BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Shared Albums for Families

One album the whole family adds to, on iPhone or Android — explained in plain English, one tap at a time

A plain-English guide to sharing family photos with Apple and Google

Take your time — opening an album can't hurt a thing

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

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For iPhone, iPad, Mac and Android · iOS 27 (notes for iOS 26) · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to sharing family pictures in one place everyone can enjoy. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind. It covers Apple's Shared Albums (written for iOS 27, with notes where iOS 26 is different), Google Photos sharing, and how to gather everyone's pictures after a big family day. If a screen looks a little different on yours, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Started with Shared Albums

What a shared album is, how it differs from sending pictures, which kind of sharing suits your family, and the few things to check before you begin.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. After every birthday party, wedding, graduation or family reunion, the same thing happens: everyone took pictures, and everyone's pictures are stuck on their own phone. Grandma has the cake, your nephew has the group shot, and somebody's teenager has the only good picture of the dog in a party hat. A **shared album** fixes that. It's one album that the whole family can see and add to, wherever they live and whatever phone they carry.

I'm Bill. For more than 30 years I've helped people feel at home with their technology, and getting a family's pictures into one happy place is some of the most rewarding work I do. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting beside you at the kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, one tap at a time.

Who this guide is for

- Grandparents who want the grandchildren's photos to arrive on their own, without asking.
- The family member who always ends up "in charge of the pictures" after a big day.
- Families with a mix of iPhones and Android phones who aren't sure what will work for everyone.
- Anyone gathering photos after a funeral or memorial, when it matters most to get them all.

What this guide covers

- **Apple's Shared Albums** on iPhone, iPad and Mac, including the new things in iOS 27: inviting people by link, joining from an Android phone or Windows computer, and temporary albums.
- **Google Photos sharing**: shared albums, links, QR codes and partner sharing.
- **Gathering everyone's photos** after a wedding, reunion or memorial, step by step.
- **Keeping your own copies**, because a shared album is not a backup.
- **Privacy and safety**: who can see what, removing someone, location details and fake invitations.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end you'll be able to start a family album, invite anyone to it, gather the photos from a big day into one place, and save the ones you love into your own collection. You'll also know which kind of sharing suits your family, so nobody gets left out because they have the "wrong" phone.

The honest promise

Opening a shared album, scrolling through it, leaving a comment or saving a photo can't harm anything. Looking around is always safe. There are just two moments that deserve a pause, and I'll flag them each time: **deleting a shared album** (it disappears for everyone), and **sharing by link** (anyone who gets the link may be able to see the pictures). Everything else, you can try and undo freely.

GOOD TO KNOW

Written for iOS 27, with notes for iOS 26

Apple changed Shared Albums quite a bit in iOS 27, released in fall 2026. This guide is written for iOS 27 and notes where iOS 26 is different. Google Photos updates itself through the app store, so its buttons can move a little from month to month; I'll describe them the way Google's own help does.

And you're never stuck alone. If you'd like a hand, call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll sort it out together. There's no such thing as a silly question about your own family's pictures.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What a Shared Album Is, and How It Differs from Sending Photos

When you **send** a photo by text message or email, you hand someone a copy. It lands in their messages, mixed in with everything else, and if you send another one tomorrow it lands somewhere else again. After a few weeks, nobody can find anything.

A **shared album** works more like a family photo album sitting on the coffee table. It has a name, like "Grandkids 2026" or "Ruth & Tom's 50th." The people you invite can open it any time, see every picture in it, leave comments and, if you allow it, add pictures of their own. When someone adds a photo, everyone else sees it appear.

Sending vs. sharing, side by side

	Sending photos	A shared album
Where they end up	Scattered through texts or emails	All in one named album
Who can add more	Only by sending back	Anyone you allow
Late arrivals	Must be sent everything again	Open the album and see it all
Best for	One or two quick pictures	An event, a season, or the grandkids year-round

Words you'll meet

Word	What it means
Owner	The person who started the album. The owner decides who's invited and can delete the album.
Participant (or member)	Someone invited into the album. Depending on the owner's choice, they can view and comment, add their own photos, or help manage the album.
Invitation	The message that asks you to join. On an iPhone it arrives as a notification; it can also come as a link in a text or email.
Link	A web address for the album. Depending on the settings, anyone who has it may be able to see the album, ask to join, or join straight away.
Your library	Your own collection of photos, in the Photos app or Google Photos. A shared album is separate from it.
iCloud / Google Account	The online accounts Apple and Google use to keep your photos and to know who you are when you join an album.

HEADS UP

A shared album is not your backup

Pictures that other people put in a shared album aren't automatically in your own library. If the owner deletes the album, or removes you, those pictures can disappear from your screen. Save the ones you love into your own library (Chapter 22 shows how).

CHAPTER 3

Which Kind of Sharing Fits Your Family

Apple and Google each offer a few ways to share. They sound alike, but they suit different families. Here's the whole menu in one table, and then my plain advice.

Choice	What it does	Good for
Apple Shared Album	An album you invite people into. In iOS 27, people can join by link even from Android or Windows.	A family that's mostly on iPhone, or any event
Apple temporary shared album	A shared album that removes itself after 30 days and doesn't use your iCloud storage (iOS 27).	One event: a party, reunion or wedding
iCloud Shared Photo Library	A second, shared library for up to six people. Everyone sees, adds and can delete.	A couple or household on Apple devices
Google Photos shared album	An album you share with Google Account users or by link. Works on iPhone, Android and computers.	Mixed iPhone and Android families
Google partner sharing	Shares your photos (all, or just of certain people) with one partner automatically.	A grandparent and one adult child, or a couple

Bill's quick advice

- **Everyone on iPhone?** Use an Apple Shared Album. It's built in and needs nothing extra.
- **A mix of iPhone and Android?** Either works now. An Apple album made on iOS 27 can be joined by link, and Google Photos works on both kinds of phone. Chapter 19 helps you choose.
- **Just one event?** A temporary Apple album, or a Google album with a QR code, keeps things simple.
- **A grandparent who wants every picture of the grandkids, automatically?** Google partner sharing or a Google live album, or an iCloud Shared Photo Library if it's a couple sharing one household.

