BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS · NO. 17

QR Codes & Digital Tickets

Scanning codes, boarding passes, and e-tickets — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide to the little square codes

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For recent iPhone and Android phones · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to those little square codes you see everywhere now — on restaurant tables, parking meters, and the tickets on your phone. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Keep it nearby and reach for whatever you need. Every topic comes with what it actually does *for you*, and slow step-by-step directions anyone can follow. Phones update their screens from time to time, so if a button sits in a slightly different spot on yours, don't worry — I'll always tell you what to look *for*, and the idea stays the same.

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PART 1

Welcome & What a QR Code Is

What those little square codes are, why they've turned up everywhere, and the one thing you already own that reads them. Start here — it's gentler than it looks.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Whoever is holding this book right now — this is for **you**. Maybe a restaurant handed you a little paper square instead of a menu and you weren't sure what to do with it. Maybe your airline keeps saying "your boarding pass is on your phone" and you'd rather have the paper one. Maybe the grandchildren sent you concert tickets that live somewhere inside your phone and you're nervous about finding them at the door. Wherever you're starting from, you've come to the right place, and I'm glad you're here.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I wrote this book the same way I'd sit down next to you at your kitchen table: patiently, in plain English, with no rushing and no fancy words. If I ever use a term you don't know, I'll stop and explain it right then — you won't have to look anything up.

Why this little square is worth ten minutes of your time

Those square codes — they're called **QR codes**, and we'll get to what that means in a moment — have quietly taken over. Menus, parking, event tickets, the gate at the airport, joining the Wi-Fi at your daughter's house: more and more, the world asks you to "just scan the code." The good news, and I mean this, is that reading one is one of the *easiest* things your phone can do. You already own the only tool you need, and once you've done it once, you'll wonder what the fuss was about.

This book is yours — read it any way you like

You do not have to read these pages in order, and there is no test at the end. Start on page one, or flip straight to the chapter that answers today's question — scanning a menu, finding your boarding pass, or spotting a scam. Fold the corners, underline things, scribble in the margins. Keep it in the drawer by your chair and pull it out whenever you need it. It's a reference, not a race — you cannot fall behind.

The big promise: you truly can't break anything

Here's the most important thing in the whole book, so I'll say it plainly. **Pointing your phone's camera at a code does not commit you to anything.** It simply offers to take you somewhere, and you get to decide whether to go. You can't accidentally buy something, sign up for anything, or pay a bill just by looking at a code through your camera. Nothing happens until *you* tap, and even then, you can back out. That little bit of breathing room is yours on every single code, and we'll lean on it the whole way through.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Once you know that scanning a code is just a polite offer — never a trap that springs shut — you can relax and use these things the way they're meant to be used: order your lunch, join the Wi-Fi, walk through the gate. The confidence is the whole skill.

A word about safety, right up front

I'll be honest with you, because that's how I do things. QR codes are wonderfully handy, but because they hide where they lead — you can't "read" a square of dots with your eye — scammers have started using them to send people to fake websites. I'm not telling you this to frighten you. I'm telling you because a few simple habits make you nearly scam-proof, and this book has a whole part (Part 7) devoted to exactly that. You can enjoy the convenience *and* stay safe. The two go together.

And I'm only a phone call away

This book will carry you a long way on your own. But if you ever get truly stuck, you are never stuck alone — that's not how I do things. Call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll work it out together, with no judgment and no eye-rolling. There is no such thing as a silly question. The only bad question is the one you talked yourself out of asking.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What a QR Code Actually Is

Before we point a camera at anything, let's answer the simplest question of all: what *is* that little square full of dots?

A picture that holds a web address

Think of a QR code as a **sign written in a language your phone can read but your eye can't**. Where a street sign might say "Diner — this way," a QR code quietly says something like "go to this website." The pattern of black-and-white squares *is* the message. Your phone's camera looks at the pattern, works out what it says, and offers to take you there. That's the whole trick.

The letters "QR" stand for **Quick Response** — the name just means a code a machine can read quickly. You'll also hear people call them "codes" or "squares." They're all the same thing.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **It's a cousin of the barcode on your groceries**
>
> You already know the striped **barcode** on a can of soup — the checkout scanner reads it with a beep. A QR code is simply a newer, roomier version of that same idea. Instead of thin stripes it uses a square of dots, which lets it hold much more — a whole web address, a ticket, your Wi-Fi password. Same basic notion: a pattern a machine reads.

What a code usually does when you scan it

Most QR codes do one of a small handful of things. It helps to know the short list, because then nothing surprises you:

- **Open a website** — by far the most common. A restaurant menu, a parking-payment page, a company's information page.
- **Join a Wi-Fi network** — the code carries the network name and password so you don't have to type them.
- **Show a ticket or boarding pass** — here the code *is* the ticket; staff scan it to let you in.
- **Start a payment** — the code opens a page or app where you can pay (be a little careful here; Part 7 covers it).
- **Add a contact or event** — some codes drop a phone number or a calendar date onto your phone.

TIP

You'll always get to see what it wants before anything happens

When you scan a code, your phone shows you a little preview — usually the web address it wants to open — and waits for you to tap it. Nothing opens on its own. So you always get a look before you leap, and you can simply ignore it if something seems off.

CHAPTER 3

Why They're Suddenly Everywhere

It can feel as though these codes appeared overnight. In a way, they did — here's the short, friendly story of why, so the world makes a bit more sense.

Two things had to come together

QR codes have existed for years, but two things made them take off. First, phones got good enough that the **ordinary camera** can read a code — no special gadget, no app to hunt down. Second, around 2020, businesses wanted ways to hand you a menu or a ticket *without* passing paper from hand to hand. The code was the answer, and it simply never went away.

Why businesses love them

- **They're cheap and instant.** A restaurant can change its menu or prices without reprinting a thing — the code always points to the latest version.
- **They save paper and clutter.** No stacks of menus, no rolls of paper tickets.
- **They connect the real world to the phone.** A code on a flyer, a package, or a television screen can hand your phone a web address without you typing a single letter.

What that means for you

The upshot is simply this: more and more, the handy path — and sometimes the *only* path — runs through one of these codes. That's exactly why it's worth getting comfortable with them. It's not a fad you can wait out; it's a small, learnable skill that opens a lot of everyday doors. And the skill is genuinely small, as the next chapters will show.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can almost always still ask for the old way

Here's a comfort: at nearly every restaurant, you can still ask a server, "Could I have a paper menu, please?" and most are happy to bring one. Same with many tickets and passes — there's often a printed option. Learning the codes gives you a choice; it doesn't take the old choices away.

CHAPTER 4

The One Thing You Need: Your Phone's Camera

People often expect there's some special app or gadget to buy. For almost everything in this book, there isn't. Let's clear that up, because it's the biggest relief in the whole subject.

Your camera is the scanner

On any reasonably recent smartphone — an **iPhone** or an **Android** phone bought in roughly the last several years — the **ordinary Camera app**, the one you take photos with, reads QR codes all by itself. You point it at the code, and it offers you a link to tap. There is nothing to download, nothing to set up, and nothing to pay for. You already own the scanner; it was in your pocket the whole time.

> **WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU**
>
> **No app, no purchase, no setup**
>
> This is worth saying twice, because the app stores are full of "QR scanner" apps trying to charge you or show you ads. You don't need any of them. Your phone's built-in camera does the job better and safer. If an app ever asks for money to scan a code, close it — you were never going to need it.

