BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Podcasts

Finding, following, downloading and enjoying free shows on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and YouTube — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for listeners of every age

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Apple Podcasts (iOS 26), Spotify & YouTube Music · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your podcasts guide. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. It starts with what a podcast actually is, then walks through Apple Podcasts on the iPhone step by step, then Spotify, YouTube and a few other apps, listening in the car and on smart speakers, paid shows and how to cancel them, and the fixes for the most common hiccups. Every feature comes with what it does *for you*. It's written for iPhones and iPads on iOS 26 and the current Spotify and YouTube Music apps as of November 2026. Apps change their look from time to time, so if a screen looks a little different on yours, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Started with Podcasts

What a podcast is, what it costs (usually nothing), and which app to use on the phone or tablet you already have. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe a friend told you about a show she can't stop listening to. Maybe your children keep saying "there's a podcast about that." Or maybe you'd simply like something good to listen to on a walk, in the car, or while you fall asleep. Whoever you are, this guide is for **you**.

I'm Bill. Helping people feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I've written this guide the way I'd explain it sitting next to you at the kitchen table: plainly, patiently, and without the jargon. When a word like "episode," "follow" or "queue" comes up, I'll stop and tell you what it means.

You can't break it by exploring

A podcast app is one of the gentlest apps on your phone. Pressing the wrong button won't cost you money or erase anything important. The worst that usually happens is that a different episode starts playing. If you ever feel lost, close the app and open it again, and you'll be right back at the start.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What podcasts can do for you

Podcasts turn ordinary time (folding laundry, a drive to the doctor, a sleepless night) into something you look forward to. There are shows about history, faith, gardening, cooking, old-time radio, sports, health, travel and almost anything else, and nearly all of them are free.

What's in this guide

- **The basics**: what a podcast is and which app to use (Part 1).
- **Apple Podcasts on the iPhone and iPad**, step by step: finding shows, playing, speed, the sleep timer, transcripts and downloads (Part 2).
- **Apple Podcasts on the Apple Watch and Mac** (Part 3).
- **Spotify, YouTube and other apps**, for Android phones and anyone who already uses them (Part 4).
- **Listening anywhere**: the car, smart speakers and trips without Wi-Fi (Part 5).

- **Money, comfort and safety**: paid shows, canceling them, easier-to-hear settings and the scams that hide in podcast ads (Part 6).
- **Fixing hiccups**: a full phone, missing episodes and shows that stop playing (Part 7).

And I'm only a phone call away

If you get stuck, you're never stuck alone. Call me at **(330) 200-8042**. No question is too small and no one will make you feel silly for asking. Now let's find you something good to listen to.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What a Podcast Is

A **podcast** is a show you listen to (and sometimes watch) whenever you like. Think of it as a radio program that waits for you: instead of tuning in at 7 o'clock, you press play when it suits you, pause it when the phone rings, and pick up exactly where you left off.

A few words you'll see

Word	What it means
Show (or podcast)	The whole series, like a radio program's name. A show might be about Civil War history, or a daily news summary.
Episode	One installment of the show. Some shows put out a new episode every day, some every week, and some only now and then.
Follow	Telling the app you'd like to keep up with a show. New episodes then show up for you automatically. Older apps called this "subscribe," and following a free show costs nothing.
Download	Saving an episode onto your phone so it plays without Wi-Fi or cellular signal.
Queue / Up Next	The line-up of episodes that will play next, in order.
Host	The person (or people) who present the show.

What does it cost?

The great majority of podcasts are **free**. They're paid for by short advertisements, often read by the hosts themselves. A few shows also offer a **paid** version with extras such as no ads or bonus episodes (Chapter 19). You never have to pay to listen to a free show, and you never need a credit card to follow one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Audio or video?

Most podcasts are audio only, like radio. A growing number also come with video, so you can watch the hosts talk. Video podcasts are common on YouTube and Spotify, and Apple Podcasts plays them too. You can always just listen; the sound is the same.

What you need

- A **smartphone or tablet** (iPhone, iPad or Android) or a computer.
- A **podcast app**. iPhones and iPads come with Apple Podcasts already installed; Android phones usually use YouTube Music or Spotify (Chapter 3).
- **Wi-Fi or cellular data** to stream or download episodes. Once an episode is downloaded, you can listen anywhere, even with no signal.
- Optional: headphones, AirPods, a Bluetooth speaker, your car, or a smart speaker.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Because episodes wait for you, nothing is ever missed. You can stop halfway through a story at bedtime and the app remembers your place for tomorrow.

CHAPTER 3

Which App Should You Use?

There isn't one official podcast app. The same shows are usually available in several apps, and they're free in all of them. The simple rule is: **use the app you already have**.

App	Good for	Cost to listen
Apple Podcasts	iPhone, iPad, Mac, Apple Watch, CarPlay and HomePod. Already installed on Apple devices. Most of this guide uses it.	Free (some shows sell optional subscriptions)
Spotify	People who already use Spotify for music. Works on iPhone, Android, computers, TVs and many speakers. Many shows have video.	Free (Premium removes Spotify's own ads)
YouTube Music and **YouTube**	Android phones, and anyone who watches YouTube. Google's replacement for its old Google Podcasts app.	Free with ads
Others (Pocket Casts, NPR, iHeart)	Specific needs: a favorite radio network, or an app that works the same on every phone.	Free to listen; some have optional paid extras

Google Podcasts is gone

If you used to listen with the **Google Podcasts** app, you may have noticed it stopped working. Google shut it down in 2024 and pointed listeners to **YouTube Music** instead. If your old app is still sitting on your phone, it won't play anything new; you can delete it. Chapter 14 shows how to get started in YouTube Music.

