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# Reddit

Finding real answers, joining communities and staying anonymous — explained in plain English, one step at a time

**A plain-English guide for seniors and families**

Take your time — you can't break it

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

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

*For Reddit on the web, iPhone, iPad & Android · facts current November 2026*

# What's Inside

This is your guide to Reddit: the huge collection of discussion groups where ordinary people ask questions and share what they know. It's written for anyone who keeps seeing Reddit pop up in their search results and wonders what it is, and for the family members who help them. You don't need an account to get a lot out of Reddit, so the first chapters are all about reading and finding answers. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Reddit changes its screens from time to time, so where a button name matters, this guide tells you what to look for.

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PART 1

# Getting Started

What Reddit is, who uses it, and the handful of odd words you'll see everywhere. Start here, even if you've already been reading Reddit for a while.

CHAPTER 1

# A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe you searched for "why is my furnace clicking" or "is this pill safe with grapefruit" and the best-looking result came from a website called **Reddit**. Maybe a grandchild said, "Just check Reddit." Either way, you've arrived at one of the busiest places on the internet, and this guide is here to make it feel a lot less strange.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County get comfortable with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain Reddit sitting next to you at the kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything. When a strange word like "subreddit" or "karma" comes up, I'll stop and explain it right then.

## What this guide will do for you

- Explain what Reddit is, and what it isn't, so you know how much to trust what you read there.
- Show you how to read Reddit and find real answers **without** making an account.
- Teach you the simple trick of adding the word "reddit" to a Google search.
- Walk you through making an account with a username that doesn't give away who you are.
- Explain communities, their rules, and how to ask a question politely so people want to help.
- Help you hide adult content, block rude people and spot the scams that turn up in Reddit messages.

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

You can't hurt anything by reading Reddit or poking around its menus. Reading is completely harmless, and if you post something you regret, you can delete it. The few things that call for real care are sharing personal details, answering strangers' private messages and following advice about your health or money. I'll mark those clearly.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### Why this matters

Reddit is where millions of people describe real experiences in their own words: how a repair actually went, what a product was like after a year, which questions to ask at a doctor's visit. Once you know how to read it with a careful eye, it can save you time, money and a lot of guesswork.

GOOD TO KNOW

### A word about advice

I'm a technology helper, not a doctor, lawyer or financial advisor, and neither are most of the people answering questions on Reddit. Chapter 23 shows you how to tell helpful advice from risky advice, and when to take a question to a professional instead.

## And I'm only a phone call away

If anything in this guide leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question.

So let's start with the simplest question: what *is* Reddit?

***— Bill***

CHAPTER 2

# What Reddit Is (and Isn't)

**Reddit** is a website and app made up of thousands of discussion groups, each about one topic. There's a group for gardening, one for woodworking, one for people caring for a parent with dementia, one for every make of car and nearly every town. Reddit calls these groups **communities**, and people also call them **subreddits**.

In each community, people write **posts** — a question, a photo, a story, a link — and other people reply with **comments**. Everyone can vote posts and comments up or down, so the most helpful replies tend to rise to the top. That voting is the heart of how Reddit works.

## Who uses it

According to the Pew Research Center's 2025 survey of U.S. adults, **26%** of American adults say they use Reddit, up from 18% four years earlier. Pew found it's far more popular with adults under 30 than with people 65 and older — but plenty of older people read it too, often without ever making an account.

## How Reddit is different from Facebook

| | Facebook | Reddit |
|---|---|---|
| Who you see | Friends and family you know | Strangers who share an interest |
| Your name | Usually your real name | A made-up username, if you like |
| What rises to the top | Posts from people close to you | Whatever other people vote up |
| Best for | Keeping up with people | Asking questions and learning from others' experience |

## What Reddit isn't

- **It isn't an encyclopedia.** Anyone can post, and nobody checks that what they say is true. Voting helps, but popular isn't the same as correct.
- **It isn't a help desk for companies.** A community about your bank or your phone is usually run by customers, not by the company. Real support comes from the company's own website or phone number.
- **It isn't private.** Almost everything posted in a public community can be read by anyone on the internet, and often shows up in Google searches.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Knowing that Reddit is "lots of strangers comparing notes" tells you exactly how to use it: as a great place to hear real experiences and get ideas, and never as the final word on anything important.

CHAPTER 3

# The Words Reddit Uses

Reddit has its own shorthand, and it can feel like walking into a club where everyone knows the secret handshake. Here are the words you'll see most often. You don't need to memorize them — just come back here when one puzzles you.

## The basics

| Word | What it means |
|---|---|
| **Community / subreddit** | A discussion group about one topic. Its name starts with **r/**, like r/gardening. |
| **r/** | Short for "subreddit." r/HomeImprovement means the Home Improvement community. |
| **u/** | Short for "user." u/ followed by a name is a person's username. |
| **Redditor** | Someone who uses Reddit. |
| **Post** | Something a person shares in a community: a question, a photo, a link or a story. |
| **Comment** | A reply to a post or to another comment. |
| **Thread** | A post plus all the comments under it — the whole conversation. |
| **Upvote / downvote** | The up and down arrows. Up means "this is helpful"; down means "this doesn't belong." |
| **Karma** | A score that grows as people upvote your posts and comments (Chapter 14). |
| **Moderator (mod)** | A volunteer who runs a community and enforces its rules. |
| **Admin** | Someone who works for Reddit, the company. |

## Shorthand you'll see in comments

| Shorthand | Meaning |
|---|---|
| **OP** | "Original poster" — the person who started the thread. |
| **TL;DR** | "Too long; didn't read" — a one-line summary, usually at the end of a long post. |
| **ELI5** | "Explain like I'm 5" — a request for a very simple explanation. |
| **IIRC** | "If I remember correctly." |
| **AMA** | "Ask me anything" — a question-and-answer session with someone interesting. |
| **NSFW** | "Not safe for work" — adult or graphic content. Chapter 20 shows how to keep it hidden. |
| **Flair** | A small colored label on a post or username, such as "Question" or "Solved." |
| **Crosspost** | A post shared from one community into another. |
| **Edit:** | The person changed their post after writing it, often to add an update. |

TIP

### When a word stumps you

If you hit a term that isn't here, type it into Google followed by the word **reddit meaning**. Someone has almost always asked the same thing before.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Once the jargon makes sense, a Reddit page stops looking like a wall of noise. You can scan a thread, see who asked the question, spot the summary and find the helpful replies in a minute or two.

