them, the way an expensive camera does. It works on people, pets and even a coffee cup. It's the easiest way to make an ordinary snapshot look professional.

## On an iPhone

1. Open **Camera** and **swipe** to **Portrait** (or tap the word). On recent iPhones, a small **f** symbol also appears in Photo mode when a face is detected — tap it to turn on the portrait effect without changing modes.
2. Stand roughly 2 to 8 feet from your subject. The screen tells you if you're too close or too far.
3. To try a lighting effect, drag the small lighting cube symbol: **Natural Light**, **Studio Light**, **Contour Light**, **Stage Light** and others.
4. Tap the shutter.

### Adjusting the blur

In Portrait mode, swipe up from the bottom of the screen (or tap the menu button), tap **Depth**, and drag the slider to make the background more or less blurry. You can also change it afterward: open the photo in Photos, tap **Edit**, and use the depth slider. Tap **Portrait** there to turn the effect off entirely if you don't like it.

> TIP
>
> **Add the portrait blur later on an iPhone**
>
> On supported iPhones, the phone saves depth information with ordinary photos of people and pets. That means you can open a regular photo later, tap **Edit**, and turn the portrait effect on. If you see the **f** symbol in Photo mode and it isn't yellow, tap it to make sure that's happening.

## On a Samsung Galaxy

1. Open **Camera** and tap **Portrait** in the list of modes along the bottom.
2. Wait until the screen says the effect is ready (the subject is outlined or a message appears).
3. Tap the effect symbol to choose a background effect, and drag the slider to set how strong it is.

4. Tap the shutter. On most Galaxy phones you can adjust the background effect later by opening the photo in **Gallery**.

## On a Google Pixel

1. Open **Camera** and tap **Portrait** in the row of modes.
2. Point at your subject and tap the shutter.
3. To add or change blur afterward, open the photo in **Google Photos**, tap **Edit**, then look under **Tools** for **Blur**.

GOOD TO KNOW

### When portrait mode gets confused

Fine hair, eyeglasses and fences can trip up the blur, leaving a fuzzy edge. Step back a little, make sure there's some distance between your subject and the background, and try again. Good light helps a lot.

CHAPTER 14

# Night Photos That Aren't Dark and Grainy

Every recent phone has a special low-light feature that gathers light for a second or more and blends many pictures into one bright, clear photo. It's remarkable — porch lights, birthday candles and city streets come out looking the way your eyes saw them.

## iPhone: Night mode

1. Open **Camera** in Photo mode somewhere dim. **Night mode turns on by itself** in low light. A yellow **moon** symbol with a number of seconds appears near the top.
2. Tap the moon symbol if you want to turn it off or on yourself.
3. Tap the shutter (or click the Camera Control), then **hold the phone still** until the countdown finishes.
4. If crosshairs appear, the phone has noticed you moving. Line them up to steady the shot.
5. To stop a night photo early, tap the **Stop** button.

For even more detail, open the tools menu, tap **Night Mode**, and choose a longer exposure. Your choice is remembered for next time. On supported models, Night mode also works for selfies and in Portrait mode.

## Samsung Galaxy: Night

On the newest Samsung software (One UI 8.5 and later), Night is part of the regular Photo mode. In dim light, look for a **moon** symbol in the picture and tap it. On older Galaxy software, Night is its own mode: tap **More** at the end of the mode list, then tap **Night**. Either way, hold the phone very still until the photo finishes.

GOOD TO KNOW

**Want Night back as its own mode on a Galaxy?**

Samsung's free **Camera Assistant** app (from the Galaxy Store) can add Night, Single take and Dual recording back as separate modes under **More**, in its **Additional modes** section. Most people don't need it — the moon symbol does the job.

## Google Pixel: Night Sight

1. Open **Camera**. In dim light, **Night Sight turns on automatically** in Photo and Portrait mode (unless the flash is on).
2. To choose it yourself, tap **Night Sight** in the row of modes.

3. Tap the shutter and **hold still** for a few seconds while the phone captures the photo.

TIP

### Brace it for the best night photos

Rest the phone on a railing, a table or a car roof, or lean against a wall. A small, inexpensive phone tripod makes night photos noticeably sharper. On a tripod, phones often take an even longer, brighter exposure on their own.