TIP

One app is plenty

Pick one app and stick with it for a while. The shows you follow are saved in that app, so jumping between apps is how people "lose" their shows. If you're on an iPhone, start with Apple Podcasts; on an Android phone, start with YouTube Music, or with Spotify if you already use it.

HEADS UP

Download apps only from the official store

Get any podcast app from the **App Store** on an iPhone or the **Google Play Store** on Android. Be wary of ads or pop-ups urging you to install a "special" podcast player or a "free premium" version of an app. Those are a common way to slip harmful software onto a phone.

PART 2

Apple Podcasts on the iPhone and iPad

The free Podcasts app that comes with every iPhone and iPad: finding and following shows, playing, speed and the sleep timer, the queue, transcripts and downloads.

CHAPTER 4

A First Look at Apple Podcasts

Apple Podcasts is the purple app with a white microphone-and-signal symbol, simply named **Podcasts** under its icon. It comes free on every iPhone and iPad. If you deleted it at some point, you can get it back free from the App Store by searching for "Apple Podcasts."

Open it and look around

1. Tap the **Podcasts** icon on your Home Screen. If you can't find it, swipe down in the middle of the Home Screen and type **Podcasts** in the search box.
2. Look at the buttons along the bottom of the screen. **Home** shows new episodes from shows you follow and suggestions; **Library** holds everything you've followed, saved or downloaded; and **Search** finds shows by name or subject.
3. When something is playing, a small bar called the **mini player** sits just above those buttons. Tap it to open the full-size player, which Apple calls the **Now Playing** screen.

GOOD TO KNOW

iPad and iPhone work the same way

On an iPad the buttons may sit in a sidebar or along the top instead of the bottom, but the names and the steps in this guide are the same.

The Library, your personal shelf

Everything you choose to keep ends up in **Library**. Tap **Library**, then **Shows** to see the shows you follow. There's a **Followed** filter at the top; if you've downloaded or saved episodes from shows you don't follow, tap **All** to see those too.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

You don't have to remember where you heard about a show or search for it again. Once it's in your Library, it's one tap away, and new episodes come to you.

TIP

Signed in with your Apple Account

Apple Podcasts uses the Apple Account you're already signed in with on your iPhone (the account you use for the App Store). You don't need a separate podcast account or password.

CHAPTER 5

Finding and Following Shows

There are millions of podcasts, which sounds overwhelming, but finding a good one is mostly a matter of searching for something you already enjoy.

Search for a show

1. Tap **Search** at the bottom of the screen.
2. Tap the search box at the top and type a show's name if you know it, or a subject: "gardening," "World War II," "Cleveland Guardians," "bedtime stories," "Bible study."
3. Tap **Search** on the keyboard. You'll see shows and individual episodes that match.
4. Tap a show to open its page. You'll see a short description, who makes it, and its episodes, newest first.
5. Tap any episode to play it. You don't have to follow a show to listen.

Other ways to discover shows

- **Browse.** Before you type anything, the Search screen shows categories and collections you can scroll through, such as history, comedy or news.
- **Charts.** Apple lists the most popular shows and episodes; it's a quick way to see what many people are listening to.
- **Suggestions on Home.** As you listen, the Home screen suggests shows like the ones you enjoy.
- **Ask people you know.** A friend, your library or your church may already have favorites.
- **Well-known names.** Many radio and TV programs you already know, such as NPR news programs, also come out as podcasts. Search for them by name.

Follow a show so new episodes come to you

1. Open the show's page (from Search or from an episode you're playing).
2. Tap **Follow**. (In a search result you may see a plus sign or a **Follow** button; on some screens it's in the **More** menu, the button with three dots.)
3. The show is now in **Library** > **Shows**.

When you follow a show, Apple adds it to your Library, can download new episodes automatically and can notify you when they arrive. Following a free show is free.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Following is like having the newspaper delivered instead of walking to the store. Each new episode simply appears on your Home screen, ready to play.

Unfollow a show

1. Tap **Library**, then **Shows**, and open the show.
2. Tap the **More** button (three dots) or the **Unfollow** button and confirm.
3. If you have episodes downloaded, the app asks whether to keep or remove them. Choose whichever you like.

HEADS UP

Unfollowing doesn't cancel a paid subscription

If you pay for a show (Chapter 19), unfollowing it in the app does **not** stop the charges. You cancel a paid subscription separately, as Chapter 20 explains.

CHAPTER 6

Playing an Episode

Playing a podcast is as simple as tapping an episode. The Now Playing screen then gives you everything you need to pause, skip a bit, or go back.

Play, pause and find your place

1. Tap an episode. It starts playing and the **mini player** appears near the bottom of the screen.
2. Tap the mini player to open the full **Now Playing** screen with larger buttons.
3. Tap the **Pause** button (two vertical bars) to pause, and the **Play** button (a triangle) to carry on.
4. Drag the slider (the line with a dot) to jump to a different spot in the episode.
5. To shrink the player again, swipe down on it.

Skip back, skip ahead

Next to Play are two curved arrows. The left one jumps **back 15 seconds**, perfect when you missed a name or someone spoke to you. The right one jumps **ahead 30 seconds**, handy for skipping an advertisement. These are the same jumps you'll find in CarPlay (Chapter 16).

> TIP
>
> **The app remembers your place**
>
> Stop an episode partway through and the app keeps your spot. Next time you play that episode, it picks up where you left off.

Listen while doing other things

You can leave the Podcasts app, check your email or lock the phone, and the episode keeps playing. To pause without opening the app, use the controls on the Lock Screen, or the play/pause control on your headphones or AirPods.