PART 2

# Reading Reddit and Finding Answers

You don't need an account to get most of the good out of Reddit. These chapters show you how to read it, search it, and use Reddit's own AI search with a sensible amount of caution.

CHAPTER 4

# Reading Reddit Without an Account

Here's some good news: you can read most of Reddit without signing up for anything. Public communities and their posts can be opened in any web browser on a computer, tablet or phone. If all you want is to read answers other people have already given, you may never need an account at all.

## Reading in a web browser

1. Open your usual web browser — Safari, Chrome, Edge or Firefox.
2. Type **reddit.com** into the address bar yourself and press Enter or Go.
3. Use the search box at the top to look for a topic, such as **gutter guards**.
4. Tap or click a post title to open it. The question is at the top and the replies are underneath.
5. Scroll down slowly. The most upvoted replies are usually near the top.

## Those "Use the app" and "Sign up" messages

On a phone especially, Reddit often shows a banner or a pop-up inviting you to open the Reddit app or sign up. It's an invitation, not a requirement. Look for a small **X**, a **Not now**, or a **Continue in browser** choice and tap that. If a page truly won't open without signing in, it's usually because the community is private or marked for adults only.

> TIP
>
> **Make the text bigger**
>
> Reddit pages can have small print. In most browsers you can zoom in: on a computer, hold **Ctrl** (or **Command** on a Mac) and press the plus key. On a phone, spread two fingers apart on the screen. Nothing on Reddit changes — it's only your view that gets bigger.

## Should you get the app?

The free Reddit app, from the App Store or Google Play, is handy if you read Reddit every day or want to post. If you only look things up now and then, the web browser is perfectly fine and keeps your phone a little simpler. Only download the app made by **Reddit, Inc.**, and get it from the official app store.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You can start using Reddit today, with nothing to sign up for and nothing to share about yourself. Reading is private in the sense that matters most: nobody on Reddit can see that you were there.

CHAPTER 5

# Adding "reddit" to Your Google Search

This is the single most useful trick in this guide. When you search Google for advice, the top results are often long articles written to sell you something. Adding the word **reddit** to the end of your search tends to bring up real people describing what actually happened to them.

## How to do it

1. Go to Google as you normally would.
2. Type your question in plain words, the way you'd ask a neighbor.
3. Add a space and the word **reddit** at the end. For example: **best way to clean hard water stains reddit**.
4. Press Enter. Look for results that say **reddit.com** underneath the title.
5. Open two or three of them, not just the first. Compare what different people say.

## Searches where this really shines

- **Real-life reviews:** "robot vacuum after one year reddit" or "hearing aids worth it reddit."
- **Household fixes:** "toilet keeps running after flush reddit."
- **Travel:** "things to know before visiting Mackinac Island reddit."
- **Tech puzzles:** "iPhone battery draining overnight reddit."
- **Hobbies:** "beginner sourdough starter not rising reddit."

TIP

### Only want Reddit results?

Google also understands **site:reddit.com** at the end of a search. That shows results only from Reddit. For most people, simply adding the word **reddit** works just as well and is easier to remember.

HEADS UP

### Look at the date

A Reddit thread from years ago may describe an old version of a product, an old price or an old rule. Every post shows how long ago it was written, such as "3 yr. ago." For anything that changes — prices, software, laws, medications — favor recent threads and double-check the facts.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

This one habit cuts through advertising and gets you closer to straight talk from people who've already been where you are. It's free, it works on any device, and you don't need an account.

CHAPTER 6

# Searching Inside Reddit

You can also search Reddit itself, using the search bar at the top of the website or the app. This is handy once you've found a community you like and want to see whether your question has already been asked there.

## A basic Reddit search

1. Tap or click the search bar at the top of Reddit.
2. Type a few key words, such as **raised garden bed**, and press Enter (or tap the search key).
3. Look at the tabs or choices for what kind of results you want — posts, communities, comments and so on.
4. Choose **Communities** if you want to find a group about the topic, or stay on posts to read answers.

## Searching within one community

When you're inside a community, the search bar usually offers to search just that community. That's often the best way to find an answer, because the regulars there have probably answered your question many times. Many communities also keep a **FAQ** (frequently asked questions) or a **wiki** linked from their About section.

TIP

### Use fewer, plainer words

Reddit's search does best with two to four key words. "Furnace short cycling" works better than "why does my furnace keep turning on and off every few minutes in the winter."

GOOD TO KNOW

### Searching Reddit and Google work well together

Many people find that Google, with the word "reddit" added (Chapter 5), finds old threads better than Reddit's own search does. Try both. There's no wrong way to look.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Checking whether a question has been answered before saves you from waiting hours for replies — the answer may already be sitting there, with dozens of people agreeing on it.

CHAPTER 7

# Reddit Answers: Reddit's AI Search

**Reddit Answers** is Reddit's built-in AI search. Instead of giving you a list of posts, it reads through what people have written on Reddit and gives you a short summary, with links to the posts and comments it drew from. It started in English, and in October 2025 Reddit added French, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese.

## How to try it

1. Tap or click the search bar at the top of Reddit.
2. Type your question in plain words, such as **what should I ask before hiring a roofer**.
3. Look for the choice to ask **Reddit Answers** (it may be labeled **Ask** or marked with a small sparkle). Choosing it gives you a summary instead of ordinary search results.
4. Read the summary. Small links in the text lead to the original comments and posts.
5. Tap a few of those links to read what the real people actually said, in full.