HEADS UP

### Moving people blur at night

Night features need everyone to hold still. For a dancing grandchild in dim light, turn on more room lights or move closer to a lamp instead.

CHAPTER 15

# Better Selfies

A selfie is simply a photo of yourself taken with the small camera on the front of the phone, above the screen. They're wonderful for sending a quick hello to family or getting a picture of you with the grandkids.

1. Open the camera and tap the **flip** button (two curved arrows) to switch to the front camera. You'll see yourself on the screen.
2. Hold the phone at arm's length, a little **above eye level**, tilted slightly down. That angle is the most flattering for nearly everyone.
3. Face a window or a lamp so the light is on your face, not behind you.
4. Look at the little camera lens at the top of the phone, not at yourself on the screen, so your eyes look at the viewer.
5. Tap the shutter, or press a volume button.

## Fitting more people in

If friends or family are crowded at the edges, look for a symbol of arrows pointing outward, or a zoom number such as **1x**, on the front-camera screen. Tapping it widens the view. On recent iPhones, the front camera can also widen on its own when it sees more faces.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Why your selfie looks flipped

The front camera shows you like a mirror, but saves the photo the way other people see you. That's why a part in your hair seems to switch sides. It's normal. On an iPhone you can choose **Settings** > **Camera** > **Mirror Front Camera** to save it as the mirror image instead.

TIP

### Use the timer for a steadier selfie

Set the timer to 3 seconds (Chapter 12), press the shutter, then hold still. Your hand stops wobbling before the photo is taken.

CHAPTER 16

# Panoramas: The Whole View in One Picture

A **panorama** is a very wide photo made by slowly sweeping the phone across a scene — a lake, a mountain range, a long family table. The phone stitches it together as you move.

## Taking a panorama

1. Open the camera and choose **Pano** (iPhone), **Panorama** (Samsung — tap **More** first if you don't see it), or **Panorama** (Pixel — look under **Modes** or at the end of the mode row).
2. Hold the phone upright and start at one end of the view.
3. Tap the shutter, then **move the phone slowly and steadily** to the side, keeping the arrow or line on the center guide.
4. Tap the shutter again to finish, or keep going until it stops on its own.

TIP

### Turn from your waist

Keep your feet planted and swivel at the waist, as if you're turning to look over your shoulder. Moving the phone in a smooth arc, rather than walking, gives the cleanest result.

HEADS UP

### People who move get stretched

Anyone who walks through a panorama may appear twice, or cut in half. Panoramas are best for scenery. For a big group, use the ultra-wide **.5** lens instead (Chapter 9).

CHAPTER 17

# Close-Ups: Flowers, Labels and Fine Print

Getting very close to a small thing — a bloom in the garden, a bee, the tiny writing on a pill bottle — is called **macro** photography. Many recent phones handle it automatically.

- **iPhone (Pro models and others that support it):** just move close. When you get within a few inches, the camera switches to its macro lens on its own and a small **flower** symbol may appear. Tap it to turn automatic macro off or on.
- **Samsung:** on supported models, the camera switches to close-up focusing on its own when you get near (the Scene optimizer setting shows a flower symbol). Some Galaxy A models have a separate **Macro** mode under **More**.
- **Pixel:** on supported models, **Macro Focus** turns on by itself when you get close, and a flower symbol appears.

GOOD TO KNOW

### No macro lens? Back up and zoom

If the picture won't focus when you're very close, move back a few inches and tap **2x** or **3x**. You'll get a sharp, large close-up from a bit farther away.

TIP

### Reading fine print

The camera makes a fine magnifying glass. Take a close photo of a label and pinch to zoom in on the photo. iPhones also have a dedicated **Magnifier** app, and Android phones have **Magnifier** features in their accessibility settings, if you find yourself doing this often.

CHAPTER 18

# Live Photos, Motion Photos and Fast Bursts

Your phone may be quietly recording a second or two of movement and sound with every photo. That's not a mistake — it's a feature, and it can rescue a shot where someone blinked.

## iPhone: Live Photos

With **Live** turned on (the round target symbol above the picture), your iPhone records 1.5 seconds before and after each photo. In the Photos app, touch and hold the photo to watch it move. Tap the **Live** button above the picture to turn it off or on. Live Photos take a little more storage space, but you can choose a better "key" frame afterward if someone blinked.