How to tell if your phone is recent enough

Nearly all phones in use today can do this. If yours was made in roughly the last six or seven years, you're almost certainly fine. The surest test is simply to try it, which we'll do in the very next part. If your camera doesn't react to a code, don't worry — the next part also covers the free, built-in backup (Google Lens on Android, and a few tricks on iPhone) and what to do on an older phone.

What about a tablet or iPad?

An iPad or an Android tablet with a camera reads codes exactly the same way a phone does. The trouble is simply that a tablet is bigger and more awkward to hold up to a code on a table or a meter. For tickets and boarding passes especially, a phone is the handier choice because it fits in your hand at the gate. But the how-to is identical.

TIP

A clean camera lens helps more than you'd think

If your phone ever seems slow to "see" a code, give the little camera lens on the back of the phone a gentle wipe with a soft cloth or your shirt. Pockets and purses leave a smudge, and a smudged lens is the single most common reason a code won't scan. Costs nothing, fixes a lot.

PART 2

Scanning a Code, Step by Step

The main event — reading a code on an iPhone and on an Android phone, what happens next, scanning from a photo, and what to do when a code won't cooperate.

CHAPTER 5

Scanning a Code on an iPhone

If you have an iPhone, you already have everything you need. Here's the whole thing, slowly. Do it once and it'll feel like second nature.

The steps

1. Find the **Camera** app on your Home Screen — the little icon that looks like a camera lens — and tap it to open it. (It's the same app you take photos with.)
2. Hold your phone up so the **code fills the middle of the screen**, the way you'd frame a photo of it. You don't need to press the shutter button or take a picture.
3. Keep it steady for a second. A small **yellow banner** (or a little link bubble) will pop up on the screen, showing the web address the code points to.
4. **Read that address first** (we'll make a habit of this in Part 7), then **tap the banner** to go there.

That's it. There's no picture saved, nothing to send — you simply pointed the camera and tapped the banner it offered. If you decide you don't want to go there, just don't tap it; lower the phone and nothing happens.

> TIP
>
> **No banner? Try these three things**
>
> If the yellow banner doesn't appear: (1) move the phone a little closer or farther until the code is sharp and fills the screen; (2) make sure there's decent light on the code; (3) wipe the camera lens. Nine times in ten, one of those does it. If your Camera truly won't react, the next pages cover a backup.

If your Camera doesn't seem to notice codes

On most iPhones this works right out of the box. If yours doesn't react, there's a setting worth a look. Open your phone's **Settings** (the grey gear icon), scroll down to **Camera**, and make sure **Scan QR Codes** is switched **on** (the little switch shows green). That's usually the whole fix.

GOOD TO KNOW

The Control Center shortcut (handy but optional)

iPhones also have a dedicated **Code Scanner** you can reach from the Control Center — the panel you get by swiping down from the top-right corner. It's a nice extra, but you don't need it: the ordinary Camera does the same job. Mentioning it only so the name doesn't confuse you if you ever see it.

CHAPTER 6

Scanning a Code on an Android Phone

Android phones — Samsung, Google Pixel, Motorola, and the rest — read codes just as easily, though the exact words on screen vary a little from brand to brand. Here's the reliable way, and a sure-fire backup.

The usual way: the Camera app

1. Open your **Camera** app — the same one you take photos with.
2. Point it at the **code** so it fills the middle of the screen. No need to press the shutter.
3. Wait a moment. A **link or a little pop-up** appears showing the web address.
4. Read the address, then **tap it** to go there.

The sure-fire backup: Google Lens

Every recent Android phone includes a free, built-in tool called **Google Lens** that reads codes beautifully. If the plain Camera doesn't react, look for a small **Lens** icon — it looks like a little camera-shutter circle — right inside your Camera app, often near the shutter button, and tap it. Point at the code, and Lens shows you the link to tap.

If you can't find the Lens icon in the camera, you can also open the **Google** app (the one with the colorful "G"), and tap the little **camera icon** in its search box. That opens Lens too. Either route works.

> **TIP**
>
> **Samsung phones have their own scanner, too**
>
> On many Samsung phones there's also a **QR scanner** tucked into the Quick Settings — the panel you pull down from the top of the screen. If you swipe down and see a "Scan QR code" button, that's a quick shortcut. But the Camera or Google Lens will always get you there, so don't go hunting if you can't find it.

On an older Android phone

Phones more than about seven years old (running an old version of Android) may not scan from the plain camera. In that case, the **Google** app's camera icon, or Google Lens, is your friend — both are free and already on most phones. If all else fails, that's a fine moment to call me and we'll sort it in a few minutes.

CHAPTER 7

What Happens After You Scan

You've pointed the camera and tapped the banner. What now? This is the part that makes folks nervous the first time, so let's walk through exactly what you'll see — and how to get back to safe ground any moment you like.

Usually, a web page opens

Most of the time, tapping the banner opens your phone's **web browser** — Safari on an iPhone, Chrome on most Android phones — and shows you a page: a menu, a payment screen, an information page. This is exactly the same as if you'd typed that web address in yourself. You can read it, scroll it, and tap things on it just like any web page.

GOOD TO KNOW

A browser is just the program that shows web pages

If "browser" is a new word: it's simply the app your phone uses to show pages from the internet. On an iPhone that's usually **Safari** (a blue compass). On Android it's usually **Chrome** (a colorful circle). The code just handed one of them a web address to open — nothing more mysterious than that.

How to back out of anything

This is the reassurance to hold onto. If a page opens and you don't like the look of it, you are never trapped:

- **Close the page** — tap the **X** or the back arrow (usually top-left), or simply close the browser. Nothing you merely *looked* at costs you anything.
- **Go back to your Home Screen** — swipe up from the very bottom of the screen (or press the round Home button on older phones). You're home, safe and sound.
- **Don't type anything** — looking at a page is harmless. You only ever share information by actively typing it in and tapping a button. So when in doubt, don't type.

Codes that aren't web pages

Now and then a code does something other than open a page, and your phone will *ask* first. A Wi-Fi code pops up a little box asking "Join this network?" A contact code asks "Add this contact?" In each case the phone tells you plainly what it wants and waits for you to say yes or no. You're always the one who decides.

TIP

When in doubt, tap "Cancel" — you lose nothing

Every one of these little pop-ups has a **Cancel** or an **X**. If you're not sure, tap it. You can always scan the code again in two seconds. Saying "no" to a code never causes any harm — it just puts you right back where you were.

CHAPTER 8

Scanning a Code That's Already a Picture

Sometimes the code isn't in front of you on a table — it's *inside* your phone already: in an email, a text message, or a photo someone sent you. You can't very well point your camera at your own screen. Happily, your phone can read a code straight out of a picture, and it's easy.

On an iPhone: Live Text in Photos

If the code is saved in your **Photos** (or you take a screenshot of it):

1. Open the **Photos** app and tap the picture that has the code in it.
2. Press and hold your finger on the **code** itself for a moment.
3. A little link or menu pops up with the web address — tap it to open it.

On Android: Google Lens in Photos

1. Open **Google Photos** (or your Gallery) and tap the picture with the code.
2. Tap the **Lens** icon (the little camera-circle) along the bottom.
3. Lens reads the code and shows the link — tap it to open it.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **This is how you "scan" a code someone emailed you**
>
> If a company emails you a boarding pass or a ticket with a code on it, you don't scan your own screen — *they* scan it from your screen at the gate. But if you ever need to open a *link* hidden in a code that was sent to you, pressing and holding it (iPhone) or using Lens (Android) is exactly how. We'll come back to tickets in Parts 4 through 6.