TIP

### If you don't see it

Reddit adds features to some accounts, countries and languages before others, and the screens change from time to time. If there's no Answers choice for you, ordinary search (Chapter 6) and Google with the word "reddit" (Chapter 5) still work perfectly well.

## What to keep in mind

- It only summarizes what Reddit users have written. It doesn't check whether they were right.
- A summary can leave out the one comment that says "careful — that didn't work for me."
- Like every AI tool, it can occasionally get things wrong or mix up details.

HEADS UP

### A starting point, not the final word

For anything about your health, your money or the law, treat an AI summary as a starting point. Read the original posts yourself, and check with a professional before acting on it (Chapter 23).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

When a topic has hundreds of threads, Reddit Answers can give you the gist in a few seconds and point you to the most relevant discussions — like a helpful librarian pulling the right folders off the shelf.

CHAPTER 8

# How to Read a Reddit Thread

A Reddit thread can look busy: a post at the top, then comments, replies to comments, and replies to those replies, all indented like an outline. Once you know the layout, it's easy to read.

## The parts of a thread

| Part | What it tells you |
|---|---|
| **Community name** | At the very top, starting with r/. Tells you where you are. |
| **Username and time** | Who posted, and how long ago, such as "u/maple_leaf_42 · 2 days ago." |
| **Title and post** | The question or story. Look for "Edit" or "Update" notes added later. |
| **Vote score** | The number between the arrows: upvotes minus downvotes. |
| **Comments** | Replies underneath. Replies to a comment are indented beneath it. |
| **OP label** | Marks comments written by the person who asked the question. |

## Reading the comments wisely

1. Read the original post first, so you know exactly what was asked.
2. Look for an **Edit** or **Update** from the original poster. Sometimes they say what finally worked.
3. Read the top few comments, then a few further down. Good advice isn't always the most popular.
4. Notice replies that disagree with a top comment. They often add an important "yes, but."
5. Tap the small line or minus sign beside a long reply chain to collapse it if it gets off topic.

TIP

### Sorting comments

Above the comments there's usually a sort choice. The default shows the most helpful replies first. Switching to newest first is useful when a thread is about something that changes, like a product update.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Votes and karma, in one sentence

Reddit says upvotes show that people think something adds to the conversation, and downvotes mean they think it doesn't belong. Chapter 14 explains more, including karma.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Reading the whole shape of a thread — the question, the top answers and the disagreements — gives you a far more balanced picture than any single comment can.

PART 3

# Your Reddit Account

You only need an account to post, comment, vote or join communities. Here's how to make one that keeps your real name out of it, lock it down, and get back in if you forget your password.

CHAPTER 9

# Making an Account and Picking a Username

An account is free. It lets you ask your own questions, reply, vote, and join communities so their posts show up on your home page. Before you start, think about one thing above all: your **username**.

## Choose your username carefully — it's permanent

Reddit's help pages are clear: once a username is set, it **can't be changed**, not even to fix capitalization. If you delete your account, that username can never be used again by anyone. So take a minute and pick one you're comfortable with for years.

- **Don't use your real name**, your email address, your street or your birth year.
- Pick something about an interest instead, like **RiverbendGardener** or **OldFordTinkerer**.
- Reddit may suggest a random name for you. That's fine to accept — random names are the most private.
- Your **display name** is separate and *can* be changed later in your profile settings.

## Signing up

1. Type **reddit.com** into your browser yourself, or open the official Reddit app.
2. Choose **Sign Up**. You can usually continue with an email address, or with a Google or Apple account.
3. If you use email, choose a password you don't use anywhere else.
4. Pick your username, or accept the suggestion if you like it.
5. Reddit may ask about your interests to fill your home page. Choose a few, or skip.
6. Check your email for a message from Reddit and confirm your address. This matters: it's how you get back in if you forget your password (Chapter 11).

HEADS UP

### Add an email address, always

Reddit says that if there's no email address on your account and you forget your password, it can't help you reset it. If you signed up with a phone number, add an email address and a password in your account settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Reddit may ask your age

In some places and situations Reddit asks people to confirm their age. Reddit says that when an outside company checks your age, Reddit receives only your age range, not your birthdate. Accounts for people under 18 get extra protections automatically (Chapter 26).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

A well-chosen username lets you ask about a health worry, a family situation or a money question without anyone who knows you being able to tell it's you.

CHAPTER 10

# Locking Down Your Account

Your Reddit account may not hold your bank details, but it carries your voice. If someone took it over they could post scams under your name or read your private chats. A few minutes of setup makes that very unlikely.

## Turn on two-factor authentication

**Two-factor authentication** (often called 2FA) means signing in takes your password *plus* a six-digit code from an **authenticator app** on your phone — such as Google Authenticator or Microsoft Authenticator. It's easiest to set up on a computer's web browser.

1. On a computer, go to **reddit.com** and sign in.
2. Click your profile picture and open **Settings**.
3. Find **Account authorization** and choose **Two-factor authentication**.
4. Enter your password when asked. Reddit shows a square code (a QR code).
5. Open your authenticator app on your phone, add a new account, and point the camera at the code.
6. Type the six-digit code the app shows into Reddit to finish.

> TIP
> **Signed up with Google or Apple?**
> If you sign in to Reddit with your Google or Apple account, Reddit says you set up two-factor protection through Google or Apple instead. Protecting that account protects Reddit too.

## Save your backup codes

Reddit can give you **ten backup codes**, each usable once, for days when your phone is lost or broken. Create them on the computer from the same two-factor settings, then write them down and keep them somewhere safe at home, away from the computer.

## Passkeys: signing in with your face or fingerprint

Reddit also offers **passkeys**. A passkey lets you sign in with your phone's face or fingerprint unlock, or its PIN, instead of typing a password. Reddit says passkeys are optional and resist phishing well, because no password is sent. You can add one in your account settings. You'll still keep your original way of signing in as a backup.

SCAM ALERT

### Reddit will never ask for your codes

Reddit says it will never ask for your password or two-factor codes, and won't ask you in a private message to change your email address. Anyone who does is trying to steal your account.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

With two-factor or a passkey turned on, a stolen or guessed password alone isn't enough for anyone to get into your account and post under your name.