## Samsung: Motion photo

Galaxy phones call it **Motion photo**. Turn it on or off with its symbol in the top row of tools in Photo mode. In Gallery, open a motion photo and tap **View motion photo** to see it play.

## Pixel: Top Shot and motion

Pixel phones can save a short clip with each photo and use it to suggest a better moment, a feature Google calls **Top Shot**. You'll find motion and Top Shot choices in the camera's quick settings.

## Bursts: a quick string of photos

For fast action — a pitch, a jump, a dog catching a ball — a burst takes many photos in a second so you can keep the best one.

- **iPhone:** in Photo mode, **swipe the shutter button to the left** and hold. Let go to stop. (Holding the shutter without swiping records a short video instead.)
- **Samsung: swipe the shutter button down** (or toward the edge of the screen) and hold. If that records video instead, check **Camera settings** > **Shooting methods** > **Swipe Shutter button to**.
- **Pixel:** touch and hold the shutter. Depending on your setting, it takes a burst or starts a quick video.

HEADS UP

### Bursts fill your phone fast

A single burst can be dozens of photos. Afterward, open it, choose the one or two keepers, and delete the rest. Your storage (and your family's patience with your albums) will thank you.

CHAPTER 19

# Group Photos Everyone Smiles In

Group photos are the ones families treasure most, and the ones most often ruined by a blink. A few simple habits help on any phone, and the newest phones add clever helpers.

## Habits that work on every phone

- **Take several.** Tell everyone you'll take three or four in a row. Somebody always blinks in the first one.
- **Bring people close together** and slightly angle the people on the ends toward the middle.
- **Put the tallest people in back** and children in front, kneeling if the grass is dry.
- **Mind the sun.** Bright sun in faces means squinting. Open shade or a cloudy day is ideal.
- **Hold the phone sideways** and give yourself a little room on every side.
- **Use the timer** (Chapter 12) so the photographer gets to be in it too.

## Clever helpers on the newest phones

| Phone | What it does |
|---|---|
| **Google Pixel: Add Me** | On Pixel 9 phones and later, the photographer takes the group, then someone else takes a second photo of the photographer in the empty spot. The phone blends them so everyone is in one picture. |
| **Google Pixel: Best Take** | Combines several similar group shots so each person's best expression ends up in the final photo. On Pixel 10, Google says this can happen automatically when Top Shot is on. |
| **iPhone** | Burst mode and Live Photos (Chapter 18) let you choose the moment when every eye is open. |
| **Samsung** | Single take (available through the Camera Assistant app on newer software) records a few seconds and offers a selection of photos and clips to choose from. |

GOOD TO KNOW

### Edited group photos aren't the real moment

Features that combine several photos create a picture that never happened in one instant. That's fine for a family album. Just keep it in mind, and don't use blended photos for anything official.

PART 4

# Videos the Family Will Want to Watch

Starting and stopping a recording, keeping it steady, getting clear sound, slow motion and time-lapse, and the settings that decide how much room your videos take up.

CHAPTER 20

# Recording a Video

Videos capture what photos can't: a voice, a laugh, a grandchild's first words. Recording one is as easy as taking a photo.

## On an iPhone

1. Open **Camera** and tap **Video** (or swipe to it).
2. Tap the red **Record** button, press either volume button, or click the Camera Control. A timer at the top counts up while you record.
3. While recording, you can pinch or tap the zoom numbers to zoom, tap the **Pause** button to pause, and tap the white button to grab a still photo.
4. Tap the Record button again (or press a volume button, or click the Camera Control) to stop.

### The quick way: record from Photo mode

In Photo mode, simply **touch and hold the shutter button** to start recording. Slide it to the right onto the **lock** symbol to keep recording without holding. Release or tap to stop. On iPhones with the Camera Control, click and hold the button to record. This is perfect for a moment that starts without warning.

## On a Samsung Galaxy

1. Open **Camera** and tap **Video** in the list of modes.
2. Tap the red **Record** button to start. Tap the **Pause** button to pause or the square **Stop** button to finish.
3. In Photo mode you can also touch and hold the shutter to record a quick video.