TIP

You don't have to pick just one

Many families use a long-running "Grandkids" album all year and a separate album for each big event. Albums are free to make, so a new one for each occasion keeps things tidy.

CHAPTER 4

What You Need Before You Start

Five minutes of checking now saves a lot of puzzling later. Here's what each kind of sharing needs.

For Apple Shared Albums

- An **Apple Account** signed in on your iPhone, iPad or Mac (this used to be called an Apple ID).
- **Shared Albums** turned on (Chapter 5).
- On **iOS 27**, **iCloud Photos** turned on to create a regular shared album. A temporary shared album doesn't need iCloud Photos.
- For people you invite: an Apple device, or, for albums made in iOS 27, any phone or computer with a web browser. People on older Apple software may need to update, or can view the album on iCloud.com.

Check which iOS you have

1. Open **Settings** (the gray gear).
2. Tap **General**, then **About**.
3. Look at **iOS Version**. It will say something like 27.2 or 26.6.

To update, plug in, join Wi-Fi, and go to **Settings** > **General** > **Software Update**. iOS 27 is reported to run on the iPhone 11 and later; my Apple Photos manual has more on which iPhones get which features.

For Google Photos

- The **Google Photos** app (it comes on most Android phones, and is free from the App Store on iPhone).
- A **Google Account** (a Gmail address is one). To invite someone by name, they need a Google Account too; anyone else can get a link.
- Your photos **backed up** to Google Photos. Partner sharing only shares photos that are backed up.

TIP

Write down the account names

Most "I never got the invitation" trouble comes from inviting the wrong email address. Before a big event, jot down the email or phone number each relative actually uses for their Apple or Google account. The cheat-sheet at the end has a place for it.

PART 2

Apple Shared Albums on iPhone and iPad

Turning Shared Albums on, making your first album, inviting the family, deciding who can do what, and the new 30-day temporary albums.

CHAPTER 5

Turning Shared Albums On

Shared Albums is a switch in your iPhone's iCloud settings. If you can't see a Shared Albums section in the Photos app, or an invitation never shows up, this switch is the first place to look. The same steps work on an iPad.

1. Open **Settings**, tap your name at the top, then tap **iCloud**.
2. Under **Saved to iCloud**, tap **Photos**.
3. On iOS 27, make sure iCloud Photos is on. The switch is called **Sync this iPhone** (Apple's help pages call it **Sync this device**).
4. Scroll down and turn on **Shared Albums**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why iOS 27 wants iCloud Photos on

In iOS 27, new shared albums keep pictures at full quality, and the album is stored as part of the owner's iCloud. That's why Apple asks you to have iCloud Photos turned on before you create one. Joining someone else's album, or making a temporary album, doesn't need it.

Where shared albums live in the Photos app

Open **Photos**, tap **Collections** at the bottom, and scroll down to the **Shared Albums** section. Every album you own or have joined is there. Tap **Shared Albums** itself to see them all in a list.

TIP

Bigger and easier on an iPad

An iPad is a wonderful way to enjoy a family album: bigger pictures, easier to pass around the table. Turn Shared Albums on there too, and every album you've joined appears on both.

CHAPTER 6

Making a Shared Album

Let's make your first family album. Choose a few nice photos to start it off; an empty album is less inviting than one with a picture or two already in it.

On iOS 27

1. Open **Photos** and tap **Collections**.
2. Scroll down to **Shared Albums** and tap it.
3. Tap the **Add** button (+).
4. Give the album a name, like "Grandkids 2026," and choose some photos to start it off.
5. Tap **Sharing Options** and choose how people get in: you invite and approve people yourself, or you share the album with a link.
6. If this album is for one event only, you can turn on **Make Album Temporary** (Chapter 10).
7. Tap the **Done** button (the check mark).

On iOS 26

1. Open **Photos**, tap **Collections**, then **Shared Albums**.
2. Tap the **Add** button (+) and name the album.
3. Choose the photos to start with.
4. Pick people from your contacts, or type an email address or phone number.
5. Tap **Done**, then tap **Create**.

Two ways to choose who gets in (iOS 27)

Choice	What it means
Invite and approve	You choose the people. Anyone else who gets hold of the link has to ask, and you approve or decline them. The safest choice for a private family album.
Share with a link	Anyone with the link can join. You can also let people with the link join without waiting for your approval. Handy for a big event, but only send the link to people you'd want in the album.

TIP

Name it so everyone knows what it is

"Photos" tells nobody anything. "Mom's 80th — June 2026" or "Lake House Summer" helps everyone find it among their albums for years to come.

HEADS UP

Your album, your storage

In iOS 27, a regular shared album you own counts toward **your** iCloud storage, and so do the photos and videos others add to it. For one big event, a temporary album avoids that. Chapter 13 explains the details.

CHAPTER 7

Inviting the Family: Invitations, Links and Approvals

Once the album exists, it's time to let people in. You can invite people one by one, or send a link they can tap.

Invite people (iOS 27)

1. Open the shared album.
2. Tap the **Manage Shared Album** button (it shows two little people).
3. Under **Participants**, tap **Invite Participants** and choose how to send the invitation, such as Messages or Mail.
4. Or tap **Copy Album Link** and paste the link into a text, email or family group chat yourself.
5. Tap **Done**.