CHAPTER 9

When a Code Won't Scan: Simple Fixes

Every so often a code just won't "catch." Before you decide something's wrong with your phone, run down this short list. One of these fixes it almost every time.

The quick checklist

1. **Steady the phone.** Hold it still for a second or two; a shaking hand blurs the code. Resting your elbows on the table helps.
2. **Get the distance right.** Too close and it blurs; too far and it's tiny. Move the phone slowly in and out until the code is sharp and fills the middle of the screen.
3. **Add light.** A dim code is a hard code. Move it under a lamp, or turn on your phone's flashlight. (In the Camera, some phones switch the light on automatically.)
4. **Wipe the lens.** Give the little camera lens on the back of the phone a gentle wipe. A smudge is the most common culprit of all.
5. **Try Google Lens (Android) or the Code Scanner (iPhone).** If the plain Camera won't react, these built-in backups often read a stubborn code.

If the code itself is the problem

Codes can be damaged — a creased paper menu, a faded sticker, a torn flyer. If a particular code won't scan no matter what, it may simply be worn out or printed poorly. That's not your phone's fault. At a restaurant, ask for a paper menu; at a meter, there's usually a way to pay without the code (and Part 7 explains why a meter code might be worth skipping anyway).

HEADS UP

A code that won't scan is sometimes a blessing

If a code on a parking meter, a flyer, or a sticker simply won't read, don't go hunting for another way to make *that exact code* work. Occasionally a code won't scan because someone tampered with it. When a code fights you, it's perfectly fine to walk away and use the official app, website, or a human being instead. More on this in Part 7.

FROM BILL

Stuck for more than a minute? That's what I'm for

If you've wiped the lens, found good light, and tried the backup and a code still won't behave, don't let it spoil your afternoon. Call me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll figure out whether it's the phone, the code, or just a setting — usually in a couple of minutes.

PART 3

Everyday QR Codes

The codes you'll actually meet day to day — restaurant menus, parking meters, joining Wi-Fi, paying, and the odds and ends on packages and screens.

CHAPTER 10

Restaurant Menus

The menu code is where most folks first meet all this, so let's make it painless. You sit down, and instead of a menu there's a little printed square on the table, often on a stand or a card. Here's the whole dance.

Step by step at the table

1. Open your **Camera** (iPhone) or Camera / Google Lens (Android).
2. Point it at the **code** on the table card until the banner or link appears.
3. **Tap the banner.** The menu opens as a web page in your browser.
4. **Scroll** with your finger to read it, just like any page. Pinch two fingers apart to make the words bigger if they're small.

In most places the code only shows you the menu — you still order from a server as always. At some restaurants the same page also lets you **order and pay** from your phone; if so, it'll be clearly marked with buttons, and you're free to use it or to flag down a server instead.

TIP

You can always ask for a paper menu

If reading a menu on a phone is a strain — small print, glare, tired eyes at the end of the day — there is nothing wrong with saying, "Could I have a paper menu, please?" Most places keep a few behind the counter and are glad to bring one. The code is an option, not an obligation.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why restaurants do this

It's not to make life hard. A code lets the kitchen change a price or cross off the sold-out special without reprinting menus, and it saves them money. Knowing the *why* sometimes takes the irritation out of it — though wanting paper is still perfectly reasonable.

CHAPTER 11

Parking Meters & Lots

More and more parking — street meters, lots, garages — asks you to pay through a code or an app rather than feeding coins. This one deserves a little extra care, because parking codes are a favorite target for a scam we'll cover fully in Part 7. Let's do it right.

The honest, safe way to pay for parking

1. **Note the name** of the parking service printed on the meter or sign — for example "ParkMobile," "PayByPhone," or your city's own system.
2. Rather than scanning a sticker you're unsure about, it's safest to **open that company's official app**, or type its web address yourself — many regulars install the app once and never scan again.
3. If you do scan the code, **read the web address carefully** before tapping. It should clearly match the service named on the sign.
4. Enter your **space or meter number** and the time you want, then pay. Keep the confirmation (a text or email) until you're back at the car.

SCAM ALERT

Fake stickers on parking meters are a real, current problem

Thieves have been caught sticking **counterfeit QR codes** over the real ones on parking meters — this has happened in cities across the country, including Austin, New York, Orlando, and Raleigh. The fake code sends you to a look-alike payment page (one real example read "poybyphone" — one letter off from PayByPhone) that steals your card details. The safest habit: **don't pay parking through a code sticker at all.** Use the parking company's official app or type its web address yourself. Part 7 goes deeper.

If something feels off

A code on a meter looks like a sticker slapped over something else? The web address has odd spelling, or asks for more than seems needed? Walk away from the code. Pay at a pay station, use the official app, or find an attendant. Trust that little feeling — it's usually right.

CHAPTER 12

Joining Wi-Fi with a Code

Here's a genuinely lovely use of a code, and a safe one when it's in someone's home or a place you trust. Many homes, cafés, and guest rooms now post a little code that joins you to their **Wi-Fi** — the wireless internet — without making you type a long, fiddly password.

What "joining Wi-Fi" means, quickly

Wi-Fi is the wireless internet in a building. Joining it lets your phone use that internet instead of your own cellular data — handy for faster, cheaper browsing when you're a guest somewhere. Normally you'd pick the network's name from a list and type its password. A Wi-Fi code does both of those for you in one tap.

How to use a Wi-Fi code

1. Point your **Camera** at the code.
2. Instead of a web link, a little box appears asking something like **"Join network 'Smith-Home'?"**
3. Tap **Join** (or **Connect**). You're on the Wi-Fi — nothing to type.

GOOD TO KNOW

This one doesn't open a web page

A Wi-Fi code behaves a little differently from a menu code: it doesn't send you to a website, it just offers to connect you. So don't be thrown when you see a "Join network?" box instead of a link. Tap Join if it's a place you trust, or Cancel if you're not sure.

TIP

Great at a friend's house; be choosier in public

Joining Wi-Fi from a code posted in your daughter's kitchen or your hotel room is perfectly safe. In a random public spot, free Wi-Fi is fine for ordinary browsing but *avoid* doing your banking on it — that caution has nothing to do with the code and everything to do with public Wi-Fi in general. My Staying Safe Online manual covers that in depth.

CHAPTER 13

Paying by QR Code

Some shops, market stalls, and services let you pay by scanning a code, or by showing a code from a payment app on your phone. Done with a trusted business, it's quick and fine. Because money's involved, though, this is the one to approach with your eyes open.

Two directions a payment code can go

- **You scan their code** — the shop shows a code; you scan it and it opens a page or app to pay them. Fine at a known, trusted business you can see in front of you.
- **They scan your code** — you open your own payment app (such as PayPal, Venmo, or a store's app), show the code it displays, and the cashier scans it. This is the safer direction, because the code came from *your* trusted app, not a stranger's sticker.

Rules that keep paying-by-code safe

- **Only pay a business you can see and trust** — a real shop, a market vendor, a service you sought out. Never because a code arrived in an email or a text out of the blue.
- **Check the name** on the payment page matches who you think you're paying before you confirm any amount.
- **Never enter your card details on a page you reached from a code you don't fully trust.** A trusted shop's code shouldn't ask you to re-type your whole card.
- **Keep the receipt** — the confirmation text or email — in case there's ever a question.