## On a Google Pixel

1. Open **Camera** and tap **Video** in the row of modes.
2. Tap the **Record** button to start, and tap it again to stop. You can pause in between.
3. In Photo mode, touch and hold the shutter to record a quick clip.

HEADS UP

**You can't record during a phone call**

On an iPhone, video recording isn't available while you're on a phone or FaceTime call. Hang up first.

TIP

### Hold it sideways for video

Turn the phone **sideways** before you press record. Sideways videos fill a TV or computer screen; upright ones show up as a narrow strip with black bars. The only exception is a video you'll only ever watch on a phone.

CHAPTER 21

# Steady Video and Clear Sound

Shaky video and muffled sound are the two most common complaints about family videos. Both are easy to fix.

## Keep it steady

- **Use two hands** and keep your elbows in, just as for photos.
- **Stay put.** Let the action come to you instead of walking around while recording.
- **Move slowly.** If you need to follow something, turn smoothly from your waist.
- **Go easy on zoom.** Zooming in makes every small wobble bigger. Get closer instead.
- **Lean on something** — a doorframe, a fence, the back of a bleacher seat.

## Extra stabilization for action

- **iPhone: Action mode.** On supported models, in Video mode, open the tools (swipe up or tap the menu button) and tap **Action**. It smooths out bumps a great deal, which is ideal for walking or riding along. It works best in bright light, and records at a slightly lower resolution.
- **Samsung: Super steady.** In Video mode, tap the **hand** symbol at the top to turn on Super steady on supported models.
- **Pixel:** video stabilization is on automatically. Some models offer extra choices in the video settings.

> TIP
>
> **To always see the Action mode button on an iPhone**
>
> Go to **Settings** > **Camera** > **Indicators** and turn on **Action Mode**. To use it in dimmer light, go to **Settings** > **Camera** > **Record Video** and turn on **Action Mode Lower Light**.

## Get clear sound

- **Get closer to the person talking.** The phone's microphones pick up the loudest sound nearby, which is often the person holding the phone.
- **Keep your fingers off the bottom edge** of the phone, where the microphones usually are.
- **Mind the wind.** Outdoors, turn your back to the wind to shield the phone.

- **Stay quiet** while you record. Your own comments come through loudest of all.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Short videos get watched

A one-minute video of the best part gets watched again and again. A twenty-minute recital often doesn't. If you can, record the highlights in several short clips. They're also far easier to send to family.

CHAPTER 22

# Slow Motion and Time-Lapse

These two modes are a lot of fun and surprisingly useful. Slow motion stretches a split second into something you can really see. Time-lapse squeezes a long, slow event into a few seconds.

## Slow motion

Great for a golf swing, a splash, a dog shaking off water, or a grandchild leaping off the diving board.

- **iPhone:** swipe to **Slo-mo**, then tap the Record button (or press a volume button) to start and stop. Afterward you can choose which part plays slowly: open the video, tap **Edit**, and slide the bars below the picture.
- **Samsung:** tap **More**, then **Slow motion** (or **Super slow-mo** on some models).
- **Pixel:** open the Video mode options and choose **Slow motion**.

## Time-lapse

Perfect for a sunset, clouds rolling in, a flower opening, or the whole family assembling a holiday puzzle. The phone takes a picture every so often and plays them back quickly.

1. Choose **Time-lapse** (iPhone), **Hyperlapse** under **More** (Samsung), or **Time Lapse** in the video options (Pixel).
2. Set the phone down on a **steady surface** or tripod, framed on the scene.
3. Tap Record and leave it alone. The longer you record, the longer the finished video.
4. Tap Record again to stop.

> **TIP**
>
> **Plug it in for long time-lapses**
>
> A time-lapse of a whole sunset can run 20 minutes or more. Keep the phone plugged into a charger, and make sure you have some free storage first.