Episodes with video

Some episodes include video. They play right on the Now Playing screen, and you can turn the phone sideways for a bigger picture. If you lock the phone, the sound carries on like any other episode.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

A podcast fits around your day instead of the other way around: start it with breakfast, pause it for a phone call, and finish it on your afternoon walk.

CHAPTER 7

Speed, Sleep Timer and Clearer Voices

Three small controls make a big difference: playback speed for hosts who talk too fast (or too slow), the sleep timer for listening in bed, and settings that make voices easier to hear.

Make it slower or faster

1. Open the **Now Playing** screen (tap the mini player).
2. Tap the **playback speed** control. It shows the current speed, such as **1x** (normal speed).
3. Choose a speed, or swipe or slide your finger to adjust it. Lower numbers like **0.8x** are slower; higher numbers like **1.25x** are faster.
4. To go back to normal, choose **1x**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

If a host speaks quickly or has a strong accent, slowing down just a little (0.9x) can make every word clear without sounding odd. If a show rambles, a little faster keeps it lively. Many listeners find their own favorite setting and leave it there.

A different speed for one show

You can give one show its own speed, so a fast-talking news program plays slower while everything else stays normal.

1. Open the show's page (from **Library** > **Shows**).
2. Tap the **More** button (three dots) and open the show's **Settings**.
3. Tap **Speed & Audio Adjustments**.
4. Choose **Custom for This Show** and set the speed you like.

Make voices clearer: Enhance Dialogue

In the same **Speed & Audio Adjustments** settings you'll find **Enhance Dialogue**. It helps voices stand out from background music and sound. Try it on a show with music behind the talking.

Fall asleep listening: the sleep timer

1. Start an episode and open the **Now Playing** screen. (If you don't see the sleep timer button, tap the mini player to open the full-screen player.)
2. Tap the **Sleep Timer** button.
3. Choose how long to keep playing, for example 15 or 30 minutes, or until the end of the episode.
4. Settle in. Playback stops by itself when the time is up.

TIP

Finding your place in the morning

Because the episode stopped on its own, the app remembers exactly where. In the morning, use the 15-second back button a few times, or drag the slider back a little, to catch what you missed after you dozed off.

CHAPTER 8

Your Queue: What Plays Next

When one episode ends, the app moves on to the next one in your **queue**. You can choose what's in that line-up, so the app plays the episodes you want in the order you want.

Add an episode to the queue

1. Find the episode (on a show's page or in your Library).
2. Tap the **More** button (three dots) next to it.
3. Tap **Play Next** to play it straight after the current episode, or **Add to Queue** to put it at the end of the line.

See and change the queue

1. Open the **Now Playing** screen (tap the mini player).
2. Tap the **Playing Next** (queue) button to see what's lined up.
3. To play one now, tap it. To change the order, drag the **Reorder** handle (three short lines) up or down.
4. To remove one, swipe left on it and tap **Remove**. To empty the whole queue, tap **Clear**.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Continue Playing"

If you've listened to several episodes of a show in a row, the app may line up more of them in a **Continue Playing** section. Those play after the episodes you added to the queue yourself.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Set up your queue before a long drive or a flight, and the episodes play one after another without you touching the phone.

CHAPTER 9

Transcripts: Read Along or Search

A **transcript** is the written text of everything said in an episode. Apple Podcasts creates transcripts for many episodes, and they move along with the episode as it plays. It's a wonderful help if your hearing isn't what it was, or if you want to find a recipe or a name you heard.

Show the transcript

1. Play the episode and open the **Now Playing** screen.
2. Tap the **Transcript** (View Transcript) button.
3. Read along as it plays. The text keeps pace with the episode.
4. You can also open the transcript from the episode's details: scroll down to the **Transcript** section, or tap the **More** button and choose **View Transcript**.

Search for a word

1. With the transcript showing, swipe up on it and tap **Search** (or tap the **Search Transcript** button from the episode's details).
2. Type the word you're looking for, such as "oven" or a person's name.
3. Tap a result to jump straight to that part of the episode.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not every episode has one

If the Transcript button is gray, that episode doesn't have a transcript. Transcripts depend on the language and your country or region, and they don't show while you're watching a video episode full screen. Computer-made transcripts can occasionally get an unusual name or word wrong.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

You don't have to catch every word by ear. Reading along makes a fast speaker or a soft voice easy to follow, and searching finds that one moment without listening to the whole hour again.

CHAPTER 10

Downloads and Automatic Deleting

Normally episodes **stream**: they play over the internet as you listen. A **download** saves the episode on your phone so it plays anywhere, even with no Wi-Fi or signal. Apple Podcasts can download new episodes for you and tidy them up after you've listened.

Download one episode

1. Connect to Wi-Fi if you can (downloads can be large).
2. Find the episode and tap the **More** button (three dots) next to it.
3. Tap **Download**. A small download symbol appears next to the episode while it saves, then disappears or changes when it's done.
4. Downloaded episodes are in **Library** under **Downloaded**.

Automatic downloads of new episodes

When you follow a show, Apple can download new episodes automatically so they're always ready. That's lovely until your phone fills up. You can change it for every show at once, or for one show.

For every show you follow

1. Open the **Settings** app (the gray gear).
2. Tap **Apps**, then **Podcasts**.
3. Under **Automatic Downloads**, tap **Automatically Download** and choose how you'd like it to work, or choose **Off**.

For one show

1. In the Podcasts app, open the show from **Library** > **Shows**.
2. Tap the check mark (or the **More** button) at the top of the show's page.
3. Tap **Turn Off Automatic Downloads**.