SCAM ALERT

"Scan here to pay" out of the blue is a red flag

If a message, email, letter, or flyer tells you to scan a code to "pay a fee," "release a package," "settle a fine," or "claim a refund," be very suspicious — that's a classic swindle. Real bills from real companies don't chase you by surprise QR code. When money and a code arrive together uninvited, stop and call me or the company directly. Part 7 is all about this.

CHAPTER 14

Other Everyday Codes You'll Meet

Codes turn up in a surprising number of spots now. None of them are any harder than what you've already learned — here's a quick tour so none of them catch you off guard.

Where you'll see one	What it usually does
On product packaging	Opens the maker's page — instructions, a recipe, how to register a warranty, or how to recycle the box.
On a flyer or poster	Opens an event page, a sign-up form, or a business's website. Harmless to look; just read the address first.
On a business card	Adds the person's phone number and email to your Contacts — your phone will ask before saving.
On a TV screen	Lets you sign in to an app on the TV using your phone, or opens an offer. Common with streaming apps.
On a receipt or statement	Opens a survey, a feedback form, or your account page. Optional — you never have to.
At a museum or park	Opens information about the exhibit or trail you're standing in front of. A nice, safe use.

TIP

The habit is always the same

No matter where a code turns up, the routine never changes: point the camera, **read the web address it offers**, and decide whether to tap. If it's from a source you trust and the address looks right, go ahead. If anything feels off, just lower the phone. You're always in charge.

GOOD TO KNOW

A code can't do anything your phone can't already do

It's worth remembering that a code is only ever a shortcut. It opens a page, joins a network, or offers a contact — all things you could do by hand. It can't reach into your phone and take anything on its own. That's why the "read before you tap" habit is such complete protection: you're simply choosing whether to follow a shortcut.

PART 4

Digital Tickets Explained

What people mean by a "ticket on your phone," where those tickets actually live so you can find them when it counts, and why the code on a ticket is the opposite of a code you scan.

CHAPTER 15

What a "Digital Ticket" Really Means

"Your ticket is on your phone." "It's a mobile ticket." "Just show the code at the door." These phrases make a lot of people anxious, because a paper ticket you can hold and see, but where exactly is a ticket that's "on your phone"? Let's take the mystery out of it.

A ticket is just a code that proves you paid

A **digital ticket** (also called a **mobile ticket** or **e-ticket** — they all mean the same thing) is simply a **code shown on your phone's screen** instead of printed on paper. When you arrive, a staff member scans that code with their own device, it beeps "yes, this one's paid," and you walk in. That's the entire idea. The code on your screen does exactly the job the paper stub used to do.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Here, the roles are reversed**
>
> This is the key thing to understand, and it trips up almost everyone at first. With a menu or a meter, *you* scan *their* code. With a ticket or boarding pass, it's the other way round: *they* scan *your* code, off your screen. So you don't need to "do" anything with a scanner — you just need to find your ticket and hold up the screen.

Why it's actually good news

- **You can't leave it on the kitchen counter.** Your phone goes where you go, so the ticket does too.
- **It can't fade or tear** in your pocket the way a paper stub can.
- **It updates itself.** If a flight time or a seat changes, the ticket on your phone quietly updates — no reprinting.
- **It's easy to send** to the person you're going with, in a tap or two (we'll cover that in Part 6).

The one honest worry, and its answer

The sensible worry is: "What if my phone battery dies before I get in?" That's fair, and it has simple answers — charge up before you leave, carry a little pocket charger for a big day out, and for some tickets you can print a paper backup. We'll cover all three in Part 8. For now, just know the worry is normal and entirely manageable.

CHAPTER 16

Where Your Tickets Actually Live

The single most useful thing to learn about digital tickets is *where they are kept*, because the panic at the door is almost always "I can't find it!" — not a broken ticket, just a lost one. There are three usual homes. Learn which one yours is in, and you'll never scramble.

The three places a ticket can live

Where it lives	How you get to it
In an app	The company's own app — an airline app, Ticketmaster, AMC Theatres, your transit app. You open the app and tap "My Tickets" or "My Trips."
In your email	A confirmation email with the ticket attached or a "View Ticket" button. Keep the email; you may need to open it at the door.
In your phone's Wallet	A special built-in app — Apple Wallet on iPhone, Google Wallet on Android — that holds passes and boarding passes all in one tidy place.

A ticket often lives in *more than one* of these at once — for instance, in the company's app *and* in your email. That's a good thing: it means a backup. The trick is simply to know, before you leave home, which one you'll open at the door.

TIP

The five-minute pre-trip check

Before you leave for the airport, the concert, or the movie, **open your ticket once at home** while you're calm and have good Wi-Fi. Make sure it loads and you can see the code. That one minute of checking saves nearly every door-step panic. If it won't load at home, you've got time to fix it or call me — not so at the gate.

Apple Wallet and Google Wallet, in a sentence

Your phone comes with a free app made just for passes: **Apple Wallet** on an iPhone (a little icon of cards fanned out) and **Google Wallet** on Android (a colorful wallet icon). Think of it as the billfold in your pocket, but for the digital versions of things: boarding passes, event tickets, loyalty cards. When a ticket offers an **"Add to Wallet"** button, taking it tucks a copy into that app, where it's easy to find. We'll use it a lot in the next parts.

CHAPTER 17

Barcodes, QR Codes & the Code on Your Ticket

On your tickets you'll meet two shapes of code — the square QR code you already know, and the older striped barcode. It helps to recognize both, and to understand one modern wrinkle that catches people out: the code that keeps changing.

Two shapes, same purpose

- **The square QR code** — a square of dots, the kind this book is mostly about. Common on event and movie tickets.
- **The striped barcode** — the familiar row of thin vertical lines, like on a grocery item. Common on boarding passes. A scanner reads it the same way; you just hold up the screen.

From your side, both work identically: you find the ticket, hold up your screen, and a staff member's scanner reads whichever shape is there. You don't need to know which is which — only that both are perfectly normal.

The code that moves: why a screenshot can fail

Here's the modern wrinkle, and it's an important one. To stop cheats from copying and re-selling tickets, many venues — concerts especially — now use a code that **quietly refreshes itself every few seconds**, with a little animation to show it's "live." Ticketmaster calls theirs **SafeTix**. Because that kind of code is always changing, an ordinary **screenshot** (a frozen picture of your screen) will be out of date the instant you take it — and the scanner will reject it.

HEADS UP

For these "live" tickets, show the real ticket — not a photo of it

If your ticket has a code that shimmers or animates, you **must** open the actual ticket in its app or Wallet at the door — a saved screenshot or a photo won't get you in. This is most common at big concerts and sports events. It's not true of every ticket (a movie or a flight is usually a fixed code you *can* screenshot as backup), but when in doubt, open the real one. Part 6 walks through exactly this.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why they went to the trouble

The changing code exists for a good reason: it makes tickets far harder to counterfeit or scalp, which protects honest buyers like you from paying for a fake. It's a nuisance to learn once, but it's on your side. Knowing it's there is half the battle.

PART 5

Boarding Passes & Travel

How airline check-in works now, getting your boarding pass onto your phone, tucking it into Apple or Google Wallet, and sailing through security and the gate with confidence.