CHAPTER 23

# Video Quality and Phone Storage

Videos take up far more room on your phone than photos. A few seconds of video can take as much space as dozens of pictures. Your phone's video quality setting decides how much.

| Setting | What it means |
|---|---|
| **HD (1080p)** | Plenty sharp for watching on phones, tablets and most TVs. Uses much less space. A good everyday choice. |
| **4K** | Sharper still, especially on a big TV, but uses several times more space. |
| **30 fps** | "Frames per second." Standard, natural-looking motion. A good default. |
| **60 fps** | Smoother motion for sports and action, at the cost of more space. |

## Changing the video quality

- **iPhone:** in Video mode, tap the small resolution and frame-rate labels at the top of the screen (such as **HD** and **30**) to change them. For more choices, go to **Settings** > **Camera** > **Record Video**.
- **Samsung:** in Video mode, tap the resolution label (such as **FHD** or **UHD**) in the top row of tools.
- **Pixel:** in Video mode, open the settings and choose the resolution and frame rate.

TIP

### Bill's suggestion for most people

Record in **HD at 30 fps** for everyday family videos. Switch to 4K for something special, like a wedding or graduation, and switch back afterward. Your phone, and your cloud storage, will stay roomier.

GOOD TO KNOW

### "Storage full" in the middle of a recording?

If your phone runs out of space, it stops recording. Chapter 29 has quick fixes, and Bill's *Managing Phone Photos* manual walks through freeing up space and backing up your videos safely before you delete anything.

PART 5

# Your Camera as a Handy Tool

Scanning forms and receipts into clean, readable copies, reading QR codes safely, and copying text straight out of a picture.

CHAPTER 24

# Scanning Documents on an iPhone

A regular photo of a piece of paper comes out tilted, shadowy and hard to read. A **scan** is different: the phone finds the edges of the page, straightens it, evens out the brightness, and saves a crisp copy — often as a **PDF**, the kind of file doctors' offices, insurance companies and lawyers expect. No scanner or printer needed.

## Scan into the Notes app

Notes is a good home for scans you want to keep handy, like a medication list or a warranty.

1. Open the **Notes** app and open a note, or tap the new-note button to start one.
2. Tap the **Attachment** button (a paper clip), then tap **Scan Documents**.
3. Place the page on a flat, plain surface in good light, and hold the phone above it. On iOS 26 and later, you can also choose options such as flash or a filter.
4. In **Auto** mode the phone scans by itself as soon as the page is steady. If it doesn't, tap the shutter button or press a volume button.
5. Drag the corners so the frame fits the page, then tap **Keep Scan**.
6. Scan more pages if you need to, then tap **Done** (the check mark).

In an open note you can also tap the **More** button (three dots) and then tap **Scan**.

## Scan straight into the Files app as a PDF

If you'll be emailing the scan or uploading it to a patient portal, scanning into Files saves it as a ready-to-send PDF.

1. Open the **Files** app and tap the **More** button (three dots).
2. Tap **Scan Documents**.
3. Hold the phone over the page, as above. Let it scan automatically, or tap the shutter.
4. Drag the corners to fit, then tap **Keep Scan**. Add more pages if needed.
5. Tap **Done**, choose where to save it (for example, iCloud Drive or On My iPhone), and tap **Save**.

TIP

### Tips for a clean scan

Lay the paper on a dark table or countertop so the edges stand out. Turn on a light rather than using flash, which can cause glare on glossy paper. Hold the phone directly above the page, not at an angle. Flatten creased pages with a hand at the edge, keeping your fingers out of the picture.

STAY SAFE

### Treat scans of IDs like the real thing

A scan of your Medicare card, driver's license or Social Security card is just as valuable to a thief as the card itself. Keep only what you need on the phone, make sure your phone has a passcode, and only send those scans to places you trust, through their official website or app.

CHAPTER 25

# Scanning Documents on Android

Android phones can scan, too. Samsung phones can do it right in the Camera app, and every Android phone can use the free **Google Drive** app, which saves clean, searchable PDFs.

## Samsung Galaxy: scan with the Camera app

First, make sure document scanning is turned on (you only do this once):

1. Open **Camera** and tap the **gear** symbol for Camera settings.
2. Look for a **Scanning** or **Intelligent features** section, and turn on **Document scan** (on some models it's called **Scan documents and text**, and **Scene optimizer** must also be on).

Then, to scan:

1. Open **Camera** in Photo mode and point it at the document, holding the phone level above the page.
2. When a **Scan** button appears, tap **Scan**.
3. Adjust the corners if needed, then tap **Save**.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **If the Scan button won't appear**
>
> Samsung says the page needs to be mostly text, and the phone and paper should be parallel. For a small item like a business card, zoom in slightly rather than holding the phone very close.