CHAPTER 11

# Forgot Your Password or Locked Out

It happens to everyone. If you can't remember your Reddit password, you can reset it — as long as you can get into the email account connected to Reddit.

## Resetting your password

1. On the Reddit sign-in screen, choose the **forgot password** link.
2. Enter your username or the email address on your account.
3. Open your email and look for the message from Reddit. Give it a little while to arrive.
4. Check your **spam** or **junk** folder if you don't see it.
5. Tap the link in the email and choose a new password. The link only works for a limited time; if it has expired, simply ask for a new one.

GOOD TO KNOW

### After a reset

Once you've chosen a new password, you may need to sign in again with it on your other phone, tablet or computer. If you were worried someone else knew your old password, a reset is exactly the right move.

## If there's no email on the account

Without an email address on the account, Reddit can't reset your password for you. Try every other way you might have signed in: a linked Google or Apple account, a passkey, or a password your phone or browser saved for you. A passkey alone won't unlock an account Reddit has locked for security, though. If none works, the honest answer is that you may need to start a new account — and this time, add an email address right away.

## Forgot your username?

Reddit's help center has a page called "Recovering a lost or forgotten username." Type **support.reddithelp.com** into your browser yourself and search for **forgotten username**. It helps to know which email address you used when you signed up.

SCAM ALERT

### Ignore "account recovery" helpers

If a stranger in a comment or message offers to "recover" your Reddit account for a fee, it's a scam. Reddit's own reset is free and only happens through its website, app and official emails.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Knowing the reset depends on your email tells you the one thing to keep in good order: the email address on your Reddit account, and the password to that email.

PART 4

# Communities and Taking Part

How to find good communities, follow their rules, understand votes and karma, and ask a question in a way that gets kind, helpful answers.

CHAPTER 12

# Finding and Joining Communities

Every community on Reddit is about one subject, and each one has its own personality. Some are huge and busy; some are small and friendly. **Joining** a community simply means its posts will show up on your home page. It's free, it's private, and you can leave any time.

## Finding a community

1. Tap or click the search bar at the top of Reddit.
2. Type a topic, such as **birding**, **Ohio**, **caregivers** or **woodworking**.
3. Choose the **Communities** results to see groups instead of single posts.
4. Tap a community's name to look around before deciding. Read a few posts and the About section.

## Joining and leaving

1. Open the community.
2. Tap the **Join** button near the community's name.
3. The community now appears in the left-hand menu (on a computer) or your list of communities (in the app).
4. To leave, open the community again and tap the button that now says **Joined**, then choose to leave.

## Communities that are often worth a look

Community names change and new ones appear all the time, so search for your interest rather than relying on a list. Good kinds of communities to look for include ones for your town or region, your hobby, your car or appliance brand, a health condition you or a loved one lives with, caregiving, retirement, and "explain it simply" style communities where people answer everyday questions.

> TIP
>
> **Look at how busy and how kind it is**
>
> Before joining, scroll through a page of posts. Are questions answered? Are people polite to beginners? A smaller, kinder community is often more helpful than a giant one.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Joining a few communities about things you love turns your Reddit home page into a daily newspaper written just for your interests — new garden photos, new fishing reports, new tips.

CHAPTER 13

# Community Rules and Moderators

Each community has its own rules, written by its **moderators** — volunteers who look after it. On top of that, everyone must follow the **Reddit Rules** that apply across the whole site. Most trouble newcomers run into comes from not reading a community's rules first.

## Where to find the rules

- **On a computer:** look in the right-hand column (the sidebar) of the community's page.
- **In the app:** open the community, tap **See more**, then the **About** tab.

## Common rules you'll see

- Be civil. No insults or personal attacks.
- Stay on topic for this community.
- Search before you ask, or use the weekly question thread.
- Use a clear title, or start it with a tag such as [Question].
- Choose a flair (a label) for your post.
- No selling, self-promotion or links to your own business.
- Some communities require a minimum account age or karma before you can post (Chapter 14).

## Moderators and admins

**Moderators** are ordinary Redditors who volunteer to run a community. They can remove posts, pin helpful posts to the top, and ban people from *their* community. **Admins** work for Reddit, the company, and enforce the site-wide rules. Reddit says official admin accounts show a red username with a Reddit icon or an **[A]** label.

HEADS UP

### Moderators are not company support

A moderator of a community about your bank, your phone company or your computer is usually just a volunteer customer. They can't fix your account. Never give a moderator — or anyone on Reddit — your account numbers or passwords.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Two minutes reading the rules means your question stays up, gets answered, and doesn't get you a sharp reply from a regular.

CHAPTER 14

# Upvotes, Downvotes and Karma

Next to every post and comment are two small arrows. These votes are how Reddit decides what rises to the top and what sinks out of sight.

## What the arrows mean

- **Upvote** (up arrow): Reddit says this shows you think the post or comment adds something positive to the community.
- **Downvote** (down arrow): Reddit describes this as meaning the content shouldn't be seen. It's meant for off-topic or unhelpful posts, not for opinions you simply disagree with.
- The number shown is the **net score**: upvotes minus downvotes.
- Voting is quiet. Other people can't see how you voted.

## What karma is

**Karma** is a score on your profile, built from the votes your posts and comments receive. Reddit says it's only a rough reflection — one upvote doesn't always equal one point of karma. Karma has no money value for most people, and you can't spend it.

## Why karma matters a little

Some communities only let people post once they have a certain amount of karma, to keep out spam accounts. If you get a message that you can't post yet, spend a week or two leaving helpful comments in friendly communities. Your karma will grow naturally.

HEADS UP

### Never buy karma or accounts

Offers to sell you upvotes, karma or an "aged" Reddit account break Reddit's rules on spam and can get the account banned. They're also a common way scammers collect payment details.