Approve someone who asks to join (iOS 27)

If you chose to approve people yourself, anyone who taps the link without an invitation sends you a request. You'll get a notification. Tap it, or go to **Photos** > **Collections**, tap your **profile button** (your picture or initials at the top), then **Invitations and Access Requests**, and tap **Approve** or **Decline**.

STAY SAFE

Don't recognize the name? Decline

If an access request comes from a name or email address you don't know, decline it. You can always ask the person in another way, by phone or in person, and invite them properly.

When you're the one invited

- **On an iPhone or iPad:** tap the invitation notification, or look in **Collections** > your **profile button** > **Invitations and Access Requests**, and accept it. The album then appears under Shared Albums.
- **From a link:** tap it. On an Apple device it opens the album in Photos; on an Android phone or a Windows computer it opens in the web browser (Chapter 12).

- **On older Apple software:** an album made in iOS 27 may ask you to update, or you can view it on **iCloud.com**.

TIP

"I never got the invitation"

Check three things: that Shared Albums is on (Chapter 5), that the invitation went to the email or phone number that person actually uses for their Apple Account, and the Invitations list under the profile button. If all else fails, simply send them the album link.

CHAPTER 8

Who Can Do What: Participant Permissions

In iOS 27 you can decide, person by person, what each participant may do. It's a gentle way to let the grandkids add photos while keeping the album's housekeeping with one or two trusted grown-ups.

Permission	What that person can do
Can Manage Album and Photos	Can view, comment and add photos, delete photos, add or remove participants, and approve or decline requests to join. Good for a co-organizer, like a son or daughter.
Can Add Photos	Can view, comment and add photos, but can only delete the photos they added themselves. Right for most family members.
Can View and Comment	Can look and leave comments, but not add pictures. Good for a large circle of friends.

Change someone's permission (iOS 27)

1. Open the shared album.
2. Tap the **Manage Shared Album** button.
3. Tap the person's name.
4. Choose **Can Manage Album and Photos**, **Can Add Photos** or **Can View and Comment**.

On iOS 26

iOS 26 has a single switch for the whole album instead: **Participants Can Add Photos**. If someone can see the album but can't add to it, check that this switch is on.

TIP

A relative can't add pictures?

On iOS 27, open the album, tap **Manage Shared Album**, tap their name and make sure **Can Add Photos** (or Can Manage Album and Photos) is chosen. On iOS 26, check the Participants Can Add Photos switch.

CHAPTER 9

Adding Photos, Comments and Reactions

This is the everyday part: dropping in new pictures and enjoying everyone else's.

Add photos from your library

1. In your **Library** or any album, tap **Select** and tap the photos you want to share.
2. Tap the **Share** button (a box with an arrow pointing up).
3. Tap **Add to Shared Album**.
4. Choose the album and tap **Done** (on iOS 26, tap **Post**).

Everyone in the album gets a notification that new pictures have arrived.

Comments and reactions

Open any photo in a shared album to leave a comment underneath, the way you'd write on the back of a print. In iOS 27 you can also react to a picture with any emoji, a quick way to send a smile or a heart without typing.

Full quality, now

Albums made in iOS 27 keep photos at **full resolution**, so pictures from a shared album are good enough to print or frame. Older albums kept a smaller version. An older album can be upgraded (Chapter 13); only photos added after the upgrade are stored at full resolution.

TIP

Videos are welcome too

Long videos can be too big to send comfortably by text. A shared album is a good home for the speeches, the first dance or a grandchild's recital.

HEADS UP

Think before you post

Everyone in the album sees what you add, and anyone you let in by link may too. Skip anything you'd rather keep private, such as photos of documents or of a house number.

CHAPTER 10

Temporary Shared Albums: 30 Days for One Event

New in iOS 27, a **temporary shared album** is made for one occasion. Everyone drops in their pictures, everyone saves what they want, and after 30 days the album tidies itself away.

Why families like them

- They **don't count toward your iCloud storage**, however many pictures people add.
- You don't need iCloud Photos turned on to create one.
- They hold up to **5,000** photos and videos from everyone combined.
- Relatives with Android phones or Windows computers can join by link.

Make one (iOS 27)

1. Open **Photos** and tap **Collections**.
2. Scroll down to **Shared Albums** and tap it.
3. Tap the **Add** button (+).
4. Name the album and choose a few photos to start it off. Tap **Sharing Options** to choose whether you approve people or share with a link.
5. Turn on **Make Album Temporary**, then tap the **Done** button (the check mark).
6. To invite people, tap the **Share** button and send the link by Messages or Mail, or copy the link.

HEADS UP

After 30 days, unsaved photos are gone

When a temporary album expires, any photo or video that nobody saved to their own library is deleted. Tell everyone the date, and remind them a few days before (Chapter 20 has a simple plan).

Decided to keep it?

Open the album, tap the **Manage Shared Album** button, and turn off **Make Album Temporary**. From then on it's a regular shared album, and it starts counting toward your iCloud storage.

GOOD TO KNOW

Not offered everywhere

Apple says temporary shared albums aren't available in every country. If you don't see the switch, check that you're on iOS 27, and otherwise use a regular shared album.

PART 3

Apple Albums on a Mac, Android and Windows

Shared albums on a Mac, letting relatives with Android phones or Windows computers join, what counts toward your storage, and how a shared album differs from a Shared Library.

CHAPTER 11

Shared Albums on a Mac

On a Mac, shared albums live in the same Photos app, in the sidebar on the left. A big screen is a comfortable place to look through a reunion album or pick the best shots for printing.