Remove Played Downloads

Apple Podcasts normally deletes a downloaded episode automatically about **24 hours after you've played it**. This setting is called **Remove Played Downloads**, and it's the main reason podcasts don't fill up most people's phones.

1. Open **Settings** > **Apps** > **Podcasts**.
2. Find **Remove Played Downloads**. Leave it **on** to keep your phone tidy, or turn it off if you want to keep episodes after you've played them.
3. To keep episodes from just one show, change the same setting in that show's own settings in the Podcasts app.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

With automatic downloads on and Remove Played Downloads on, new episodes are waiting on your phone before you leave home, and old ones quietly disappear after you've heard them. No housekeeping needed.

GOOD TO KNOW

Deleted an episode by mistake?

Removing a download only removes the copy on your phone. The episode itself is still in the show. Open the show's page, find the episode and play it or download it again.

PART 3

Apple Podcasts Beyond the iPhone

Taking your shows to an Apple Watch for a phone-free walk, and listening on a Mac.

CHAPTER 11

Podcasts on the Apple Watch

If you wear an Apple Watch, it has its own **Podcasts** app. With a pair of AirPods or other Bluetooth headphones connected to the watch, you can listen on a walk or at the gym and leave the phone at home.

Streaming or downloaded?

- When the watch is near your iPhone, or on Wi-Fi (or on a cellular plan, for cellular watches), it can **stream** episodes.
- When it's away from all of those, it can play only episodes that are **downloaded** to the watch.

Put episodes on the watch

1. On your iPhone, open the **Apple Watch** app.
2. Scroll down and tap **Podcasts**.
3. Choose which shows and episodes to add to the watch, such as shows you follow or your Up Next.
4. Put the watch on its charger. Recent episodes download to the watch while it's connected to power.

Play on the watch

1. Connect your AirPods or Bluetooth headphones to the watch.
2. Open **Podcasts** on the watch.
3. For downloaded episodes, go to **Library** > **Downloaded** and tap an episode.
4. You can also search for and follow shows right on the watch.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

A walk with a good story in your ears goes by quickly, and you don't have to carry a phone in your pocket. Plan ahead: charge the watch overnight so the episodes are ready in the morning.

TIP

Cellular data on the watch

If your watch has its own cellular plan, look in the watch's **Settings** app under **Podcasts**. That's where you choose how many episodes sync and whether downloads may use cellular data.

CHAPTER 12

Apple Podcasts on a Mac

Every Mac includes the same **Podcasts** app. It's a comfortable way to listen at a desk, with a bigger screen and larger text.

Get started

1. Open **Podcasts** from the Dock, or press **Command** and the **Space bar** together, type **Podcasts**, and press **Return**.
2. Make sure you're signed in with the same Apple Account as your iPhone, so the shows you follow show up on both.
3. Use the sidebar on the left: **Search** to find shows, **Home** for new episodes, and the **Library** sections for your shows and downloads.
4. Click an episode to play it, and use the play and pause controls in the window.

TIP

Bigger text on a Mac

Press **Command** and **+** (plus) to make text bigger in many Mac apps, or change the text size for the whole Mac in **System Settings**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Settings live in the app

On a Mac, download and other options are in the Podcasts app's own settings: click **Podcasts** in the menu bar at the very top of the screen, then **Settings**.

PART 4

Spotify, YouTube and Other Apps

For Android phones, and for anyone who already listens to music on Spotify or watches YouTube.

CHAPTER 13

Podcasts on Spotify

If you already use **Spotify** for music, you don't need another app: podcasts are right there, and they're free on both Spotify Free and Premium. Our Spotify guide covers the app itself in depth.

Find and follow a show

1. Tap **Search** and type a show's name or a subject.
2. Tap the **Podcasts** (or **Podcasts & Shows**) filter to see only shows.
3. Tap a show to open its page, and tap any episode to play it.
4. Tap **Follow** on the show's page. It's saved in **Your Library** under **Podcasts**. To stop following, tap **Following**.

Speed and sleep timer

On the Now Playing screen, the **Playback speed** button (it shows **1x**) slows a show down or speeds it up. Spotify also has a **Sleep timer** on the Now Playing screen; look for it in the screen's menu (three dots) if you don't see it right away.

Download for offline listening

Tap the **Download** button (a downward arrow) next to an episode. Free accounts can download podcast episodes, though Spotify notes that some shows may need Premium to download.

Video podcasts on Spotify

Some episodes on Spotify come with video, so you can watch the hosts. The video plays on the Now Playing screen; lock the phone and the sound simply carries on. If you'd rather not see video at all, or want to use less data, go to your profile picture > **Settings and privacy** > **Content and display** > **Videos and Canvas** and turn off the video switches.

GOOD TO KNOW

What Premium changes for podcasts

Spotify Premium removes Spotify's own ads, including on video podcasts, but many hosts still read their own sponsor messages inside the show. You don't need Premium to listen to podcasts.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Music and podcasts live in one app with one sign-in, and on Spotify the same shows follow you to your computer, TV and smart speakers.

CHAPTER 14

Podcasts on YouTube and YouTube Music

Many podcasts are also on **YouTube**, often with video of the hosts. On YouTube, a podcast show is set up as a playlist and each episode is a video in it. Google's music app, **YouTube Music**, plays the same shows in a way that feels more like a podcast app, and it's where Google sent listeners when it shut down Google Podcasts.