TIP

### Use your upvotes to say thank you

When someone gives you a helpful answer, an upvote is the Reddit way of saying thanks. A short "Thank you, this worked!" reply is even nicer, and helps the next person with the same question.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Understanding votes lets you read Reddit more wisely: a high score means many people found something useful, but it's still worth reading the replies that disagree.

CHAPTER 15

# Asking Your First Question

Asking a question on Reddit can feel like standing up at a town meeting. It doesn't need to. With a clear title and a few details, most communities are glad to help.

## Before you post

1. Search the community first (Chapter 6). Your answer may already be there.
2. Read the community's rules (Chapter 13).
3. Decide what you'll share — and what you won't (Chapter 18). Leave out names, addresses and account numbers.

## Making the post

1. Open the community you want to ask in.
2. Tap **Create** (a plus sign) or **Create a post**. If you start from the home page, choose the community from the list.
3. Write a clear, specific **title**. "Kitchen faucet drips only when the hot water is on — cartridge?" beats "Help!!"
4. In the body, say what you have (brand, model, how old), what happened, and what you've already tried.
5. Add a photo if it helps — but check that it doesn't show your address, a license plate or family faces.
6. Pick a flair if the community asks for one, then tap **Post**.

## After you post

- Replies can take minutes or hours. Check back later rather than waiting by the screen.
- Answer follow-up questions in the comments — people may need one more detail.
- When something works, add an **Edit** or **Update** to your post saying what fixed it.

> **TIP**
>
> **A good title does most of the work**
>
> Many people only open posts whose titles tell them what the question is. Put the key fact — the brand, the symptom, the place — right in the title.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

A clear post brings answers from people who've solved your exact problem, often within the same day and without a service call.

CHAPTER 16

# Commenting Politely

Reddit has a long-standing set of manners called **Reddiquette**, posted in Reddit's help center. The gist will sound familiar to anyone raised to be polite: treat people the way you would face to face.

## How to reply

1. Open the post you want to reply to.
2. To answer the post itself, tap the comment box or comment icon under the post.
3. To answer one person's comment, tap **Reply** under that comment.
4. Type your reply. On a phone, the typing box appears at the bottom of the screen.
5. Read it over once, then tap to send.

## Good manners on Reddit

- Remember there's a real person on the other side of the screen.
- Stay on topic and keep replies kind, even when you disagree.
- Share what you know from your own experience, and say so: "In my house, this worked..."
- Don't vote down someone only because you disagree with them.
- Thank people who help you. It's noticed.
- If you made a mistake, edit your comment and add a note rather than quietly changing it.

TIP

### Editing and deleting

Tap the three dots (the menu) on your own post or comment to find **Edit** or **Delete**. If you wrote something you regret, delete it. You can't break anything by doing so.

HEADS UP

### Don't feed the trolls

A **troll** is someone who posts rude things on purpose to get a reaction. Don't argue. Stop replying, and if they cross the line, block and report them (Chapter 22).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

A kind, helpful comment gets upvotes, builds your karma and makes communities glad to see you — which means better answers the next time you ask.

CHAPTER 17

# When Your Post Is Removed or You're Banned

It's surprisingly common for a newcomer's post to be removed, usually by an automatic filter or a moderator enforcing a rule. It's rarely personal. Here's how to understand what happened and what you can do.

## Why posts get removed

- It broke a community rule — wrong topic, no flair, or the question is in the FAQ.
- The account is new or has little karma, and the community filters new accounts.
- It included a link or phone number that looked like advertising.
- Reddit's own team removed it for breaking the site-wide Reddit Rules.

## If a moderator removed it or banned you from a community

1. Look for a message from the moderators. Reddit says a community ban comes with a message from that community's moderators.
2. Read the community's rules again to see what was missed.
3. To ask about it or appeal, send a message through **mod mail** — the community's official way to contact its moderators — and explain politely why you think the ban should be lifted.
4. Don't send direct chat messages to individual moderators about a ban; Reddit asks people to use mod mail.
5. If the answer is no, find a similar community and carry on. There's almost always another one.

## If Reddit itself took action

If Reddit's own team removes your content or suspends your account, Reddit says you'll be told the reason and given instructions for an appeal, and you can appeal within **six months**. Some removals made by spam-detection systems may not come with a message.

SCAM ALERT

**Nobody can "unban" you for money**

If a stranger offers to get your post restored or your ban lifted for a fee, it's a scam. Appeals are free and only go through mod mail or Reddit's own help center.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

A removed post isn't a black mark on you. Knowing the polite way to ask, and when to simply move on, keeps Reddit a pleasant place to be.

PART 5

# Privacy and Staying Anonymous

Reddit lets you take part without your real name. These chapters show you how to keep it that way, tidy up what your profile shows, and keep adult content out of sight.

CHAPTER 18

# Staying Anonymous: What Not to Share

One of the nicest things about Reddit is that you can ask a frank question — about a health worry, a family disagreement or a money mistake — without anyone who knows you being able to tell it's you. That only works if you guard the little details that add up to your identity.

## Why small details matter

No single detail gives you away. But a town, plus a street name, plus a grandchild's school, plus a photo of your front porch is enough for a determined stranger to work out who you are. And remember that public posts can show up in Google searches for years.

## Leave these out of posts, comments and photos

- Your full name, or the names of family members.
- Your street address, house number or a photo that shows them.
- Your phone number or email address.
- Account numbers, card numbers, policy numbers or Medicare numbers.
- Exact dates that identify you, such as your birthday or a recent surgery date.
- Your employer, or a former employer if it's small and local.
- Photos with license plates, mail on the counter, house numbers or children's faces.

## Things that are usually fine to share

- A general area, such as "northeast Ohio," when it helps people give local advice.
- Your age range, such as "in my 70s," if it matters to the question.
- The brand and model of a device or appliance.
- What you've already tried and what happened.

TIP

### The neighbor test

Before you post, ask yourself: "Would I be comfortable if my neighbor read this and knew it was me?" If the answer is no, take out the details that point to you, or don't post it.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Deleting isn't always erasing

If you delete a post, Reddit stops showing it. But Reddit says it can't guarantee that copies others have already made are gone. The safest privacy step is not posting the detail in the first place.

