BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS · NO. 104

Smart Device Offline?

Getting your plugs, bulbs, cameras, speakers
and thermostats back on Wi-Fi, calmly and step by step

Most offline gadgets come back in minutes

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Wi-Fi smart-home gadgets of every brand · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your fix-it manual for the moment an app says a gadget is **offline**, **unreachable** or **not responding**. Start with Part 1 and the five-minute check; it solves most problems. Then jump to the chapter for your kind of device. Read it in any order and at your own pace. If a screen on your phone looks a little different from what's described here, look for the same words nearby. The idea is still the same.

Part 1 — Start Here

1 A Note from Bill
2 What "Offline" Really Means
3 Why Devices Drop Off Wi-Fi
4 The Five-Minute Check: The Order That Fixes Most Problems

Part 2 — Your Wi-Fi, Explained Just Enough

5 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz: The Two Lanes
6 One Name or Two? Band Steering, Mesh and Internet-Company Gateways
7 Newer Routers, Older Gadgets: Wi-Fi 6, 6E, 7 and WPA3
8 Weak Signal, Too Many Devices, and Where Things Sit
9 Addresses in Plain Terms (Only If You Need Them)
10 Is It the Internet, Not the Wi-Fi?

Part 3 — The Big Fix: New Router, New Name, New Password

11 The Golden Trick: Keep the Same Wi-Fi Name and Password
12 When the Internet Company Swaps Your Equipment
13 After a Power Outage
14 If You Must Change the Name or Password: A Calm Plan

Part 4 — Device by Device: Plugs, Bulbs and Cameras

15 Kasa and Tapo Smart Plugs
16 Philips Hue: The Bridge Is the Key
17 Wi-Fi Bulbs: WiZ and Govee
18 Ring Doorbells and Cameras
19 Blink and Wyze Cameras

Part 5 — Device by Device: Speakers, Thermostats and More

20 Amazon Echo and Alexa
21 Google Nest Speakers, Displays and Cameras
22 ecobee Thermostats
23 Google Nest Thermostats
24 Robot Vacuums

25 Smart TVs, Streamers and Printers

Part 6 — Last Resorts and Smarter Setups

26 Factory Resets: The Last Resort, and What They Erase
27 Matter and Thread in Plain Terms
28 A Separate Network for Gadgets? Guest and IoT Networks
29 When a Gadget Won't Ever Come Back, and Scams to Avoid

Part 7 — Keep It Running

30 Your "My Devices" Record
31 A Calm Routine to Prevent Offline Surprises
32 When to Call Bill
33 Your Offline Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Start Here

What "offline" really means, the usual reasons a gadget drops off Wi-Fi, and the five-minute check that brings most of them back. If you read only one Part, read this one.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you're reading this, there's a good chance something in your home just stopped listening. The lamp won't turn on from the phone. The doorbell app shows a gray picture and the word **Offline**. The speaker in the kitchen says it's having trouble connecting. It's frustrating.

It wasn't. I'm Bill, and for more than 30 years I've helped people feel at home with their technology, here in Portage County, Ohio and beyond. I can tell you that "offline" is the most common smart-home problem there is, and it's usually one of the easiest to fix. Almost always, nothing is broken. The gadget has simply lost its way to your Wi-Fi, and it needs a little help finding the road home.

How this guide works

- **Part 1** explains what offline means and gives you a five-minute check that works for every brand. Start there.
- **Part 2** explains your Wi-Fi just enough to understand why gadgets get confused.
- **Part 3** covers a new router, a new internet company, or a changed password.
- **Parts 4 and 5** walk through each kind of gadget, brand by brand, with steps I checked against each company's own help pages in November 2026.
- **Parts 6 and 7** cover factory resets (the last resort), Matter, separate gadget networks, a record of your devices, and when to call me.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

You'll know the calm, correct order of checks, so you stop guessing. You'll know which gadgets fix themselves, which need one tap, and which need to be set up again. And you'll know the one trick that saves hours whenever a router is replaced.

You can't break it

Restarting a gadget, unplugging a router for a minute, or opening an app's settings will not hurt anything. The only step in this guide that erases anything is a **factory reset**, and I'll always warn you before we get there. And if you get stuck, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. We'll sort it out together, with no rushing.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What "Offline" Really Means

Every smart gadget, whether it's a plug, a bulb, a camera, or a speaker, does its job by talking to two things: your home's **Wi-Fi** (the wireless signal from your router) and, through the Wi-Fi, the company's computers on the **internet**. Your phone's app talks to those same computers. When the app says **Offline**, it means the company's computers haven't heard from your gadget lately.

Different words, same idea

What the app says	What it means
Offline	Used by Ring, Blink, Wyze, ecobee, Google Home and many others.
Unreachable	The word the Philips Hue app often uses for a light it can't talk to.
Device is unresponsive / not responding	What Alexa says when it can't reach a gadget.
Spinning wheel, gray tile	The app is still trying. Give it a minute before worrying.