Make a shared album (macOS 27)

1. Make sure iCloud Photos is turned on for this Mac (a temporary album doesn't need it).
2. Open **Photos**.
3. In the **Sharing** section of the sidebar, click the **Add** button (+) next to **Shared Albums**.
4. Type a name for the album.
5. Choose whether to invite and approve participants, or share the album with a link.
6. For a one-event album, turn on **Make Album Temporary**.
7. Click **Create**.

On macOS 26 and earlier

Select the photos you want, click the **Share** button, choose **Shared Albums**, then **New Shared Album**. Type a name and the email addresses of the people to invite. Use the email address each person uses for their Apple Account, so they can see it on their iPhone or iPad.

Saving to your Mac's library

To keep a photo from someone else's album, open it and use the option to import it into your library (on a Mac you can also drag it into your Library). Once it's yours, it stays even if the album goes away.

> **TIP**
>
> **One album, every device**
>
> A shared album you join on your iPhone also appears on your Mac and iPad, as long as each is signed in to the same Apple Account with Shared Albums turned on.

CHAPTER 12

Letting Android and Windows Relatives Join

For years, Apple's shared albums were really only for Apple people. Your nephew with the Samsung phone could look, but not add his own pictures. iOS 27 changed that, and it's one of the most welcome changes for families.

What's new in iOS 27

- A link to an album created in iOS 27 or later opens on **Apple and non-Apple devices** alike.
- Friends and family can join and **add their own photos on the web**, even without an Apple Account or an Apple device.
- You decide whether people with the link can join straight away, or must be invited or approved.

Inviting a relative with an Android phone

1. On your iPhone, open the shared album and tap the **Manage Shared Album** button.
2. Tap **Copy Album Link**.
3. Paste the link into a text message or email to your relative.
4. They tap the link on their phone. It opens in their web browser, where they can view the album and, if you've allowed it, ask to join or join straight away.
5. If you chose to approve people, approve their request when it arrives (Chapter 7).

On a Windows computer

The same link works in any up-to-date web browser on a Windows PC. A relative can also sign in at **iCloud.com** with an Apple Account to see shared albums. Apple's iCloud for Windows app has offered shared albums too, but the link is the simplest path for most families.

GOOD TO KNOW

Older albums work differently

An album created before iOS 27 keeps its old behavior until its owner upgrades it (Chapter 13). If a relative's link doesn't let them add photos, ask the owner whether the album was made on iOS 27.

HEADS UP

A link travels

A link can be forwarded. For a private family album, choose to approve people yourself, so that a forwarded link leads to a request you can decline, not straight into the album.

CHAPTER 13

Storage and Limits: What Counts Now

This is the one place where iOS 27 brought a real trade-off, so it's worth a few minutes. Older advice, including some you may have read, says shared albums are "free" and don't use your iCloud space. That's still true for older albums and for temporary albums, but **not** for regular albums made in iOS 27.

What counts toward your iCloud storage

Kind of album	Counts toward the owner's iCloud storage?
Regular album made in iOS 27 or later	Yes. Everything in it counts, including photos and videos other people add.
Temporary shared album (iOS 27)	No, however many photos are added. (Turn off Make Album Temporary and it starts counting.)
Album made in iOS 26 or earlier	No.
Older album you've upgraded	Photos already in it don't count. New photos added after the upgrade count toward the owner's storage.

GOOD TO KNOW

Only the owner's storage is used

When you add pictures to someone else's iOS 27 album, they count toward **the album owner's** storage, not yours. So it makes sense for the family member with the roomiest iCloud plan to own the big long-running albums.

The limits

Album	Limits
Albums made in iOS 27 or later	Up to 100 participants per album, including the owner. Apple says the number of albums and photos is limited by the owner's available iCloud storage.
Temporary albums	Up to 5,000 photos and videos combined, for 30 days.
Albums made in iOS 26 or earlier	Up to 200 shared albums you own, 200 you've joined, 100 subscribers per album and 5,000 photos and videos per album.

Upgrade an older album

Upgrading an older album gives it the iOS 27 features, such as full-resolution photos, emoji reactions and the new invite options. To do it, open **Photos** > **Collections** > **Shared**

Albums, open the album, tap the **More** button (three dots) and choose **Upgrade Shared Album**. Participants still on older software will need to update, or view the album on iCloud.com.

TIP

Don't upgrade just because you can

If an old family album works fine and everyone can see it, there's no rush. Upgrading means new photos start using the owner's iCloud space. Upgrade when you want the new features, such as letting Android relatives add photos.

If the owner runs out of room

If the owner's iCloud fills up, they can free up space or move to a larger iCloud+ plan. In the U.S., Apple's plans are $0.99 a month for 50 GB, $2.99 for 200 GB, $9.99 for 2 TB, $29.99 for 6 TB and $59.99 for 12 TB, and an iCloud+ plan can be shared with up to five family members. My iCloud manual walks through it.

CHAPTER 14

Shared Album or iCloud Shared Photo Library?

Apple has a second, bigger kind of sharing called the **iCloud Shared Photo Library**. People mix the two up all the time, so here's the difference in plain words.

	Shared Album	iCloud Shared Photo Library
What's shared	Only the photos you choose to add	A whole second library; can fill itself from the camera
How many people	Up to 100 (iOS 27 albums)	Up to six (you plus five)
Who can delete	Depends on each person's permission	Everyone in it
Who can join	Anyone you invite; by link even without an Apple Account (iOS 27)	Apple Account users with iCloud Photos on
How many you can be in	Many albums	One Shared Library at a time
Storage	See Chapter 13	The person who set it up provides the storage

Which should we use?