HEADS UP

### Don't move to another app with a stranger

If someone you met on Reddit asks for your phone number, email or to "talk on WhatsApp instead," slow down. Keeping the conversation on Reddit, where you can block and report, is much safer (Chapter 21).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Guarding a few details lets you ask the questions you'd feel awkward asking face to face, and get honest answers, without it ever following you home.

CHAPTER 19

# Your Profile and Privacy Settings

Your **profile** is the page people see when they tap your username. By default it can show the posts and comments you've written. Reddit gives you a few settings to choose what appears there.

## Choose what your profile shows

1. Sign in and open **Settings** (on a computer, click your profile picture; in the app, tap your profile picture, then **Settings**).
2. Open the **Profile** section and look for **Curate your profile**.
3. Choose **Content and activity**.
4. Pick whether to show everything, hide posts and comments from certain communities, or hide them all.
5. In the same area you can choose whether to show any adult (NSFW) content and your follower count.

HEADS UP

### Hidden from your profile isn't hidden everywhere

Reddit is clear that hiding posts and comments on your profile doesn't remove them. They're still in the community where you wrote them, and they can still appear in searches on Reddit and on Google. Moderators of a community you take part in can also see your full history for 28 days.

## Your display name and picture

Your **username** can't be changed (Chapter 9), but your **display name**, profile picture and short description ("About") can. Keep them as anonymous as your username: a nickname, a photo of your garden or your dog rather than your face, and nothing about where you live or work.

## Who can contact you

In your privacy or safety settings you can decide who's allowed to send you chat requests. Chapter 21 walks through it. Many people choose **Accounts older than 30 days**, which cuts out most brand-new spam accounts.

TIP

### Check how your profile looks to others

After changing settings, look at your own profile again. If you have a second device, open **reddit.com/user/** followed by your username in a browser where you're not signed in. That's roughly what a stranger sees.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

A tidy, anonymous profile means a stranger who disagrees with one comment can't scroll through everything you've ever written to learn more about you.

CHAPTER 20

# Filtering Mature Content

Reddit has adult communities, and some posts in ordinary communities are marked **NSFW** ("not safe for work") because they include graphic images, strong language or adult themes. You can keep all of that out of sight.

## Turn off mature content

1. Sign in and open **Settings**.
2. Look for **Preferences** (on a computer) or the view and content options (in the app).
3. Find the switch for **Show mature content** — it usually says something like "I'm over 18."
4. Turn it **off**. Adult communities and posts marked NSFW will no longer show in your feeds or search.
5. If you'd rather keep some posts visible but covered, there's also a **blur** option for mature images, which keeps them hidden until you tap.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> **Settings can move**
>
> Reddit has rearranged these switches more than once, and the names differ a little between the website, iPhone and Android. If you can't find them on your phone, try the same steps at reddit.com on a computer — your choice carries over to your account.

## Mute a community you don't want to see

Sometimes a community that isn't adult still isn't for you — one that's always angry, or a topic that upsets you. You can **mute** it.

1. Open the community.
2. Tap the menu (three dots) near the community's name.
3. Choose **Mute** and confirm.

Reddit says a muted community disappears from your home feed, your notifications, your recommendations and the Popular feed. You can still visit it on purpose, and you can unmute it from your settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Teens are protected automatically

Reddit says that for people under 18, mature content and communities are blocked by default and can't be turned on without confirming age. Chapter 26 has more for families.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

A couple of switches let you read Reddit — or hand the tablet to a grandchild — without worrying about what might pop up next.

PART 6

# Staying Safe

Private messages, blocking and reporting, telling good advice from risky advice, and the scams that turn up on Reddit — and what to do if someone got into your account.

CHAPTER 21

# Chat and Private Messages

Besides public posts and comments, Reddit has **chat**: private conversations between you and another person, or a small group. Most messages you'll ever get are harmless, but private messages from strangers are also where most Reddit scams begin.

## Choose who can send you chat requests

A **chat request** is the first message from someone you haven't talked to before. You decide whether to accept it. You can also decide who's allowed to send one at all.

1. Sign in and open **Settings**.
2. On a computer, open the **Privacy** section. In the app, look under **Safety** for **Chat and messaging permissions**.
3. Choose **Who can send you chat requests**.
4. Pick **Everyone**, **Accounts older than 30 days** or **Nobody**.
5. If you choose a stricter option, you can still allow particular usernames — such as a family member — by adding them to the allowed list.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Moderators and Reddit can still reach you**
>
> Reddit says community moderators and Reddit admins can still contact you even if you choose **Nobody**. That's so you can hear about a removed post or an account notice.

## When a stranger messages you

- You don't have to answer. Ignoring a chat request is perfectly polite.
- Be wary of compliments, sad stories or offers that come out of nowhere.
- Never send money, gift cards, codes, photos of your ID or your account details.
- If the message is rude, threatening or a scam, block and report it right inside the chat (Chapter 22).

SCAM ALERT

### Someone messaged me offering help

A common trick: you post a question about your bank, your computer or a lost account, and a "helpful" stranger messages you privately with a phone number or link to "support." Real companies don't find you through Reddit messages. Look up the company's number yourself on its own website or on your card or statement.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Setting chat requests to a stricter option means far fewer messages from spam accounts, so the messages you do get are much more likely to be real.

CHAPTER 22

# Blocking and Reporting

Most people on Reddit are kind. When someone isn't, you have two tools. **Blocking** cuts off contact between you and that person. **Reporting** tells moderators or Reddit that something breaks the rules. Neither one tells the other person who did it.

## Blocking someone

1. Tap the person's username to open their profile.
2. Tap the menu (three dots, sometimes called "More options").
3. Choose **Block** and confirm.

You can also block someone from inside a chat conversation. Reddit says blocked accounts can't reply to, vote on or award each other's posts and comments in communities. You can block up to 1,000 accounts, and unblock anyone later from the blocked list in your settings.