In the YouTube app

- Search for the show by name, or open YouTube's **Podcasts** page. On a computer it's under **Explore**; in the phone app, look for it among the category pages under **More** or **Explore**.
- Subscribe to the show's channel or save the playlist to keep up with new episodes.
- In the free YouTube app, the sound usually stops when you switch to another app or lock the screen. Playing in the background is a YouTube Premium feature.

In YouTube Music

1. Install **YouTube Music** from the App Store or Google Play (it's often already on Android phones) and sign in with your Google Account.
2. Use the search box, or the **Explore** tab, to find podcasts. Use the filters at the top of the results to show only podcasts.
3. Open a show and tap an episode to play it. Save the show to your **Library** to keep it handy.
4. To listen offline, tap the **Download** button on an episode.

GOOD TO KNOW

Free listening, with ads

In the United States, YouTube Music lets free listeners play podcasts in the background (with the screen locked) and download episodes. Free listening includes ads. Even with Premium, you may still hear the hosts' own sponsor messages. Downloads need an internet connection at least once every 30 days to keep working.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

If you're on an Android phone and miss Google Podcasts, YouTube Music is the closest replacement, and it's free. If you prefer to watch a show, YouTube lets you see the hosts on a TV.

CHAPTER 15

Other Podcast Apps

Most people never need anything beyond Apple Podcasts, Spotify or YouTube Music. But a few other apps are well known and perfectly safe when you get them from your phone's official app store.

App	Why some people choose it
Pocket Casts	A dedicated podcast app that works the same way on iPhone and Android, which helps if a couple has one of each. Free to listen, with an optional paid tier for extras.
NPR app	From National Public Radio: NPR's news and podcasts, plus your local public radio station live.
iHeartRadio	Live radio stations from around the country plus podcasts, in one app.

TIP

Moving to another app

Switching apps doesn't move the shows you follow automatically. The simplest way is to make a short list of your shows, then search for each one in the new app and tap Follow. It only takes a few minutes.

HEADS UP

Check before paying for any app

Every app above is free to listen to. If an app asks for payment before you've heard a single episode, or charges a weekly fee, stop and check what you're buying. Chapter 20 shows how to see and cancel subscriptions on your phone.

PART 5

Listening Anywhere

Podcasts in the car, on a smart speaker in the kitchen, and on a plane or at the cabin with no signal.

CHAPTER 16

Podcasts in the Car

A long drive is the perfect time for a podcast. There are three common ways to hear one through your car's speakers. Our Car Touchscreen & Bluetooth guide covers connecting your phone to the car in more detail.

Apple CarPlay (iPhone)

If your car has **CarPlay**, the Podcasts app appears right on the car's screen once your iPhone is connected.

1. Connect your iPhone to the car (by cable, or wirelessly if your car supports it).
2. On the car's screen, tap **Podcasts**.
3. Tap **Home** for the latest episodes of your shows, **Library** for episodes you've saved or downloaded, or **Browse** to stream popular episodes.
4. Use the buttons on the screen to play and pause, jump **back 15 seconds** or **ahead 30 seconds**, and change the playback speed. The steering-wheel buttons work too.

Ask Siri instead of tapping

It's safest to keep your eyes on the road. Press and hold the **voice control button** on your steering wheel until you hear Siri (or touch and hold the Home button on the CarPlay screen), then say something like "Play the latest episode of" and the show's name. You can also ask Siri to pause, resume or change what's playing.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some cars have Apple Podcasts built in

A few newer vehicles have Apple Podcasts built into the car's own system, so it works without pairing your phone. Check your car's manual or ask the dealer.

Android Auto (Android phones)

If you have an Android phone and your car supports **Android Auto**, apps like YouTube Music and Spotify show up on the car's screen. Tap the app, then pick an episode, or use the voice button on the steering wheel and ask Google to play a show.

Plain Bluetooth

No CarPlay or Android Auto? If your phone is paired to the car by Bluetooth, start the episode on your phone **before you pull out**. On the car's radio, choose the Bluetooth audio source (often shown as **Bluetooth Audio** or **BT Audio**). The steering-wheel buttons can usually pause and skip.

STAY SAFE

Set it up before you drive

Choose your episode, set the speed and line up your queue (Chapter 8) while you're parked. Never scroll through shows while the car is moving.

TIP

Download before a road trip

Rural roads can have patchy signal. Download a few episodes on Wi-Fi at home first (Chapter 18) so the story doesn't cut out between towns, and so you don't use your cellular data.

CHAPTER 17

Smart Speakers: HomePod, Alexa and Google

A smart speaker lets you play a podcast just by asking, which is wonderful in the kitchen when your hands are busy. Results vary by speaker and by show, so if one way doesn't work, the phone method at the end of this chapter always does.

Apple HomePod

HomePod plays shows from Apple Podcasts. Just ask Siri, for example "Hey Siri, play the latest episode of" and the show's name. While it plays, you can say:

- "Play this faster," "Play this slower," or "Play at normal speed."
- "Skip forward 30 seconds" or "Go back 10 seconds."
- "Subscribe to this podcast." (New episodes then appear in the Podcasts app on your devices.)

Apple recommends setting up **voice recognition** on the HomePod so Siri can use your own account and suggestions. You can also start an episode on your iPhone, tap the **AirPlay** button and choose the HomePod.

Amazon Echo (Alexa)

Ask by name: "Alexa, play the podcast" followed by the show's name. If you listen on Spotify, you can link it in the **Alexa** app under **Settings** > **Music & Podcasts**; you'll usually add "on Spotify" to the end of a podcast request.

Google Nest and other Google speakers

Ask "Hey Google, play the podcast" followed by the show's name. If the speaker can't find it, play the show in YouTube Music or Spotify on your phone and **cast** it to the speaker using the cast or devices button in the app (your phone and speaker must be on the same Wi-Fi).