## Any Android phone: scan with Google Drive

1. Open the **Google Drive** app (it comes on most Android phones; it's free in the Play Store if not).
2. Tap the **Camera** button at the bottom right. (On some versions, tap the **+** button and choose **Scan**.)
3. Point the phone at the page. A blue outline shows what will be captured, and it usually takes the scan on its own. Tap the shutter if it doesn't.
4. Add more pages if you need to, then tap **Done** or **Save**, give it a name, and choose a folder.

TIP

### Drive scans are searchable

Google says Drive saves scans as PDFs you can search. Months later, type a word that was on the page — "warranty," or the name of your dentist — into Drive's search box, and it finds the scan.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Pixel phones can scan in the camera, too

Point the Pixel Camera at a document and it may offer a **Scan document** suggestion on the screen. Google Drive is the most dependable route, so it's the one I teach.

CHAPTER 26

# QR Codes and Copying Text from a Picture

A **QR code** is that square of black-and-white dots on menus, parking signs, bills and tickets. Pointing your camera at it opens a web page or app. Your camera can also read the words in a picture so you can copy a phone number or address without typing it.

## Reading a QR code

1. Open the camera in Photo mode and point it at the code. You don't need to take a picture.
2. Hold steady until a small banner or link appears on the screen.
3. **Read the web address in that banner before you tap it.** Make sure it's the business you expect.
4. If it looks right, tap the banner to open it.

SCAM ALERT

### Fake QR codes are a real scam

The Federal Trade Commission has warned that scammers stick their own QR codes on parking meters and signs, and send them by text and email, to steer you to fake payment pages or harmful downloads. Don't scan a code from an unexpected text, email or letter. For parking or bills, use the official app or type the company's web address yourself. Chapter 28 has more.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Bill's QR Codes manual

For digital tickets, boarding passes, restaurant menus and more, see Bill's *QR Codes & Digital Tickets* manual.

## Copying text out of a picture

- **iPhone (Live Text):** point the camera at printed text. When a small text symbol appears in the corner, tap it, then touch and hold a word to select and copy it. Phone numbers, addresses and web addresses can be tapped directly. It works on photos you've already taken, too.
- **Samsung:** point the camera at text and tap the **T** symbol that appears, or open a photo in Gallery and tap the **T** symbol to select text.

- **Pixel and other Android phones:** use **Google Lens**. In the Pixel Camera, tap the Lens symbol, or open a photo in Google Photos and tap **Lens**. Choose **Text** to select and copy.

TIP

### Translate a sign or a label

Live Text on the iPhone and Google Lens on Android can also translate the words they read. Point the camera at a foreign menu or a medicine box and look for a **Translate** button.

PART 6

# Privacy and Safety

What your photos quietly reveal about where you live, how to share them without giving that away, and the camera-related scams worth knowing about.

CHAPTER 27

# The Location Hidden in Your Photos

Most phones quietly save **where** each photo was taken inside the photo file. That's lovely for finding vacation pictures on a map. But it also means a photo of your new porch, shared with the wrong person, can reveal your home address. You're in control of this.

## Share one photo without its location (iPhone)

1. Select the photo (or photos) in **Photos**, or tap the little picture in the Camera app.
2. Tap the **Share** button (a square with an arrow).
3. Tap **Options** near the top of the share screen.
4. Turn off **Location**, then tap **Done**. You'll see **Location Not Included**.
5. Now choose how to share it, as usual.

You have to do this each time you share. To remove the location from a photo for good, open it in Photos, tap **Adjust** under the location, then tap **Remove Location**.

## Stop saving location on new photos

- **iPhone: Settings** > **Privacy & Security** > **Location Services** > **Camera**, then tap **Never**.
- **Samsung:** open **Camera**, tap the **gear** for Camera settings, and turn off **Location tags**.
- **Pixel:** open the camera's settings and turn off **Save location**.

GOOD TO KNOW

### The trade-off

Google notes that photos without location may not show up on the map in your photo app, in searches by place, or in trip memories. Many people leave location on and simply remove it when sharing something sensitive, like photos of the house, the car or the grandkids at school.