CHAPTER 18

How Airline Check-In Works Now

Flying has changed, and the boarding pass is the part that worries folks most. Let's lay out the whole journey plainly, so you know what's coming at every step. The short version: a boarding pass on your phone is just the paper one you remember, shown on a screen — and you can usually still get the paper one too.

Checking in: your seat, locked in

Checking in simply means telling the airline "yes, I'm coming" and getting your boarding pass. It opens about **24 hours before** your flight. You can do it three ways:

- **On the airline's app** on your phone — the handiest, and where your pass will live.
- **On the airline's website** from a computer — then email or print the pass.
- **At the airport** — at a self-service kiosk, or at the counter with a real person who will print you a paper pass. This option has not gone away.

What a boarding pass is

A **boarding pass** is your permission to get on the plane. It shows your name, the flight, the gate, the boarding time, and your seat — plus a **code** (usually a striped barcode) that staff scan at security and at the gate. Whether it's on paper or on your phone screen, it holds the very same information and does the very same job.

TIP

You can still get a paper boarding pass — always

If a phone boarding pass makes you uneasy, you never have to rely on one. At the airport, go to a kiosk or the check-in counter and a staff member will print you a paper pass, free. Many seasoned travelers carry both — the phone for convenience, paper as a backstop. There's no wrong choice here.

CHAPTER 19

Getting Your Boarding Pass onto Your Phone

If you'd like the convenience of the pass on your phone — no paper to lose, and it updates itself if the gate changes — here's how to get it there. The exact buttons vary by airline, but the shape is always the same.

Step by step

1. **Download the airline's app** before your trip (from the App Store on iPhone or the Play Store on Android), and sign in. Do this at home, unhurried.
2. When check-in opens (about 24 hours before), **open the app** and look for **Check In**.
3. Answer the few questions (bags, seat), and the app shows your **boarding pass** with its code.
4. Look for a button that says **Add to Apple Wallet** or **Add to Google Wallet**, and tap it. This tucks a copy into your phone's Wallet, where it's easiest to find later.

If you check in on the airline's **website** instead, the confirmation email usually has the same **Add to Wallet** button, or a **View Boarding Pass** link. Either way, the goal is the same: the pass, on your phone, easy to pull up at the airport.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not every airline offers Wallet — and that's fine

Most major airlines support Apple and Google Wallet, but a few smaller ones don't. If you don't see an "Add to Wallet" button, no harm done — your pass still lives in the airline's app and in your email, and you can open it from either. Or print a paper copy. There's always a path.

TIP

Do it at home, on Wi-Fi, the night before

The calmest way to fly is to check in and load your pass the evening before, at home, where the internet is reliable and you're not rushed. Then at the airport it's already waiting on your phone. Trying to do it all for the first time in a busy terminal is the hard way — give yourself the easy one.

CHAPTER 20

Apple Wallet for Boarding Passes (iPhone)

Apple Wallet is the free app on every iPhone that holds your passes in one tidy place. For travel it's a real comfort, because the pass is always two taps away and updates itself. Here's how to use it without any fuss.

Getting a pass into Wallet

When your airline app or confirmation email shows an **Add to Apple Wallet** button, tap it, then tap **Add** in the top corner. The pass is now filed in Wallet. You can do this with the boarding pass the moment you check in.

Pulling it up at the airport

1. Open the **Wallet** app (the icon of cards fanned out).
2. Your boarding pass is one of the cards — tap it so it fills the screen.
3. Hold the screen, code-side up, to the scanner at security or the gate. They do the scanning.

TIP

Your pass can pop up on its own at the right moment

A lovely touch: as your flight nears, your iPhone often shows the boarding pass right on the Lock Screen (the screen you see before you unlock), so you can reach it without even opening Wallet. If it does, wonderful; if it doesn't, just open Wallet the usual way. Both work.

GOOD TO KNOW

It updates itself when the flight changes

If your gate or boarding time changes, the pass in Wallet quietly updates to match, and your phone may even nudge you about it. That's one of the nicest things about a Wallet pass over paper — it can't go out of date in your pocket.

CHAPTER 21

Google Wallet for Boarding Passes (Android)

On an Android phone, the equivalent is **Google Wallet** — the same tidy billfold for passes, boarding passes, and cards. It works just like Apple's, with its own colorful wallet icon.

Getting a pass into Google Wallet

When your airline app or email shows an **Add to Google Wallet** button, tap it and confirm. Major airlines such as Delta, United, and American Airlines support this. Once it's in, the pass sits in your Google Wallet, ready to pull up.

Pulling it up at the airport

1. Open the **Google Wallet** app.
2. Tap your **boarding pass** among your cards and passes.
3. Hold the screen up to the scanner at security and the gate.

GOOD TO KNOW

It can even add the next leg for you

Once you've saved a pass from a particular airline, Google Wallet can quietly add your pass automatically the next time you fly with them — a small kindness that means less fiddling. And like Apple's, a Google Wallet pass updates itself when the flight details change.

TIP

Can't find the Wallet button? Use the airline app

If an airline doesn't offer a Google Wallet button, you're not stuck — open the airline's own app, find **My Trips** or **Boarding Pass**, and show it straight from there. The scanner reads it just the same. Wallet is a convenience, not a requirement.

CHAPTER 22

At the Airport: Security & the Gate

Knowing exactly when and how you'll show your pass takes the nerves right out of it. Here's the sequence from curb to seat, with your phone in hand.

The three moments you'll show your pass

Where	What you do
Bag drop / check-in	If you have bags to check, show your pass at the counter. No bags? You can often skip straight to security.
Security checkpoint	Show your boarding pass (phone or paper) with your ID to the officer, who scans or checks it.
The boarding gate	When your group is called, hold your pass to the scanner at the gate; it beeps and you walk down to the plane.

Showing a pass on your phone, smoothly

1. **Have it open before you reach the front** of the line — open Wallet or the airline app and tap your pass so the code fills the screen. Don't make the line wait while you hunt.
2. **Turn your screen brightness up.** A bright screen scans far more reliably. Many phones do this automatically for a Wallet pass; if not, slide your brightness up by hand.
3. **Hold the phone flat and still** over or in front of the scanner, code-side showing, until it beeps. The staff member will guide you — they do this all day.

TIP

Brightness is the secret to a clean scan

The most common hiccup at the gate is a dim screen the scanner struggles to read. Before you step up, turn your brightness all the way up (swipe into your phone's quick settings and drag the sun/brightness slider). A bright, steady screen scans on the first try nearly every time. Turn it back down afterward to save battery.

FROM BILL

Give yourself extra time, and ask for help freely

Airports fluster everyone, not just folks new to phone passes. Arrive early so nothing is rushed, and remember that gate and security staff help nervous travelers all day long — a friendly "this is my first time using the phone, could you help me?" is always welcome. And if you'd like to practice before a trip, call me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll run through it at your table.

PART 6

Event, Movie & Other E-Tickets

Buying and receiving a ticket on your phone, finding it when you arrive, showing it at the door, and passing one to the friend or grandchild you're bringing along.

CHAPTER 23

Buying & Receiving a Mobile Ticket

Concerts, ballgames, the movies, the theater, the museum — most now sell tickets that land on your phone. The buying part works like any online purchase; the part worth understanding is *where the ticket shows up afterward*, so you're not left wondering.