The method that always works

1. Pair your phone with the speaker by Bluetooth (most smart speakers can act as a plain Bluetooth speaker), or use AirPlay or casting if you have them.
2. Start the episode in your usual podcast app.
3. Control it from your phone: pause, speed, sleep timer and all.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Asking out loud means no glasses, no tiny buttons and no wet hands on the phone. It's one of the easiest ways to enjoy a show while cooking or resting.

CHAPTER 18

Downloading for a Trip

On a plane, at a cabin, or on a cruise, you may have no internet at all. Downloaded episodes still play perfectly. A little planning the night before makes the difference.

The night before you leave

1. Connect to your home Wi-Fi.
2. Download several episodes you'd like to hear (Chapter 10 for Apple Podcasts, Chapter 13 for Spotify, Chapter 14 for YouTube Music). Pick more than you think you'll need.
3. Check they're really saved: in Apple Podcasts, look in **Library** > **Downloaded**.
4. Test one: turn on **Airplane Mode** for a moment, play the episode, then turn Airplane Mode off again.
5. Charge your phone and pack the charger and headphones.

TIP

Turn off Remove Played Downloads for the trip?

If you might want to replay an episode with no internet, you can turn off **Remove Played Downloads** (Chapter 10) before you go, and turn it back on when you're home.

Keep downloads working

- **Spotify** and **YouTube Music** downloads need the app to go online at least once every 30 days, or they stop playing until you reconnect.
- Downloads take up space. A one-hour episode is usually a modest size, but dozens of them, or video episodes, add up. Chapter 24 shows how to clean up afterward.
- Download on Wi-Fi rather than cellular to avoid using up your data plan.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

A delayed flight or a long layover becomes a chance to catch up on your favorite show, with no Wi-Fi password to hunt for and no data charges.

PART 6

Money, Comfort and Safety

Paid podcast subscriptions and how to cancel them, settings that make shows easier to hear and see, the scams that hide in podcast ads, and sharing a good episode with family.

CHAPTER 19

Paid Podcast Subscriptions

Almost everything in this guide is free. But some shows also sell a **paid subscription** for extras, depending on the show: for example no ads, bonus episodes or early access. It's entirely optional. The free version of a show keeps coming whether you pay or not.

Apple Podcasts Subscriptions

In Apple Podcasts, a show or a **channel** (a group of shows from one creator) may offer a subscription. You'll see the price and what's included on the show's page. Each creator sets the price, and many offer a free trial. The charge goes to your Apple Account, like an app purchase.

1. On the show's or channel's page, read what's offered and the price after any free trial.
2. If you decide to go ahead, tap the subscribe or free-trial button and confirm with Face ID, Touch ID or your password.
3. Put a reminder in your calendar a few days before the trial ends, so you can decide whether to keep it.

HEADS UP

Follow is free; Subscribe may not be

Tapping **Follow** never costs anything. A paid subscription always shows a price and asks you to confirm with Face ID, Touch ID or your password. If you're asked to confirm a payment, stop and read what you're agreeing to.

Spotify, YouTube and others

- **Spotify Premium** and **YouTube Premium** remove the apps' own ads, but you still hear the hosts' sponsor messages in most shows. Our Spotify and YouTube guides cover those plans and prices.
- Some shows sell memberships on their own websites. Those are paid and canceled on that website, not in your podcast app.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

If you love a show and listen every week, a subscription can be a nice way to support it and skip the ads. But you never have to pay to enjoy podcasts.

CHAPTER 20

Canceling a Podcast Subscription

Paid subscriptions renew automatically until you cancel. Canceling is quick, and you usually keep the extras until the end of the period you've already paid for.

On an iPhone or iPad (Apple Podcasts and other Apple billing)

1. Open the **Settings** app.
2. Tap **your name** at the top.
3. Tap **Subscriptions**.
4. Tap the subscription you want to stop.
5. Tap **Cancel Subscription** (you may need to scroll down), then confirm.

You can also start from the Podcasts app: tap **Home**, tap your profile picture at the top, then **Manage Subscriptions**, and tap the subscription to change or cancel it.

GOOD TO KNOW

No Cancel button?

If there's no Cancel button, or you see an expiration date in red, that subscription is already canceled. If you subscribed on a website or through another company, it won't appear here; cancel it with that company.

HEADS UP

Unfollowing isn't canceling

Unfollowing a show or deleting the Podcasts app does **not** stop a paid subscription. Always cancel in **Subscriptions** as shown above.

Spotify Premium

Spotify is canceled on its website rather than in the iPhone app: go to **spotify.com/account**, sign in, choose **Manage your plan**, then **Cancel subscription**. Premium continues until your next billing date, and you keep the shows you follow. Our Spotify guide has the full steps.

Android phones

Subscriptions paid through Google Play are canceled in the **Play Store** app under your profile picture and **Payments & subscriptions**. Our Subscriptions guide walks through it, along with how to spot charges you don't recognize.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Knowing exactly where to cancel means a free trial never turns into a surprise charge, and you stay in control of what you pay for.

CHAPTER 21

Easier to Hear, Easier to See

Podcasts are friendly to tired eyes and changing ears. Here are the settings worth knowing, all in one place.