STAY SAFE

### Posting online? Think about the background

Even without hidden location data, a photo can give things away: a house number, a street sign, a school name on a shirt, mail on the counter, or a vacation announced while the house is empty. Take a quick look at the whole picture before you post it, and consider sharing trip photos after you're home.

CHAPTER 28

# Camera Scams and Safe Habits

The camera itself is safe. The scams that involve it are mostly about tricking you into scanning, sending or installing something. A few simple rules protect you from nearly all of them.

SCAM ALERT

### Fake QR codes on meters, signs and mail

Scammers place stickers with their own QR codes over real ones, and send codes in texts, emails and letters claiming a package problem or an account issue. The FTC advises checking the web address before you open it, and not scanning codes that arrive unexpectedly. When in doubt, go to the company's real website or app yourself.

SCAM ALERT

### "Send me a photo of your card"

No real bank, government office, Medicare or utility will ask you to text or email a photo of your debit card, driver's license or Social Security card to a stranger. If anyone asks, hang up and call the organization at the number on its official website or on the back of your card.

SCAM ALERT

### "Camera cleaner" and "photo booster" apps

Apps that promise to clean your camera, speed it up or free up photo storage often show alarming warnings and push paid subscriptions. Your phone's own camera and photo apps do everything you need. If an app suddenly charges you every week, check your subscriptions in the App Store or Google Play.

SCAM ALERT

### A photo of a QR code someone asks you to scan

If someone you don't know sends you a QR code and asks you to scan it "to receive money" or to "verify your account," it's a scam. Scanning a code never needs to happen to receive money.

## Safe habits for everyday photos

- **Don't photograph boarding passes, tickets or prescription labels for social media.** The codes and numbers on them can be misused.
- **Keep a passcode on your phone.** Your photo library is one of the most personal things you own.
- **Ask before posting photos of others**, especially grandchildren. Some families and schools have rules about it.
- **Check which apps can use your camera.** On an iPhone: **Settings** > **Privacy & Security** > **Camera**. On Android: **Settings** > **Security and privacy** (Samsung) or **Security & privacy** (Pixel), then look for **Permission manager** or **Privacy** controls, and tap **Camera**. Turn off any app that doesn't need it.
- **Watch for the green dot** (Chapter 4). If it appears when you're not using the camera, check which app is responsible.

**FROM BILL**

### When something feels off, stop

If a text, call or pop-up is rushing you to scan, send a photo or install something, put the phone down. Real organizations don't mind waiting while you check. You can always call me at **(330) 200-8042** and ask, "Does this look right to you?"

PART 7

# Fixes, Help and Your Cheat-Sheet

What to try when the camera misbehaves, an honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep nearby.

CHAPTER 29

# When the Camera Won't Cooperate

Most camera problems have simple causes. Work down the list for your problem; you'll usually be fixed by the second or third step.

## Every photo is blurry or hazy

1. **Wipe the lens** with a soft cloth (Chapter 7). This fixes it more often than anything else.
2. Check that a **case or finger** isn't covering part of a lens.
3. **Tap to focus** on your subject before taking the photo.
4. Hold still and wait a beat after tapping the shutter.
5. If you're very close, back up a few inches, or zoom in slightly.

## The screen is black when I open the camera

1. Tap the **flip** button to switch cameras, then flip back.
2. Check that nothing is covering the lens, including a sliding privacy cover on some cases.
3. Close the camera app completely and open it again (swipe it away from the list of open apps).
4. **Restart the phone.** Turn it off, wait 30 seconds and turn it on.
5. Install any waiting software update (**Settings** > **General** > **Software Update** on an iPhone; **Settings** > **Software update** on a Samsung; **Settings** > **System** > **Software updates** on a Pixel).

## "Storage full" or "Not enough space"

- Delete videos you don't need first — they take the most room.
- Empty the "Recently Deleted" (iPhone) or Trash (Samsung and Google Photos) folder, after checking there's nothing there you want.
- Turn on your phone's cloud backup and its option to keep smaller copies on the phone.
- Bill's *Managing Phone Photos* manual walks through all of this safely, step by step.