- **A couple or one household** who want every family photo in one place, automatically: the Shared Library.
- **The wider family**, an event, or anyone outside the household: a shared album.
- Plenty of families use both: a Shared Library for Grandma and Grandpa, and shared albums for the children and grandchildren.

Set up a Shared Library

1. Open **Settings**, tap **Apps**, then tap **Photos**.
2. Tap **Shared Library**.
3. Choose up to five people to invite, or invite them later.
4. Choose any past photos you want to move into the Shared Library.
5. Follow the steps on screen to preview it and send the invitations.

HEADS UP

Everyone can delete in a Shared Library

Because every member can delete photos, agree as a family how you'll use it. A photo someone else deletes goes to Recently Deleted, but only the person who added it can recover it. My Apple Photos manual covers the Shared Library in more detail.

PART 4

Sharing with Google Photos

Google Photos shared albums, letting others add their pictures, links and QR codes, partner sharing, and how Google counts storage for shared photos.

CHAPTER 15

Making a Google Photos Shared Album

Google Photos works the same way on an Android phone, an iPhone and a computer, which is why so many mixed families like it. If you already use it to back up your pictures, a shared album is only a few taps away. My Google Photos manual covers the app itself; here we'll focus on sharing.

Make an album and share it (phone)

1. Open **Google Photos**.
2. Tap **Add** (the **+** at the top), then **Album**. Or touch and hold the photos you want, then use the **Add** button to put them in a new album.
3. Give the album a title and add some photos, then tap **Done**.
4. Open the album and tap **Share**.
5. Choose family members from your contacts (they need a Google Account), or search by email address or phone number. For anyone else, tap **Create link** (on iPhone, it may say **Get link**).

Find the albums shared with you

In Google Photos, tap **Collections**, then **Albums**. You can filter the list to show **Shared with me** or **My albums**. Invitations also arrive as notifications and emails.

GOOD TO KNOW

On a computer

Go to **photos.google.com** and sign in with your Google Account. Shared albums appear there too, and a big screen is a comfortable place to sort through an event's pictures.

TIP

A live album that fills itself

Google Photos can also make an album that automatically adds every new photo of the people or pets you pick, and you can share it like any other album. My Google Photos manual shows how. It's a favorite with grandparents.

CHAPTER 16

Letting Others Add: Collaborate, Links and QR Codes

A Google shared album has a few settings that decide who can see it and who can add to it. They're found in the album's sharing settings: open the album, tap **More** (three dots), then **Options** or **Sharing** (the name depends on your app version).

Setting	What it does
Collaborate	When on, people in the album can add their own photos. Turn it off to stop new additions; photos already added stay unless you delete them.
Link sharing	When on, anyone with the album's link can view it. Turn it off, and the link stops working. Turn it on again and Google makes a brand-new link.
Comments and likes	You can choose whether others can comment and like photos in your album.

HEADS UP

Anyone in the album can invite others

Google says anyone with access to a shared album can add other people to it. That's handy for spreading the word at a reunion, but it means a private album can grow. Only the owner can change the album's settings.

Show a QR code for the album (Android)

A **QR code** is a square barcode that a phone's camera can read. Google Photos can show one for an album, so family members can scan it and open the album without typing anything. It's perfect for a sign on the gift table.

1. Open the album in Google Photos.
2. Tap **Share**, then **Show QR code**.
3. Let others scan it with their phone's camera.
4. To print it or send it later, take a screenshot of the QR code.

STAY SAFE

A QR code is just a link

Anyone who scans the code can open the album, so treat a printed code like a printed link. Take it down after the event, and turn off Collaborate when the collecting is done. On an iPhone, look for the same option under Share; if you don't see it, send the link instead.

Reset a link that's gone too far

If a link has been passed around more than you'd like, turn **Link sharing** off, then on again. The old link stops working, and you can send the new one only to the people you want.

CHAPTER 17

Partner Sharing: Photos That Arrive by Themselves

Partner sharing is Google's way of sharing your pictures with one special person automatically. There's no album to keep up: as you take photos, they appear for your partner. You can share everything, or only photos of certain people, such as the grandchildren.

Set it up (phone)

1. Open **Google Photos** and tap your **profile picture** or initial at the top.
2. Tap **Photos settings**, then **Sharing**, then **Partner sharing**.
3. Choose what to share: **All photos**, or **Photos of certain people** (then pick their faces).
4. Choose a start: share from all time, or only photos from a specific date onward.
5. Choose your partner by their email address (it must be a Google Account), then send the invitation.

When you're the partner

Accept the invitation when it arrives. You can then see your partner's shared photos, choose to share your own back, and turn on automatic saving: either everything they share, or only photos of the people you pick.

Good to know

- You can have **one partner at a time**. To choose someone new, stop sharing with the current partner first.
- Only photos that are already **backed up** to Google Photos are shared.
- Sharing by date relies on each photo's date. Scanned prints or a camera with the wrong clock can occasionally share a photo outside the dates you chose.
- Sharing photos of certain people uses face groups, which Google doesn't offer in every region.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A steady stream of the grandkids

Set up partner sharing from an adult child to a grandparent, limited to photos of the grandchildren, and new pictures of the little ones simply appear, with nobody having to remember to send them.

HEADS UP

Think it through first

"All photos" really means all: screenshots, receipts, everything. For most families, sharing only photos of certain people, from today onward, is the comfortable choice.

CHAPTER 18

How Google Counts Storage for Shared Photos

Every Google Account comes with **15 GB** of free storage, shared across Gmail, Google Drive and Google Photos. Here's how shared photos fit in.

Situation	What Google says
Looking at a shared album	Viewing photos someone else shared doesn't add them to your library.
Saving shared photos	Photos and videos you save into your own library count toward your storage.
Partner sharing	Photos you save from your partner don't use your storage while your partner keeps sharing them with you.
Album size	An album can hold up to 20,000 photos and videos.