If this is the trouble	Try this
Speakers talk too fast	Lower the playback speed to 0.9x or 0.8x (Chapter 7).
Music drowns out voices	Turn on **Enhance Dialogue** in the show's Speed & Audio Adjustments (Chapter 7).
Missed a word	Tap the back-15-seconds button, or read the **transcript** (Chapter 9).
Hard to hear at all	Read the transcript as you listen, or use headphones or AirPods so the sound is right in your ears.
Small buttons and text	Make the text bigger for the whole phone (below).
Tired eyes or hands	Ask Siri, Alexa or Google to play a show (Chapter 17).

Bigger text on an iPhone

1. Open **Settings** > **Display & Brightness** > **Text Size**.
2. Drag the slider to the right until the text is comfortable to read.
3. For even larger sizes, go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Display & Text Size** > **Larger Text**.

TIP

Hearing aids and AirPods

Many modern hearing aids can stream sound straight from a phone, which makes podcasts much clearer. Ask your hearing care provider whether yours can, and our iPhone guide covers the phone's hearing settings.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

With the right speed, clearer voices and a transcript to read along, shows that used to be hard work become easy to enjoy again.

CHAPTER 22

Ads, Scams and Bad Advice

Podcasts are paid for by advertising, and most ads are for ordinary products. But some ads, and some shows, push things that can cost you money or harm your health. A podcast feels personal, like a friend talking, and that's exactly why a pitch can be so persuasive. A little healthy doubt protects you.

Ads to be careful with

- **"Investment" pitches**: gold, crypto, trading courses or "secret" strategies that promise big or guaranteed returns.
- **Health products** that claim to cure, reverse or replace medicine for things like memory loss, diabetes, joint pain or hearing loss.
- **"Act now" offers** with a countdown, a special code "only for listeners," or a phone number to call right away.
- **Anything asking you to move money**, buy gift cards, or share your bank or Medicare details.

SCAM ALERT

A familiar voice isn't a guarantee

Hosts are often paid to read ads, and their enthusiasm is part of the job. Scammers also make fake ads and videos that copy well-known voices and faces, sometimes using AI. Never invest money or buy a health product because a podcast host recommended it. Look the company up yourself, talk it over with someone you trust, and remember: guaranteed returns and miracle cures don't exist.

STAY SAFE

Health advice belongs with your doctor

Podcasts can be a great way to learn, but a podcast host isn't your doctor. Before you start a supplement, stop a medicine or change a treatment because of something you heard, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. In an emergency, call 911.

Telling good information from bad

- Who makes the show? A news organization, university, hospital or library is usually more careful than an anonymous channel.
- Does the host tell you when something is an ad or sponsored? Honest shows do.
- Is the show trying to sell you something in every episode? That's a warning sign.
- Does a claim sound shocking? Check it with a trusted news source before you share it.

Scams that pretend to be podcast apps

- **Emails or texts** saying your "podcast subscription" failed or expired, with a link to "update payment." Don't tap the link. Check your subscriptions yourself in Settings (Chapter 20).
- **Phone calls** from "Apple" or "Spotify support" about a podcast charge. Hang up. Spotify doesn't offer phone support at all, and Apple won't call you out of the blue.
- **Fake apps** offering "free premium" podcasts. Install apps only from the official app store.

SCAM ALERT

If you think you've been taken in

Stop paying, call your bank or card company using the number on the back of your card, and report it at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**. If you'd like a hand, call me. You're not alone, and it isn't your fault.

CHAPTER 23

Sharing an Episode with Family

Heard something your sister would love? You can send an episode as easily as a photo.

Share from Apple Podcasts

1. Find the episode (or open the show).
2. Tap the **More** button (three dots), then tap **Share** (it may say Share Episode or Share Show).
3. Choose **Messages**, **Mail** or another app, pick the person, and send.
4. The person taps the link to open it in their podcast app, or in a web browser if they don't use Apple Podcasts.

Share from Spotify or YouTube

In Spotify, tap the three dots next to an episode, then **Share**. In YouTube or YouTube Music, tap **Share** under the episode or in its menu. Choose how to send it, just as above.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

Sharing a show gives you something to talk about on the next phone call, a bit like recommending a good book. It works across iPhone and Android.

TIP

For a grandchild

Before sharing a show with a young child, listen to an episode yourself. Some shows are labeled **Explicit** (an E symbol) when they contain strong language.

PART 7

Fixing Common Problems

A phone full of podcasts, new episodes that don't show up, and shows that stop playing or seem to disappear. Work down the lists calmly; you can't make anything worse by trying these in order.

CHAPTER 24

Freeing Up Storage

If your phone says "Storage Almost Full," downloaded podcasts are one of the easiest things to clear. Removing a download never removes the show; you can always stream or download the episode again later.

See how much space podcasts use

1. Open **Settings** > **General** > **iPhone Storage** (or **iPad Storage**).
2. Wait a moment while the list loads. Apps are listed biggest first.
3. Find **Podcasts** and tap it to see how much space its downloads take.

Remove downloads in Apple Podcasts

1. Open the Podcasts app and tap **Library** > **Downloaded**.
2. Tap the **More** button (three dots) next to an episode you've finished and choose to remove the download.
3. Repeat for other episodes, or remove the downloads of a whole show from that show's page.

Stop it filling up again

- Leave **Remove Played Downloads** turned on, so episodes delete themselves after you've played them (Chapter 10).
- Turn off **automatic downloads** for shows you rarely listen to, or for all shows (Chapter 10).
- Unfollow shows you've lost interest in (Chapter 5). You can keep or remove their downloads when you do.

Spotify and YouTube Music

In Spotify, tap the download arrow on an episode again to remove it, or go to your profile picture > **Settings and privacy** and look under **Storage** for the option to remove all downloads. In YouTube Music, open your Library's downloads and remove the episodes you've finished.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this helps

A few taps can free up a surprising amount of room for photos and updates, without losing a single show.