## I can't find a mode or button I used to have

- **iPhone:** since iOS 26, many tools moved into the tools menu. Swipe up from the modes at the bottom, or tap the menu button at the top.

- **Samsung:** scroll to the end of the mode list and tap **More**. On One UI 8.5 and later, Night is a moon symbol in Photo mode, and some modes need the Camera Assistant app.
- **Pixel:** look for **Modes** or swipe along the mode row; some choices are inside Video mode's options.

## The camera opens by itself in my pocket

- **iPhone with Camera Control:** set it to need a double click (Chapter 5).
- **Samsung:** the side-button double-press opens the camera; turn it off in **Settings** > **Advanced features** > **Side button** if it causes trouble.
- **Pixel:** turn off **Quickly open camera** in **Settings** > **System** > **Gestures**.

## The flash or flashlight won't work

The flash may be turned off on purpose when the phone is hot or the battery is very low. Let the phone cool down and charge it, then try again. If it still won't work after a restart, it may be a hardware problem worth having checked.

HEADS UP

### Cracked lens cover or a rattle

If the glass over a lens is cracked, or the camera rattles or buzzes when you open it, that's damage rather than a setting. Contact your phone maker, carrier or an authorized repair shop. If the phone is under warranty or a protection plan, the repair may be covered.

CHAPTER 30

# When to Call Bill

I've written this manual so you can handle most of your camera on your own. But part of being truly helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time or frustration, so here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

## Times it's well worth a call

- **Setting up your camera the way you like it** — grid, quick-open shortcut, flash, video quality — in one patient sitting, tuned to your eyes and hands.
- **A practice session before a big event** — a wedding, a graduation, a trip — so you're comfortable with portrait, night and video before it counts.
- **"My phone is full"** and you're worried about losing pictures. We'll make sure everything is backed up before anything is deleted.
- **Scanning important papers** into tidy, well-named folders you can find again.
- **Privacy worries** — location in photos, which apps can use your camera, or a QR code or message you're not sure about.
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person show you.** That's always a good enough reason.

## What working with me is like

I work at your pace — no rushing, no talking down. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I'll always tell you honestly when an app, accessory or upgrade isn't worth your money. That's been my way for more than 30 years, serving folks here in Portage County.

FROM BILL

### How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. If I'm with someone, my AI receptionist, **Sophie**, will answer and help you set up a time. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. No question is too small.

Thank you for letting me help you take pictures you'll treasure. Practice on the everyday things, tap to focus, hold still — and remember I'm only a phone call away.

***— Bill***

CHAPTER 31

# Your Phone Camera Cheat-Sheet

Print just this page and keep it with your phone charger. The whole manual, boiled down.

## The habits that matter most

1. Wipe the lens.
2. Hold the phone with two hands, elbows in.
3. Tap the screen on your subject to focus.
4. Press gently (or use a volume button) and hold still a beat.
5. Walk closer instead of zooming in a lot.
6. Turn the phone sideways for groups, landscapes and videos.

## Quick reference

| To do this | Do this |
|---|---|
| **Open the camera fast** | iPhone: swipe left on the Lock Screen. Samsung: double-press the side button. Pixel: double-press the power button. |
| **Brighter or darker** | Tap to focus, then drag the sun symbol or slider. |
| **Blurry background** | Portrait mode. |
| **Dark room or night** | Let Night mode or Night Sight turn on, and hold very still. |
| **Get in the picture** | Timer, 10 seconds, phone propped up. |
| **Record a video** | Video mode and the red button, or touch and hold the shutter in Photo mode. |
| **Scan a document** | iPhone: Notes or Files > Scan Documents. Samsung: Camera with Document scan on. Any Android: Google Drive > Camera button. |
| **Share without location** | iPhone: Share > Options > Location off. |

## Things worth writing down

| Keep handy | |
|---|---|
| **My phone and software version** | _____ |
| **Where my photos back up to** | _____ |

## Keep handy

**My favorite quick-open method** _____

SCAM ALERT

### The one safety rule

Never scan a QR code or send a photo of a card or ID because a text, email or caller asked you to. Check with the real company first.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### You've got this

You can now open your camera in a second, take sharp and bright photos, use portrait and night modes, record steady video, scan important papers and keep your location private. That's everything most people ever need from a phone camera.

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