Where a ticket arrives after you buy

When you buy from a ticket seller — Ticketmaster, Fandango, AMC, a theater's own site — the ticket usually turns up in two places:

- **A confirmation email** arrives within minutes. Keep it. It often has a **"View Tickets"** button or the ticket attached.
- **The seller's app or account** holds the ticket under something like **My Tickets** or **My Events**. This is usually where you'll open it at the door.

TIP

Make an account with the ticket seller — it saves grief

If a site offers to make you an account when you buy (with your email and a password), it's usually worth saying yes. That's how you'll log in later to find your ticket. Buying as a "guest" works too, but then the email is your only copy — so guard it, and don't delete it before the event.

A word on where to buy

Buy from the **official** seller or the venue's own site whenever you can. The internet is full of resale sites and, worse, outright fakes. If a deal arrives by surprise text or social-media message, or a stranger offers tickets "cheap," be very wary — Part 7 covers ticket scams, which are sadly common.

SCAM ALERT

Screenshots of a ticket from a stranger are a classic swindle

A common con: someone sells you a ticket and sends a **screenshot or photo** of the code. At the door it's rejected — because they never really transferred it, or they sold the same picture to ten people. A genuine ticket is **transferred to you** through the official app or site (next chapters), landing in *your* account — not mailed as a picture. If all someone will give you is a photo, walk away.

CHAPTER 24

Finding Your Ticket When You Arrive

The whole game with mobile tickets is being able to produce the code calmly at the door. Almost every door-step panic is a *findable* ticket that the person simply couldn't locate in the moment. Here's how to make sure that's never you.

Before you leave the house

1. **Open the ticket once at home**, on good Wi-Fi, and confirm you can see the code on screen.
2. Note *where* you found it — the seller's app under "My Tickets," or the email. Say it out loud: "tonight, I open the AMC app."
3. If the ticket offers **Add to Wallet**, add it — then it's also waiting in Apple or Google Wallet, the easiest place to find.
4. Make sure your phone is **well charged**, and bring a charger if it'll be a long day.

At the door

Before you reach the front of the line, open the ticket so the code is on the screen and ready. If you've a few tickets for your group, they're usually all in the one place, and you swipe between them or the staff scan each as your party steps up.

TIP

If it won't load at the door, don't panic

Phone showing no internet at the venue? First, try opening the ticket from your phone's **Wallet** (Apple or Google) — passes saved there usually show *without* internet, which is exactly why Wallet is worth using. If you're still stuck, step aside and find a staff member; they can look you up by name or the email on your confirmation. You will get in — venues deal with this constantly.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is why the "add to Wallet" habit pays off

A ticket saved in Apple or Google Wallet is the most dependable kind: it opens fast, shows even with a weak signal, and lives in the same place every time. When a ticket offers the Wallet button, taking it is nearly always the right move.

CHAPTER 25

Showing It at the Gate (and Why Screenshots Can Fail)

The moment of truth is simpler than the worry around it. You hold up your phone; a staff member scans the code; you walk in. But there's one trap worth repeating, because it catches kind, careful people: the screenshot.

Showing the code, smoothly

1. Open the ticket in its app or Wallet so the **code fills the screen**.
2. **Turn your brightness up** — a bright screen scans on the first try.
3. Hold the phone flat and steady for the staff member's scanner, or hand them the phone if they reach for it. Wait for the beep or green light.

Why a screenshot sometimes won't work

As we saw in Part 4, many concert and sports tickets use a **code that refreshes every few seconds** (Ticketmaster's is called SafeTix). A screenshot freezes one moment of that ever-changing code, so by the time you show it, it's stale — and the scanner says no. The fix is simple: for those tickets, open the **real, live ticket** in its app or Wallet at the door, not a picture of it.

Ticket type	Does a screenshot work?
Movie tickets	Usually a fixed code. A screenshot generally works, but opening the app is safest.
Museums, many local events	Usually a fixed code; screenshot usually fine as a backup.
Big concerts & pro sports (SafeTix)	Often a live, changing code. Open the real ticket — a screenshot will be rejected.
Airline boarding passes	Fixed code; a Wallet pass or the app is best, screenshot works in a pinch.

HEADS UP

When unsure, open the real ticket — never rely on the screenshot alone

A screenshot is a fine *extra* backup for fixed-code tickets, but make the real ticket in its app or Wallet your first move at any gate. If it's one of the changing-code tickets, the real one is the *only* thing that works. You'll never regret opening the genuine ticket; you might regret trusting a picture.

CHAPTER 26

Transferring a Ticket to Someone Else

Bringing a friend, your spouse, or a grandchild? You can send them their own ticket so each of you has one on your own phone — far smoother than one person trying to produce everyone's codes at the door. This is also the *proper*, safe way to give or receive a ticket.

How transferring works

1. Open your tickets in the seller's app (or your account on their website).
2. Find the **Transfer** button (sometimes "Send" or "Share").
3. Pick which ticket(s) to send and enter the other person's **email address or phone number**.
4. Send it. They get a message with a button to **Accept** the ticket, and it lands in *their* account.

GOOD TO KNOW

Transfer gives them a brand-new code — the safe part

Here's the clever, protective bit. When a ticket is properly transferred and accepted, the recipient gets a **fresh code** that only works on their phone, and the sender's old code stops working. That's why a genuine transfer can't be copied or double-sold — and why accepting a real transfer is completely different from being sent a mere photo of a code.

Receiving a ticket someone sent you

If a trusted friend transfers you a ticket, you'll get an email or text with an **Accept** button. Tap it, sign in or make an account with that ticket seller if asked, and the ticket drops into your account — ready to open or add to your Wallet. If someone instead just sends you a screenshot and says "here's your ticket," that's not a real transfer; ask them to send it properly through the app.

SCAM ALERT

Only accept transfers from people you actually know

Scammers send fake "you've received a ticket, tap to accept" messages that lead to look-alike sign-in pages built to steal your password. If you weren't expecting a ticket from someone you know, don't tap. When in doubt, contact the person directly and ask — or call me. A real surprise gift from a grandchild is lovely; a surprise from a stranger is a trap.

PART 7

Staying Safe

The honest, practical part. Because a code hides where it leads, scammers have taken to using them — here's how to spot a bad one, check a link in two seconds, and never get caught.

CHAPTER 27

"Quishing": Malicious QR Codes

Let's talk plainly about the one real risk, so you can enjoy codes without fear. Because you can't read a square of dots with your eye, a bad actor can print a code that looks exactly like a good one but sends you somewhere harmful. Crooks have a cutesy name for the trick — **"quishing"** (QR + phishing) — but the defense is simple and this chapter gives it to you.

What a bad code tries to do

A malicious code sends your phone to a **fake website** dressed up to look real — a copycat parking-payment page, a phony bank login, a bogus "you've won" page. The goal is always one of two things:

- **To steal what you type** — your card number, your password, your personal details — on a page that only looks genuine.
- **To trick you into installing something** harmful, or into paying money you don't owe.

Notice what's *not* on that list: simply **scanning** a code and **looking** at the address it offers does not, by itself, hand anything over. The danger is only in what comes next — tapping through and then typing something. That's wonderful news, because it means your eyes and a two-second habit are nearly all the protection you need.