## Reporting a post, comment, message or user

1. Find the post, comment or chat message that's the problem.
2. Tap the menu (three dots) beside it, or press and hold a chat message.
3. Choose **Report**.
4. Pick the reason that fits best, such as harassment, spam or a threat, and follow the prompts.
5. To report a whole account — for example a username or bio that's abusive — use the menu on their profile.

TIP

### Block and report together

Reddit's advice is that blocking only stops contact. If the person broke the rules — harassing you, threatening you or trying to scam you — report them too, so Reddit can act on the account.

STAY SAFE

### If someone threatens you

If anyone threatens to hurt you or someone else, or you think a person is in danger, call **911** first. Then report it on Reddit and keep a screenshot.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

## What this does for you

One tap makes a rude or pushy person disappear from your Reddit, and a report helps protect the next person they might bother.

CHAPTER 23

# Judging the Advice You Read

Reddit is full of good advice and some bad advice, often in the same thread. The people answering are usually friendly strangers with no way for you to check who they are. Here's how to sort it out.

## Signs a comment is more trustworthy

- It explains *why*, not just what to do.
- It describes a real experience in detail, including what didn't work.
- Several different people independently say the same thing.
- It's recent, especially for software, prices, laws or medications.
- It suggests checking with the manufacturer, a doctor or another professional when that makes sense.

## Signs to be careful

- It's very sure of itself but gives no reasons.
- It pushes a particular product, website or business, with a link.
- It asks you to message the person privately for the "real" answer.
- It tells you to stop a medication, skip a doctor's visit or move money quickly.
- Its replies are full of people disagreeing, and the poster brushes them off.

## A simple routine for important questions

1. Read the thread, including the replies that disagree.
2. Note the two or three ideas that keep coming up.
3. Check those ideas against an official source — the manufacturer, your pharmacy, a government website.
4. For health, legal or money decisions, take your notes to a professional and ask them.

HEADS UP

### Usernames like "Doctor" or "Lawyer" prove nothing

Anyone can call themselves a nurse, a lawyer or an accountant on Reddit. Some communities verify people and show a special label, but you can't be sure of anyone's background from a username alone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Reddit becomes what it's best at — a room full of people who've been there — while the big decisions stay with you and the professionals you trust.

CHAPTER 24

# Scams on Reddit

Scammers go where people are, and Reddit is no exception. The good news is that Reddit scams follow a handful of patterns, and once you know them, they're easy to spot.

## How to tell a real message from Reddit

- Reddit says account notices come from the account **u/reddit**, inside Reddit, or by email from reddit.com.
- It says it never contacts you on other platforms — not by text, WhatsApp or social media.
- Real Reddit staff (admins) show a red username with a Reddit icon or an **[A]**.
- Reddit will never ask for your password or two-factor codes, or ask you in a private message to change your email address.

## Common Reddit scams

| Scam | What it looks like |
|---|---|
| **Fake "support"** | A stranger replies to your question with a phone number or link for your bank, computer company or Reddit itself. |
| **Fake admin warning** | A message says your account will be banned unless you "verify" through a link. The link leads to a fake sign-in page. |
| **Too-good deals** | Someone in a buy-and-sell community offers tickets, electronics or a puppy cheaply, but wants payment by gift card, wire, crypto or a payment app as "friends and family." |
| **Romance or friendship** | A friendly stranger chats for weeks, then has an emergency and needs money. |
| **Investment tips** | A message or post promises sure profits from a coin, stock or "trading coach." |
| **Karma or account sales** | Offers to sell upvotes, karma or an older account (Chapter 14). |

SCAM ALERT

### The three red flags

Be suspicious of any message that's **urgent**, asks you to **leave Reddit** for another app or website, or wants **money, gift cards or codes**. Any one of these is reason to stop. All three together is almost always a scam.

## If you think your account was hacked

1. If you can still sign in, change your password right away, and turn on two-factor authentication (Chapter 10).
2. Check the email address on your account in Settings, and change it back if someone changed it.
3. Change the password on that email account too, especially if you used the same password.
4. If you can't get in, use Reddit's help center: type **support.redditthelp.com** yourself and search for **hacked or compromised account**, then follow its steps to submit a request.

## If you already sent money or shared details

- Call your bank or card company using the number on your card. Tell them it was a scam.
- If you shared a password, change it everywhere you used it.
- Report the scam account on Reddit (Chapter 22).
- Report it to the FTC at **reportfraud.ftc.gov**. For online fraud you can also report to the FBI at **ic3.gov**.

TIP

### There's no shame in it

Scammers are professionals and they fool careful, intelligent people every day. Acting quickly matters far more than how it happened.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Knowing the patterns means you can enjoy Reddit's helpful side and calmly ignore the people trying to take advantage of it.

PART 7

# Families, Taking a Break & Your Cheat-Sheet

Quieting notifications, deleting your account if you decide to, what families should know about teens on Reddit, when to call Bill, and a one-page summary.

CHAPTER 25

# Notifications, Taking a Break and Deleting Your Account

Reddit can send a lot of notifications and emails. You can turn most of them down to a whisper. And if you decide Reddit isn't for you, you can delete your account — but it's worth knowing what that does and doesn't remove.

## Turn down notifications

1. **On a computer:** open **Settings** and choose the **Notifications** tab. Switch off the kinds you don't want.
2. **In the app:** tap your profile picture, then **Settings**. Under your account, choose **Manage notifications** and switch off what you don't want.
3. **Emails:** in Settings, find the email section and switch off the types you don't want, such as the **Daily Digest** newsletter. Every Reddit email also has an **Unsubscribe** link at the bottom.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Some emails always come**
> Reddit says it will still send account messages, such as password resets and email verification, even if you turn everything else off. That's a good thing — they're how you get back in.

## Taking a break

You don't have to delete anything to step away. You can simply sign out, delete the app from your phone, and come back whenever you like. Deleting the app doesn't delete your account.