Three places the trouble can be

When a gadget is offline, the problem is almost always in one of three places. Keep these in mind, because the whole guide is built around them:

1. **The gadget itself**: it has no power, it froze, or it's too far from the router.
2. **Your Wi-Fi**: the router restarted, was replaced, or changed its name or password, or the gadget is on the wrong "lane" (we'll explain lanes in Chapter 5).
3. **The internet**: your internet service is down, so nothing in the house can reach the outside world, even though the Wi-Fi itself looks fine.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Offline doesn't mean broken**
> Like a phone out of range, an offline gadget is usually perfectly healthy. Bring the connection back and it picks up where it left off, with its settings intact.

Some things keep working while offline

A smart plug or bulb still works from its own button or the wall switch. Most thermostats keep running their schedule. What you lose is control from the phone, voice control, and alerts.

CHAPTER 3

Why Devices Drop Off Wi-Fi

Before we fix anything, it's worth knowing the usual suspects. Nine times out of ten, one of these happened recently. Think back over the last few days. Did any of these happen?

What happened	Why it knocks gadgets offline	Where to look
Router restarted or updated itself	Gadgets lose the signal for a few minutes. Most come back alone; a few get stuck.	Chapter 4
New router or mesh system	Different name or password, or the same name with different settings.	Chapter 11
Internet company swapped the modem or gateway	The new box comes with its own Wi-Fi name and password printed on a sticker.	Chapter 12
Power outage	Everything restarts at once and gadgets race the router to wake up.	Chapter 13
Wi-Fi password changed	Gadgets still know the old password and can't get in.	Chapter 14
Weak signal	The gadget is too far from the router or behind something solid.	Chapter 8
2.4 GHz vs 5 GHz mix-up	Many gadgets can only use one of the two lanes.	Chapter 5 and 6
Newer router security	Some older gadgets can't use the newest settings (WPA3, Wi-Fi 6/7).	Chapter 7
Too many devices	Some routers struggle when dozens of gadgets connect.	Chapter 8
The internet itself is down	Wi-Fi works, but nothing reaches the outside world.	Chapter 10
The company retired the product	The app no longer supports that model.	Chapter 29

FROM BILL

The question I always ask first

"Did anything change in the house lately?" A new router, a visit from the cable company, a storm. The answer usually points straight to the cure.

One gadget, or everything?

This is the most useful clue of all. If **one** gadget is offline, the problem is probably that gadget: its power, its spot, or its connection. If **everything** is offline at once, the problem is almost certainly the router or the internet, and fixing that one thing brings the whole house back.

CHAPTER 4

The Five-Minute Check: The Order That Fixes Most Problems

This order works for every brand. Go through it calmly, top to bottom, and stop as soon as the gadget comes back. Skipping ahead to a factory reset is the most common mistake people make, and it often turns a two-minute fix into an afternoon.

The universal order of checks

1. **Check the power.** Is the gadget plugged in, switched on at the wall, and showing a light? Is a battery camera charged? A wall switch turned off is the number-one reason a smart bulb goes "offline."
2. **Check other gadgets.** Is your phone or computer on the internet right now? Open a web page on Wi-Fi. If nothing works, skip to Chapter 10, because the internet itself may be down.
3. **Close and reopen the app.** Apps sometimes show old information. Close it completely, open it again, and pull down on the screen to refresh. Also make sure the app is up to date in the App Store or Google Play.
4. **Put your phone on your home Wi-Fi.** Not cellular data, and not a guest network. Many apps need your phone on the same network as the gadget to find it or fix it.
5. **Restart the gadget.** Unplug it (or switch it off at the wall), count to 10, and plug it back in. Give it two full minutes to reconnect.
6. **Restart the router** if more than one gadget is offline. Unplug the router (and the modem, if it's a separate box) for 30 seconds, plug the modem in first, wait for its lights to settle, then plug in the router. Allow about five minutes.
7. **Move it closer, or move the router.** If one gadget at the edge of the house keeps dropping, try it temporarily in a room near the router. If it works there, the problem is signal strength (see Chapter 8).

TIP

Give it time

After a restart, a gadget may take a minute or two to show online. Routers can take five. Make a cup of coffee before deciding it didn't work.

Only then go further

If the gadget is still offline after all seven, it's usually because the Wi-Fi it remembers no longer exists: the name or password changed, or it's looking for a lane the router doesn't offer. That's Part 3 and the brand chapters in Parts 4 and 5. A factory reset is the very last step, covered in Chapter 26.

HEADS UP

Write down what you tried

Jot a quick note: "Restarted plug, restarted router, still offline." If you end up calling the company or calling me, that list saves time and gets you to the fix faster.

PART 2

Your Wi-Fi, Explained Just Enough

Two lanes, one name or two, newer security settings, weak spots, and how to tell whether it's the Wi-Fi or the internet. Just enough to understand why gadgets get confused.

CHAPTER 5

2.4 GHz and 5 GHz: The Two Lanes

Your router sends Wi-Fi on more than one radio "lane," called a **band**. The two you'll hear about most are **2.4 GHz** and **5 GHz**. (GHz, said "gigahertz," is just a way of naming the radio frequency, like a station number on a car radio.) Newer routers may add a third lane called **6 GHz**.