SCAM ALERT

Where bad codes turn up

The common spots: **stickers slapped over real codes** on parking meters; codes in **unexpected emails or texts** ("verify your account," "a package needs a fee"); codes on **flyers left on your car** or mailed to you out of the blue; and codes on **unexpected packages** you didn't order. A code that comes *to* you uninvited deserves far more suspicion than one sitting on a menu you asked for.

GOOD TO KNOW

You're not being paranoid — this is current and real

Officials in cities across the country have found fake payment-code stickers on public parking meters, and consumer-protection agencies have warned repeatedly about QR scams in emails, texts, and on packages. A little caution here isn't fearful — it's exactly the sensible, up-to-date habit a careful person should have.

CHAPTER 28

Checking a Link Before You Tap

This is the single most valuable habit in the whole book, and it takes two seconds. When you scan a code, your phone shows you the **web address** it wants to open *before* it opens. Learning to glance at that address is almost your entire defense.

What to look at

Every web address has a main name — the part right before the first single slash. In **www.delta.com/checkin**, the main name is **delta.com**. That main name is the thing to read. Ask yourself: is it the company I actually expect? Here's what a trickster's address tends to look like:

- **Misspellings and swapped letters** — *de1ta.com* (a "1" for an "l"), *poybyphone* instead of *paybyphone*, *amaz0n* with a zero.
- **The real name buried in a longer, odd address** — *delta.com.secure-login.info*. The true main name here is *secure-login.info*, a stranger — not Delta.
- **A jumble of random letters**, or a shortened link that hides where it really goes.
- **The wrong company entirely** for what you're doing — a "parking" code that leads somewhere with nothing to do with parking or your city.

> **TIP**
>
> **The one-sentence rule**
>
> **If the main name of the web address isn't plainly the company you expect, don't tap — and certainly don't type anything.** That single habit defeats the overwhelming majority of QR scams. When the address looks right and the code came from a source you trust, go ahead with confidence.

When you can't tell

If an address looks odd and you genuinely can't judge it, the safe move is to **not tap it** and instead reach the company the way you already know — open their official app, or type their address yourself, or phone a number from your own records (not one the code gave you). You lose nothing by taking the familiar door instead of the code.

CHAPTER 29

Trusted vs. Untrusted Codes

Not all codes deserve the same suspicion. A simple way to stay relaxed *and* safe is to sort every code into one of two baskets the moment you see it: did I **seek this out**, or did it **come to me**?

The code is…	How much to trust it
A menu on your table at a restaurant you chose	Trusted — you sought it out. Scan away.
A code in a museum, on a product you own, on a trail sign	Trusted — you're there on purpose. Fine.
A Wi-Fi code in a friend's home or your hotel room	Trusted — a place you're a guest of. Fine.
A sticker on a public parking meter	Be wary — easy for a crook to cover the real one. Prefer the official app.
A code in an unexpected email or text message	Untrusted — treat as a likely scam until proven otherwise.
A flyer left on your car; a mailed "notice"; an unexpected package	Untrusted — came to you uninvited. Don't scan without strong reason.

The guiding question

Did I go looking for this, or did it arrive looking for me? A code you sought — on a menu, an exhibit, a product in your hands — is almost always fine. A code that showed up uninvited — in a message, on your windshield, on a surprise parcel — has earned your suspicion. That one question sorts nearly every situation correctly.

TIP

Trusted still means "glance at the address"

Even for a trusted code, the two-second look at the web address costs nothing and keeps the habit sharp — it's how you'd catch a tampered sticker on an otherwise ordinary meter. Trust the setting *and* check the address; the two together make you very hard to fool.

CHAPTER 30

Fake "Scan to Pay" Scams & What to Never Do

The costliest cons pair a QR code with a sense of urgency about **money**. If you learn to recognize this one shape of trick, you've closed the door on most of the damage a bad code could ever do.

The shape of the scam

It almost always sounds urgent and official, and it always wants you to scan and then pay or sign in:

- "Your package is held — scan to pay a small fee."
- "Suspicious activity on your account — scan to verify."
- "Your parking/toll/utility bill is overdue — scan to settle it now."
- "You've won / you're owed a refund — scan to claim it."
- A "charity" or "investment" code pressed on you with urgency.

Things to never do with a code you don't fully trust

Never…	
Don't type your card or bank details	into a page you reached by scanning an unexpected or public code.
Don't enter a password	on a sign-in page a code sent you to — reach the real site yourself instead.
Don't pay a "fee," "fine," or "toll"	demanded by a surprise message or sticker. Real bills don't work this way.
Don't share a verification code	that a text sends you, with anyone — scam or not, those are never to be shared.
Don't rush	because a message says "act now" or "account will be closed." Urgency is the scammer's tool.

SCAM ALERT

Real companies don't dun you by surprise QR code

Your bank, the post office, the toll authority, the utility — none of them chase a payment by sending you a QR code to scan out of the blue. If a message does, it's a scam, full stop. Delete it. If you're worried the bill might be real, reach the company the way you always have — their official app, their number on your statement — never the code or number in the suspicious message.

FROM BILL

One phone call beats one costly mistake

If a code-and-money message ever leaves you unsure — even a little — don't act on it. Call me first at (330) 200-8042. I would far rather spend five minutes telling you "yes, that's a scam, well spotted" than help you untangle a drained account afterward. Checking is never a bother, and it's never silly. That's exactly what I'm here for.

PART 8

Handy Tips, Cheat-Sheet & When to Call Bill

The useful odds and ends — brightness, backups, printing, and your digital wallet — plus a plain cheat-sheet, a glossary, and an honest word about when to pick up the phone.

CHAPTER 31

Handy Tips: Brightness, Backups & Battery

A short collection of the small habits that make all of this feel effortless. None are fancy; together they mean you're never caught out.

Turn your brightness up to be scanned

When *someone else* needs to scan a code off your screen — a boarding pass, a ticket — a **bright screen** is the difference between a clean first-try beep and a fumbling line. Before you reach the gate, swipe into your phone's quick settings and drag the **brightness** slider (the little sun) all the way up. Many phones brighten a Wallet pass for you; do it by hand if yours doesn't. Turn it back down afterward to save battery.

Screenshots: a backup, with one caution

A **screenshot** is a frozen picture of whatever's on your screen. For *fixed-code* tickets — movies, museums, many boarding passes — a screenshot makes a fine extra backup you can show if an app won't load. But remember the lesson from Parts 4 and 6: for **changing-code** tickets (big concerts and sports, SafeTix), a screenshot *won't* work; you must open the real, live ticket. So: screenshot as a backup, yes — but open the genuine ticket first.

How to take a screenshot

- **iPhone (recent):** press the **side button and the volume-up button** together, quickly. The screen flashes; the picture saves to Photos.
- **Android (most):** press the **power and volume-down buttons** together. It saves to your Gallery or Photos.

Printing a paper backup

For boarding passes and many event tickets, you can still **print** a paper copy — check in on a computer and print the pass, or use an airport kiosk. If a phone ticket makes you nervous, a printed backup in your pocket costs nothing and settles the nerves. Not every ticket allows it (changing-code concert tickets usually don't), but many do.

Keep the battery happy

- **Charge fully** the night before any day that depends on your phone.
- **Carry a pocket charger** (a "power bank") for long days out — a small one is inexpensive and lives in a bag or pocket.

- **Add tickets to Wallet** — Wallet passes open fast and usually show even with no internet, so a weak signal at the venue won't strand you.