Two things that surprise people

- **If you delete a photo from your own library**, it also disappears from any shared album you added it to. If the family is enjoying it, leave your copy in place.
- **If an owner turns off sharing** (removes everyone and turns off the link), the photos and comments other people added are removed from the album. Copies people already saved or downloaded stay theirs.

TIP

Need more room?

Google sells extra storage through Google One plans. Prices change, so check the current price in the Google One app or at one.google.com before you buy. Clearing out old videos often frees enough room.

PART 5

Mixed Families and Big Family Days

Choosing one album that works for iPhone and Android alike, gathering everyone's pictures after a wedding, reunion or memorial, and keeping your own copies.

CHAPTER 19

iPhone and Android in the Same Family

Most families today are a mix: Grandma has an iPhone, her son has a Samsung, a granddaughter has a Pixel and Grandpa checks things on a Windows laptop. The good news is that both Apple and Google now have a way for everyone to take part. The trick is to choose **one** home for the pictures and tell everybody where it is.

Which to choose

If your family...	Consider	Why
Is mostly on iPhone, with a few Android or Windows relatives	An Apple shared album made in iOS 27	Built in for the iPhone folks; others join and add photos by link in a web browser
Is mostly Android, or already uses Google Photos	A Google Photos shared album	Same app on Android and iPhone; works on any computer at photos.google.com
Is gathering photos from one event	An Apple temporary album, or a Google album with a QR code	Quick to set up, easy for guests, and the Apple one doesn't use your storage
Includes someone on older Apple software	Check before you choose	An iOS 27 album may ask them to update, or they can view it on iCloud.com

What each person will see

Device	Where the album shows up
iPhone, iPad or Mac	Apple albums appear in the Photos app under Shared Albums. Google albums appear in the Google Photos app, if they install it, or in a web browser by link.
Android phone	Google albums appear in the Google Photos app. Apple albums made in iOS 27 open in the web browser from the link.
Windows computer	Either kind opens in a web browser: Google at photos.google.com, Apple by link or at iCloud.com.

TIP

One family, one place

Whatever you choose, pin the link to the top of the family group chat, or send a short text: "All the family pictures go in the 'Our Family' album. Here's the link." Two different albums for the same event is the most common way photos get lost.

GOOD TO KNOW

A relative who'd rather not install anything

With either an iOS 27 Apple album or a Google album shared by link, a relative can at least look at the pictures in a web browser without installing a new app. To add pictures to a Google album, it's simplest if they use the Google Photos app with a Google Account.

CHAPTER 20

Collecting Everyone's Photos After a Wedding or Reunion

This is the job that so often falls to one family member: "Can you get all the pictures together?" With a little planning, it takes minutes instead of weeks. Here's a simple plan in three stages.

Before the day

1. **Pick one album and one person in charge.** Use a temporary Apple album or a Google album (Chapter 19). Give it a clear name: "Sarah & Mike's Wedding."
2. **Choose who can get in.** For a family-only reunion, invite people by name. For a wedding with many guests, a link (and for Google, a QR code) is easier.
3. **Let people add photos.** For Apple, give people the Can Add Photos permission or let them join by link; for Google, make sure **Collaborate** is on.
4. **Set a deadline.** For example: "Please add your photos by the end of the month." With a temporary Apple album, the deadline is built in: 30 days.
5. **Send the link ahead of time**, in the invitation email or family group chat.

On the day

- Put a small sign on the guest book or gift table: "Share your photos! Scan here or ask for the link." Google Photos can show a QR code for an album (Chapter 16).
- Ask one or two younger relatives to help older guests add their pictures.
- Remind people that videos of the speeches and the first dance are welcome too.

STAY SAFE

Signs in public places

A QR code or link on a sign can be photographed by anyone who walks by. For an event in a public place, choose to approve people yourself (Apple) or turn off the link once the event is over (Google).

After the day

1. Send a friendly reminder a week before the deadline: "Last call for photos!"

2. When the deadline passes, turn off adding: for Google, turn off **Collaborate**; for Apple, change people to **Can View and Comment**, or let the temporary album run its course.
3. Save your favorites into your own library (Chapter 22), and remind everyone else to do the same before a temporary album expires.
4. Choose the best pictures for prints, a photo book or a slideshow.

TIP

From album to slideshow

Once the pictures are gathered, they make a wonderful slideshow for an anniversary dinner or to play on the TV. My Making a Photo Slideshow manual walks through it, and my Photo Printing and Photo Books manual helps when you want something to hold.

HEADS UP

A temporary album means it

If you used an Apple temporary album, pictures nobody saved are deleted after 30 days. If the family wants to keep the album itself, turn off **Make Album Temporary** before then (it then counts toward your iCloud storage).

CHAPTER 21

Gathering Photos for a Funeral or Memorial

When someone dies, families often want to gather every picture they can find: for a slideshow at the service, for a memory board, and simply to keep. It's a tender job, often done in a hurry, and a shared album can take some of the strain off.

A gentle plan

1. Ask one family member to make a shared album with a simple name, such as "Remembering Dad."
2. Use a regular (not temporary) album if you'd like to keep collecting for months; use a temporary Apple album only if everyone understands it disappears after 30 days.
3. Send the link to family and close friends by text or email, with a short note: "If you have pictures of Dad, we'd love to gather them here."
4. If the service will have a slideshow, give a clear date for photos to be in, a few days before.
5. Ask people to add old prints too: they can photograph a print with their phone and add it.
6. Afterward, save everything into one person's library and make a second copy (Chapter 22).