TIP

Video episodes are the big ones

Episodes with video take up much more space than audio-only ones. If space is tight, stream video episodes on Wi-Fi rather than downloading them.

CHAPTER 25

New Episodes Aren't Showing

You expected a new episode this morning and it isn't there. Usually it's one of a handful of simple things.

1. **Check that you follow the show.** Tap **Library** > **Shows**. If it's not under **Followed**, open the show and tap **Follow** (Chapter 5).
2. **Check the show's own page.** Open the show and look at the newest episode and its date. Shows take breaks, change schedules or end, and sometimes the episode simply isn't out yet.
3. **Check your internet.** Open a web page. If that doesn't load either, the problem is the Wi-Fi or signal, not the app.
4. **Check automatic downloads.** If an episode shows up but isn't downloaded, automatic downloads may be off for that show (Chapter 10). Tap the episode to stream it, or download it yourself.
5. **Close and reopen the app.** Swipe up from the bottom of the screen and pause, then swipe the Podcasts app up and away. Open it again.
6. **Update.** Make sure your iPhone software is current in **Settings** > **General** > **Software Update**.

HEADS UP

A paid show not showing extras?

If you pay for a show and the bonus episodes have vanished, check that the subscription is still active in **Settings** > **your name** > **Subscriptions** (Chapter 20), and that you're signed in with the same Apple Account you used to subscribe.

CHAPTER 26

It Stopped Playing, or a Show Disappeared

Two worries come up again and again: an episode that suddenly stops, and a show that seems to have vanished. Neither is usually serious.

The episode stopped playing

- **Was the sleep timer on?** If you set it last night, it may still be set. Open Now Playing and check the Sleep Timer button (Chapter 7).
- **Is the sound going somewhere else?** The phone may have connected to the car, a speaker or headphones in another room. Open Now Playing, tap the **AirPlay** or output button and choose **iPhone**.
- **Lost the signal?** A streamed episode stops when Wi-Fi or cellular drops out. Download it for places with poor signal (Chapter 18).
- **Did it get to the end?** If your queue is empty, nothing more plays. Add episodes with **Play Next** or **Add to Queue** (Chapter 8).
- **Still stuck?** Close and reopen the app. If that doesn't help, restart the phone.

My show disappeared

1. Tap **Library** > **Shows** and switch the filter at the top from **Followed** to **All**. Shows you downloaded from but don't follow appear there.
2. If it's not there, you may have unfollowed it by accident. Tap **Search**, find the show by name and tap **Follow** again. Your place in each episode is usually remembered.
3. Check you're signed in with your usual Apple Account (Settings, then your name at the top). A different account has a different Library.
4. If Search can't find it at all, the show's makers may have removed it or moved it to another app. Search the show's name on the web to see where it lives now.

I deleted an episode

Deleting a download only removes the copy on your phone. Open the show's page, scroll to the episode, and play it or download it again. Very old episodes are occasionally removed by the show itself, but most stay available for years.

TIP

Moved from Google Podcasts?

If your shows disappeared because Google Podcasts shut down, they weren't lost through anything you did. Search for each one in YouTube Music or another app and follow it again (Chapter 14).

PART 8

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary of the whole guide.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can handle podcasts on your own, and most people can. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time or worry. Here's my plain advice.

Times it's worth a call

- **Getting started**: finding a few shows you'll enjoy, following them, and setting the speed, sleep timer and downloads the way you like.
- **Moving your shows** to a new phone or a different app, so nothing gets left behind.
- **Podcasts in the car** when CarPlay, Android Auto or Bluetooth won't cooperate.
- **Smart speakers** that won't play the show you ask for.
- **A phone that's always full**, when you'd like someone to sort out storage once and for all.
- **A charge you don't recognize**, or anything that feels like a scam.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, in your home here in Portage County or remotely over the phone and internet. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, I don't sell you gadgets you don't need, and I'll tell you honestly when a subscription isn't worth it. I bring more than 30 years of professional experience to every visit. This pairs well with a Device Training session if you'd like to learn your phone more broadly.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. Bill's Home Tech serves Portage County, Ohio. No question is too small.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie

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. The actual help always comes from me.

Thank you for letting me help you find something good to listen to. Take your time, explore without fear, and remember I'm only a phone call away.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

Your Podcasts Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide, boiled down. Keep it handy near your favorite listening chair.

The essentials (Apple Podcasts)

To do this	Go here
Find a show	**Search** > type a name or subject.
Keep up with a show	Open the show > **Follow**. It appears in Library > Shows.
Slower or faster	Now Playing > tap **1x** and choose a speed.
Fall asleep listening	Now Playing > **Sleep Timer**.
Read along	Now Playing > **Transcript**.
Play next	**More** (three dots) > **Play Next** or **Add to Queue**.
Downloads	Settings > Apps > Podcasts (automatic downloads, Remove Played Downloads).
Cancel a paid show	Settings > your name > **Subscriptions**.
Phone full	Library > Downloaded, remove finished episodes.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
The podcast app I use	_____
Shows I follow	_____
My favorite playback speed	_____
Paid show subscriptions and renewal dates	_____
The car connects by (CarPlay / Android Auto / Bluetooth)	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. No new episode: check you follow the show, then check the show's page for the date.
2. Stopped playing: check the sleep timer and where the sound is going.
3. Show missing: Library > Shows > **All**, then Search and Follow again.

4. Phone full: remove finished downloads and leave Remove Played Downloads on.
5. An ad promising big returns or a miracle cure: don't buy, check with someone you trust.
6. Still stuck: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.