TIP

The night-before habit beats every clever trick

If you remember one thing from this chapter: the evening before anything important, charge the phone, open the ticket or pass once to be sure it's there, and add it to Wallet. Those three quiet minutes at your kitchen table prevent nearly every stressful moment at the gate.

CHAPTER 32

Your Digital Wallet: Passes Beyond Tickets

We've leaned on Apple Wallet and Google Wallet throughout for boarding passes and tickets. They hold more than that, and getting comfortable with your Wallet makes the whole phone feel tidier. Here's the gentle tour — use as much or as little as you like.

What the Wallet can hold

What goes in Wallet	What it's for
Boarding passes	Added at check-in; updates itself if the flight changes.
Event & movie tickets	Added with "Add to Wallet"; ready at the door.
Store loyalty & rewards cards	Your coffee-shop or grocery card, scanned at the register from your phone.
Membership & library cards	Some offer a Wallet version so you don't carry the plastic.
Payment cards (optional)	You can add a credit or debit card to tap-to-pay, but only set this up if and when you want it.

Finding and using Wallet

- **iPhone:** the **Wallet** app (cards fanned out). Tap a pass to open it full-screen; hold it up to be scanned.
- **Android:** the **Google Wallet** app (a colorful wallet). Same idea — tap a pass, show the screen.
- **Adding something:** whenever you see an **"Add to Apple Wallet"** or **"Add to Google Wallet"** button on a ticket, pass, or card, tapping it tucks a copy in.

GOOD TO KNOW

You decide what goes in — nothing lands there on its own

Your Wallet only ever holds what *you* choose to add. Adding a boarding pass doesn't add your bank cards; adding a coffee card doesn't set up payments. Each thing is a separate, deliberate choice. So you can enjoy Wallet for tickets and passes and never touch the payment side unless you one day decide you'd like to.

TIP

A tidy Wallet is a calmer phone

Keeping your boarding passes and tickets in Wallet means they're all in one predictable place — not scattered across emails and apps you have to hunt through at the worst moment. That one habit removes most of the "where *is* it?" panic that makes digital tickets feel stressful.

CHAPTER 33

Your QR & Ticket Cheat-Sheet

Tear this page out, or fold its corner. These are the everyday moves, all in one place.

Scanning a code

To do this…	Do this
Scan a code (iPhone)	Open Camera, point at code, tap the yellow banner
Scan a code (Android)	Open Camera (or Google Lens), point at code, tap the link
Scan a code in a photo (iPhone)	Open it in Photos, press and hold the code, tap the link
Scan a code in a photo (Android)	Open it in Photos, tap the Lens icon, tap the link
A code won't scan	Steady the phone, add light, wipe the lens, move closer/farther

Tickets & boarding passes

To do this…	Do this
Get a boarding pass on your phone	Airline app → Check In → Add to Apple/Google Wallet
Find a ticket at the door	Open the seller's app (My Tickets) or your Wallet
Show a ticket to be scanned	Open the real ticket, brightness up, hold screen to scanner
Give a ticket to a friend	Seller's app → Transfer → enter their email/phone → send
Make a backup	Add to Wallet; screenshot too (fixed-code tickets only)

Staying safe

Situation	What to do
Any code you scan	Read the web address first; is it the company you expect?
Sticker on a parking meter	Be wary — prefer the official parking app or a pay station
Code in a surprise email/text	Don't scan. Likely a scam. Reach the company yourself
"Scan to pay a fee/fine/toll"	Stop — it's a scam. Never type card details. Call Bill if unsure
A ticket sent as just a photo	Not a real transfer — ask for a proper transfer through the app

CHAPTER 34

A Plain-English Glossary

This subject has a vocabulary all its own, and the words can make simple things sound harder than they are. Here's a plain-English dictionary of the terms you'll meet. Keep it handy for the first little while; soon you won't need it.

Word	What it means
QR code	A square of black-and-white dots that your phone's camera reads — usually a web address in disguise.
Barcode	The older row of stripes (as on groceries); common on boarding passes. A scanner reads it too.
Scan	Pointing a camera at a code so the phone reads it.
Camera app	The app you take photos with — and your QR scanner on recent phones.
Google Lens	A free, built-in Android tool that reads codes and text from the camera or a photo.
Browser	The app that shows web pages — Safari on iPhone, Chrome on most Android phones.
Web address (URL)	The name of a page on the internet, like delta.com. Read it before you tap.
Wi-Fi	The wireless internet in a building; a code can join you to it in one tap.
Digital / mobile ticket	A ticket shown as a code on your phone instead of on paper.
E-ticket	Another word for a digital ticket.
Boarding pass	Your permission to board a flight — name, flight, seat, and a scannable code.
Check in	Telling the airline you're coming and getting your boarding pass, from ~24 hours before.
Apple Wallet	The iPhone app that holds passes, tickets, and boarding passes in one place.
Google Wallet	The Android app that does the same.
Add to Wallet	A button that tucks a pass or ticket into your Wallet app.
Transfer	Sending a ticket to someone else's account so it's truly theirs, with a new code.
SafeTix	Ticketmaster's changing-code ticket; a screenshot of it won't work — open the real one.
Screenshot	A frozen picture of your screen. A backup for fixed-code tickets only.

Word	What it means
Quishing	A scam using a fake QR code to send you to a harmful look-alike website.
Power bank	A small portable battery to recharge your phone on a long day out.

CHAPTER 35

When to Call Bill

I built this book so you could do most of this yourself, at your own pace, with confidence. And you can. But part of doing things well is knowing when a task is worth handing to someone who does it every day — so you can spend your time enjoying the trip or the show instead of wrestling with a screen. Here's my honest take on when to pick up the phone.

Good reasons to call

- You got a code, message, or "bill" that feels off and you'd like a **second opinion** before you do anything — always a good call, never a bother.
- You have a **trip coming up** and you'd like to practice getting your boarding pass onto your phone and into Wallet, calmly, before the day.
- A **ticket won't load**, won't transfer, or you can't find it, and the event is near.
- Your camera won't scan codes and the simple fixes in Part 2 didn't do it.
- You think you may have **scanned a bad code** or typed something into a page you now doubt — call right away so we can check and protect you.

What working with me is like

I'm Bill, and I run **Bill's Home Tech** right here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent **30+ years** helping people feel at home with their technology, and I treat every call the way I'd want my own parents treated: patiently, in plain English, with no rushing, no jargon, and never, ever any eye-rolling. There is no such thing as a silly question with me.

How to reach me	
Call or text	(330) 200-8042
Book online	billshometech.com/book
Where I serve	Portage County, Ohio and nearby
What it costs	Fair, honest, and told to you up front — no surprises

FROM BILL

You're never a bother — that's the whole job

Some folks hesitate to call because they don't want to be a nuisance. Please don't feel that way. Helping you is not an interruption to my work — it *is* my work, and it's work I love. Whether it's a five-minute question before a flight or sitting down to practice tickets together, I'm glad to help. That's what I'm here for.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you reach my website, you may meet Sophie

When you visit billshometech.com, you might be greeted by **Sophie**, my friendly assistant on the site. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time with me. She's there to make reaching me easier — but a real person (me) always does the actual help.

Thank you for letting me be your guide through all these little square codes and the tickets on your phone. Take your time, double-check the ones that arrive uninvited, and remember — scanning a code is only ever an offer you can refuse, and you're never stuck alone. I'm proud of you for learning something new.

— Bill