TIP

Let someone else do the technical part

Grief and technology don't mix well. If a grandchild or a friend offers to manage the album, let them. Your job is to choose and enjoy the pictures.

HEADS UP

Pictures on the departed person's own phone

Photos on a loved one's own phone or in their own iCloud or Google account can be hard to reach after they've gone. Apple's Legacy Contact and Google's Inactive Account Manager are designed for this; my Digital Legacy manual explains them. It's also a good reason to set them up for yourself.

Keeping the comments

Comments left on pictures in a memorial album are often precious: a story about the photo, a memory from an old friend. Before an album is ever deleted, consider taking screenshots of

the comments that mean the most.

CHAPTER 22

Saving Shared Photos into Your Own Library

This may be the most important chapter in the guide. A shared album is a wonderful place to **enjoy** pictures, but it isn't where you **keep** them. If the owner deletes the album, removes you, stops sharing, or a temporary album expires, pictures you never saved can be gone from your view.

Save from an Apple shared album (iPhone or iPad)

1. Open the shared album and tap the photo you want.
2. Tap the **Share** button.
3. Tap **Save Image** (or **Save Video**).

The picture is now in your own Library, and it stays even if the shared album is later deleted. To save several at once, tap **Select** in the album, choose the photos, then use the **Share** button.

Save from a Google Photos shared album

- **One photo:** open it in the shared album and tap or click **Save** at the top.
- **The whole album:** open the album and use **Save** (top right on a computer) to add every picture to your library.

HEADS UP

"Saving the album" isn't saving the photos

Google lets you save a shared album to your Albums list. That gives you a shortcut to the album, but Google says it doesn't save the pictures themselves into your library. Use **Save** on the photos. Also, edits the owner makes later won't change your saved copy.

Then, keep a second copy

Once they're in your library, your iCloud Photos or Google Photos backup protects them along with the rest of your pictures. For truly precious pictures, such as a wedding or a parent's memorial, it's worth also copying them onto a computer or a USB drive once a year. My Apple Photos and Google Photos manuals show how.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Peace of mind

Ten minutes spent saving your favorites means the pictures from the big day stay with you, no matter what happens to the album, the account or anyone's phone.

PART 6

Privacy and Safety

Who can see your albums, how to remove someone or stop sharing, what a photo can reveal about where you live, and the fake album invitations scammers send.

CHAPTER 23

Who Can See It, Removing People and Ending Sharing

A shared album is private to the people you let in, but it's worth knowing exactly who that is, and how to change your mind.

Who can see an album

- **Apple:** the people you invited or approved, plus anyone with the link if you chose to let people join by link without approval.
- **Google:** the album's members, plus anyone with the link while link sharing is on. Remember that members can invite others.

Remove someone from an Apple album

1. Open the shared album and tap the **Manage Shared Album** button.
2. Tap the person's name.
3. Tap **Remove Participant**.

Remove someone from a Google album

1. Open the album (you must be its owner).
2. Tap **More** (three dots), then **Sharing** or **Options**.
3. Find the person, tap **More** next to their name, and choose **Remove person**.
4. If the album has link sharing on, turn it off too, or the person could rejoin with the old link.

GOOD TO KNOW

Blocking on Google Photos

Google Photos also lets you block someone, so you no longer see each other's photos, videos or comments. Google's help describes it on the computer and iPhone versions of the app.

End sharing altogether

What you do	What happens
Apple: delete the album	If you own it and delete it, it disappears from everyone's devices and its photos are permanently deleted. iOS 27 also offers **Make Album Temporary** instead, which removes it after 30 days and gives people time to save.
Google: stop sharing	Remove all members and turn off link sharing. Photos and comments others added are removed, but copies people already saved or downloaded stay with them.

HEADS UP

Pause before deleting

Deleting an album is the one step in this guide that can't easily be undone, and it affects everyone. Give the family a week's notice to save their favorites first, or choose Make Album Temporary on an Apple album.

GOOD TO KNOW

Once shared, a copy is out there

Anyone who could see a photo may have saved it. Removing someone stops them seeing new pictures; it doesn't take back copies they already kept. Share with people you trust.

CHAPTER 24

Location and Personal Details in Shared Photos

Phones quietly record **where** each photo was taken. That's lovely in your own library, where you can see your trips on a map. It's less lovely in a picture that strangers might see, because it can point to your home or a grandchild's school.

Turn off location when sharing from an iPhone

1. Select the photos and tap the **Share** button.
2. Tap **Options** at the top of the Share screen.
3. Turn off **Location**, then tap **Done**, and share as usual.

A family checklist for shared pictures

- Keep albums with children in them **invite-only** where you can, rather than open links.
- Watch for **house numbers, street signs, car license plates and school names or uniforms** in the background of photos shared widely.
- Leave out photos of **documents**: tickets, IDs, medicine labels, mail with your address.
- Before posting album photos on Facebook or another public site, ask the parents of any children shown.
- Review the people in your long-running albums once a year, and remove anyone who no longer needs to be there.

STAY SAFE

A private album is safer than social media

If the goal is for the family to see the grandchildren, a private shared album that only family can get into is a much safer home than a public post.

TIP

Location in Google Photos

Google Photos also keeps location information with photos. If you share widely, look in the app's sharing settings for location choices, or ask me to check them with you.

CHAPTER 25

Fake Album Invitations and Photo-Sharing Scams

People love family photos, so scammers use them as bait. A few simple habits protect you from nearly all of it.

SCAM ALERT

"Someone shared an album with you" that asks you to sign in

A real invitation from a family member opens the album in the Photos app, Google Photos or a web browser. Be suspicious of any message that takes you to a page asking for your email password, Apple Account password or Google password "to view the photos." Don't type anything. If you're not sure, call the person who supposedly sent it.