## Deleting your posts and comments first

Here's the part that surprises people: **deleting your account does not delete your posts and comments.** Reddit says they stay up, just without your username attached. If you want them gone, delete them first.

1. Open your profile and choose the **Posts** or **Comments** list.
2. Tap the menu (three dots) on an item and choose **Delete**.

3. Repeat for anything else you'd like removed.

## Deleting your account

1. On a computer, go to **reddit.com**, sign in and open **Settings**.
2. In the **Account** section, scroll down to **Delete account**.
3. Enter your password and tick the box to confirm.
4. If you signed up with Google or Apple, Reddit asks you to disconnect that sign-in and set a password first.

HEADS UP

### Deleting is permanent

Treat deleting as permanent. Reddit says a deleted account's username can never be used again by anyone, and it begins removing the account from its systems within 90 days. If you're unsure, take a break instead.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Whether you want a quieter Reddit or none at all, you're in charge — and you'll know exactly what's left behind.

CHAPTER 26

# Reddit for Families: Teens and Under-18 Accounts

Grandparents and parents often ask whether Reddit is OK for teenagers. Reddit has rules and built-in protections for younger users, but it's still a big, public place full of adults. Here's what to know.

## Reddit's own protections for under-18 users

- Mature (NSFW) content and communities are blocked by default and can't be unlocked without confirming age.
- Chat requests are set to **Nobody** by default.
- Followers are turned off and the profile is hidden by default, and a teen's profile is kept out of outside search engines.
- Personalized ads are turned off, and ads for things like alcohol, gambling and dating aren't shown.

Reddit's rules also set a minimum age to have an account at all — generally 13 in the United States. How strictly these settings are locked can depend on the teen's age and where they live.

## Why Reddit may ask someone's age

In some places Reddit now asks people to confirm their age before seeing mature content. It may use signals from the phone's app store or an outside age-check company. Reddit says it receives only an age range, such as "18+," not the birthdate or ID documents.

## Practical steps for families

1. Talk first. Ask what communities they read and why — often it's games, homework help or a hobby.
2. Make sure the account has the teen's real age, so Reddit's protections switch on.
3. Go through Chapter 18 together: no real names, schools, addresses or photos of faces.
4. Agree that they'll tell you if a stranger asks for photos, money or to move to another app.
5. Use the phone's own parental controls (Screen Time on iPhone, Family Link on Android) for time limits and app approvals.

STAY SAFE

### If a child is being targeted

If an adult is asking a child for photos, personal details or to meet, save screenshots, report the account on Reddit, and contact local police. You can also report to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline at **missingkids.org/cybertipline**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Knowing what Reddit already does — and what it doesn't — lets you have a calm, informed conversation with a young person instead of a worried one.

CHAPTER 27

# When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time or worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

## Times it's well worth a call

- **Getting set up** — making an account with an anonymous username, adding an email address, and turning on two-factor authentication or a passkey, done together so it's right the first time.
- **A privacy tune-up** — going through your profile, chat and mature-content settings with you.
- **Locked out** — when the reset email won't come, or two-factor codes aren't working.
- **Something feels off** — a message that might be a scam, or a sign that someone else got into your account.
- **Setting up a teen's phone** — parental controls and a family conversation about staying safe online.
- **Learning to search well** — practicing the Google-plus-"reddit" trick and reading threads together.

## What I don't do

I can't get a post restored, lift a ban or speak for Reddit — only Reddit and a community's moderators can do that. I'm also not a doctor, lawyer or financial advisor, so I won't tell you which Reddit advice to follow on those subjects. And I never need your passwords written down or your codes read to me; you'll type those yourself while I guide you.

## What working with me is like

I work at your pace, explain what I'm doing in plain words, and never talk down to anyone. I'll tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money. I have more than 30 years of professional experience, and I serve Portage County, Ohio, in person, and folks farther away by remote help.

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**. This guide is yours to keep for free; if you'd like a hand, I'm only a phone call away.

GOOD TO KNOW

### You may meet Sophie first

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

Thank you for taking the time to learn this. Reddit can be a wonderful place to learn from other people's experience once you know your way around. Take it one step at a time.

***— Bill***

CHAPTER 28

# Your Reddit Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide, boiled down to one page.

## The essentials

| Topic | Remember |
|---|---|
| **Find real answers** | Add the word **reddit** to the end of a Google search. |
| **Read without an account** | Type **reddit.com** yourself; tap "Not now" on sign-up pop-ups. |
| **Community** | A topic group, named r/something. Read its rules before posting. |
| **Votes & karma** | Up arrow = helpful. Karma is a rough score of the votes you've received. |
| **Username** | Permanent. Never your real name. Display name can change. |
| **Account safety** | Add an email; turn on two-factor or a passkey; save backup codes. |
| **Privacy** | Settings > Profile > Curate your profile > Content and activity. |
| **Chat requests** | Settings: choose Accounts older than 30 days or Nobody. |
| **Mature content** | Settings > Preferences: turn off Show mature content. |
| **Real Reddit messages** | From u/reddit or reddit.com email. Never asks for passwords or codes. |
| **Post removed or banned?** | Read the rules; appeal politely through mod mail. |

## Write it down once

| Keep handy | |
|---|---|
| **My Reddit username** | _____ |
| **Email address on my Reddit account** | _____ |
| **How I sign in (email, Google or Apple)** | _____ |
| **Where my password is safely kept** | _____ |
| **Where my backup codes are kept** | _____ |
| **Communities I like** | _____ |

## When something's wrong, in order

1. Can't find an answer? Try Google with "reddit," then search inside one community.
2. Forgot your password? Use the forgot-password link and check your email, including spam.
3. Post removed? Read the community rules, then ask politely through mod mail.
4. Rude or pushy person? Block them, and report them if they broke the rules.
5. Strange message about your account? Don't click. Real notices come from u/reddit.
6. Someone asked for money, gift cards or codes? Stop. It's a scam.
7. Think someone got into your account? Change your password, check your email address, turn on two-factor.
8. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.