SCAM ALERT

A verification code "to see the pictures"

No real album needs you to read out or forward a six-digit code. Someone asking for that code is trying to get into your account. Never share your Apple Account password or a verification code with anyone who contacts you.

SCAM ALERT

Invitations from strangers

If an album invitation, or a request to join one of your albums, comes from a name you don't know, decline it. Don't open the album "just to see." Albums from strangers can contain spam, rude pictures or links.

SCAM ALERT

"Your storage is full, your photos will be deleted"

Texts and emails like this, with a link to "upgrade" or "save your photos," are a common trick. Don't tap the link. Check your storage yourself: on an iPhone in **Settings** > your name > **iCloud**, or in the Google Photos or Google One app.

Red flags in any message

- The sender's email address or phone number doesn't match the person or company it claims to be.

- A link looks right, but the web address doesn't match the company's real website.
- It looks different from messages you've gotten before from that person or company.
- It pressures you to act right now.

The safe way to open an invitation

Instead of tapping a link you're unsure about, open the **Photos** app (Collections > your profile button > **Invitations and Access Requests**) or the **Google Photos** app yourself. A real invitation from family is waiting there too. If it isn't, ask the family member to send it again.

If you think you slipped up

- If you typed an Apple Account password into a suspicious page, change it right away in **Settings** > your name > **Sign-In & Security**. For a Google password, change it in your Google Account settings.
- Report a suspicious message that pretends to be from Apple by sending a screenshot to **reportphishing@apple.com**.
- On Google Photos you can block and report someone who shares unwanted content.
- Call me. A quick check of your account settings can bring real peace of mind.

STAY SAFE

QR codes at events

Only scan a QR code at a party if you know who put it there. A sticker placed over a real code can lead to a fake page. If a scanned code asks for a password or payment, close it.

PART 7

Frames, Help and Your Cheat-Sheet

Showing a family album on a picture frame or TV, an honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary.

CHAPTER 26

Showing a Shared Album on a Frame or TV

One of the loveliest uses of a shared album is a picture frame on Grandma's kitchen counter that shows new photos of the grandkids as the family adds them. Here's the short version; my Digital Photo Frames manual has the full details for each brand.

Device	How it works with shared albums
Google Nest Hub	Its Photo Frame can show Google Photos albums, including shared albums that have a name.
Aura frames	Can show Google Photos albums through the Aura app; Aura says new photos can take up to 24 hours to appear.
Other frames	Many frames (such as Skylight and Nixplay) have their own apps and email addresses for sending photos, and their own shared-album features.

TIP

An Apple TV can do it too

An Apple TV can show photos as a screen saver, and many families point it at a family album, so the living-room TV quietly shows the newest pictures.

TIP

Set it up once, enjoy it for years

The easiest arrangement is for an adult child to own the album and add photos from their phone, while the frame at Grandma's house simply shows whatever arrives. Grandma doesn't have to touch a thing.

GOOD TO KNOW

Check before you buy a frame

Not every frame works with every photo service. If the family uses Apple shared albums, check that the frame you're considering can use them before you buy. My Digital Photo Frames manual compares the options.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

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

Times it's well worth a call

- **Getting a mixed family connected**: iPhones, Android phones and a Windows laptop all in one album, with the right permissions.
- **Before a big event**, so the album, link and QR code are ready and tested before the guests arrive.
- **After a loss**, when gathering a loved one's photos for a service feels like too much on top of everything else.
- **Saving and backing up** a big album so every picture is safe in your own library and on a drive.
- **"Storage full" messages** after iOS 27, to see whether a shared album is using the space and what to do about it.
- **An invitation or message you're not sure about.** Ask before you tap.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace: no rushing, no talking down, and no jargon. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I'll tell you honestly when a storage plan or gadget isn't worth your money. I serve Portage County, Ohio, and I bring more than 30 years of professional experience to every visit.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. Help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. If I'm with another customer, my AI receptionist, Sophie, will answer and make sure I get back to you. No question is too small.

Thank you for letting me help you bring your family's pictures together. Every one of them is a memory someone wanted to share, and now they can all live in one place.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

Your Shared Albums Cheat-Sheet

Print just this page and keep it by your favorite chair. The whole guide, boiled down.

Where things are

I want	Go here
Apple shared albums	Photos > **Collections** > **Shared Albums**.
Apple invitations and requests	Collections > **profile button** > **Invitations and Access Requests**.
Turn Shared Albums on	Settings > your name > iCloud > Photos > **Shared Albums**.
Google shared albums	Google Photos > **Collections** > **Albums** > Shared with me.
Google partner sharing	Profile picture > Photos settings > Sharing > **Partner sharing**.

Everyday moves

To do this	Do this
Make an Apple album	Collections > Shared Albums > **+** > name > Sharing Options > Done.
Invite someone (Apple)	Album > **Manage Shared Album** > Invite Participants or Copy Album Link.
Add photos (Apple)	Select > **Share** > Add to Shared Album.
Save a photo (Apple)	Open it > **Share** > Save Image.
Let others add (Google)	Album > More > Options or Sharing > **Collaborate** on.
Save a photo (Google)	Open it in the album > **Save**.

Keep handy

Item	
Our family album is called	_____
Who owns it	_____
Apple or Google?	_____
Family members' account emails	_____

Safety, in three lines

- A real album invitation never needs your password or a verification code.
- Save the pictures you love into your own library; a shared album is not a backup.
- Keep albums with children in them invite-only, and turn off location when sharing widely.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

You've got this

You can now start a family album, invite anyone to it, gather the pictures from a big day, and keep them safe for years to come. When you'd like a hand, call (330) 200-8042.