Lane	What it's like
2.4 GHz	The long, slow country road. Reaches farther and goes through walls better, but carries less. Most smart plugs, bulbs, cameras and thermostats use this lane.
5 GHz	The fast highway with a shorter reach. Great for phones, laptops and TVs close to the router.
6 GHz	A newer express lane on Wi-Fi 6E and Wi-Fi 7 routers. Fast, short-range, and only for newer phones and computers. Smart gadgets almost never use it.

Why this matters for smart gadgets

Many smart gadgets have a radio that can only use the **2.4 GHz** lane. That's a sensible choice by the manufacturer, because 2.4 GHz reaches the far corners of a house. But it causes trouble during setup: your phone is happily on 5 GHz, the app hands the gadget your Wi-Fi details, and the gadget can't find the lane it needs.

- Blink says its cameras and Sync Modules connect only to 2.4 GHz networks.
- WiZ lights work only on 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi.
- Ring says all its doorbells and cameras work with 2.4 GHz (some newer models can also use 5 GHz).
- Older ecobee models (ecobee3, ecobee3 lite and ecobee4) should be put on the 2.4 GHz network.
- Some Roomba models don't support 5 GHz.

GOOD TO KNOW

You don't have to give up the fast lane

Your phone and TV can keep using 5 GHz; only the gadget needs 2.4 GHz (Chapter 6 shows how). To check a gadget, look on its box for "2.4 GHz only" or "802.11 b/g/n" (older names for 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi). "Dual-band" means it can use either lane.

CHAPTER 6

One Name or Two? Band Steering, Mesh and Internet-Company Gateways

Older routers often showed two separate Wi-Fi names, something like **SmithHome** and **SmithHome-5G**. You picked a lane by picking a name. Most newer routers, mesh systems and internet-company gateways show just **one name** for all the lanes and quietly move each device to the lane they think is best. That's called **band steering** (or "Smart Connect" on some routers).

Why one name is usually good

One name is simpler for you and works well for most gadgets once they're set up. The group behind Matter, the smart-home standard, actually recommends one network name for all bands, because it makes setup and reliability better for Matter devices.

When one name causes trouble

A 2.4 GHz-only gadget can get confused during setup when the phone is on 5 GHz under the same name. If setup keeps failing on the "connecting to Wi-Fi" step, try these, in order:

1. **Stand farther from the router** while you set up the gadget, for example in the room where the gadget lives. At a distance, phones tend to drop to the 2.4 GHz lane on their own.
2. **Use your router's 2.4 GHz helper** if it has one. Some mesh apps can hide the faster lanes for a short time so a 2.4 GHz-only device can join. The eero app, for example, has a **Connect 2.4 GHz only devices** option under Troubleshooting.
3. **Turn on a separate 2.4 GHz name** in your router's app, if it allows it. Some routers call this "split bands" or turning off "Smart Connect." Join the gadget to the 2.4 GHz name.
4. **Ask your internet company** if the router is theirs. Many have an app or a website where you can change Wi-Fi settings, or they can do it for you on the phone.

HEADS UP

If you split the names, keep them

If you give the 2.4 GHz lane its own name, gadgets joined to that name will be looking for it forever. Don't rename it later or turn it off, or they'll all go offline at once.

Mesh systems in a sentence

A **mesh** system uses two or more matching units around the house to spread one Wi-Fi network everywhere. To gadgets it looks like a single network with one name. If a gadget far from the main unit keeps dropping, the mesh unit nearest it may need to move a little closer. Bill's Mesh Wi-Fi manual covers placement in detail.

GOOD TO KNOW

Two routers in one house

If you added your own router to an internet-company gateway that also has Wi-Fi turned on, you may have two separate networks with two names. Gadgets on one can't always see gadgets on the other. The Matter group recommends keeping all devices on the same router, or putting your own router in "bridge" or "access point" mode. This is a good job to hand to me or your internet company.

CHAPTER 7

Newer Routers, Older Gadgets: Wi-Fi 6, 6E, 7 and WPA3

Routers keep getting better. That's good news, but a brand-new router can sometimes turn on settings that a five- or eight-year-old gadget simply doesn't understand. Here's what the labels mean.

Label	What it means
Wi-Fi 6, 6E and 7	Generations of Wi-Fi, like model years. Newer is faster and handles more devices. Good routers still speak the older generations too, so older gadgets can connect.
WPA2	The common security lock on Wi-Fi for many years. Nearly every gadget understands it.
WPA3	The newer, stronger lock. Newer phones and computers use it. Many older smart gadgets don't.
WPA2/WPA3 mixed (transition) mode	The router offers both locks with the same password, so new devices use WPA3 and older ones use WPA2.

When older gadgets refuse a new router

The Wi-Fi Alliance, the group that certifies Wi-Fi products, notes that some older or uncertified devices have trouble even with the mixed WPA2/WPA3 setting, and that devices made before about 2016 or no longer getting updates are more likely to have problems. If one older gadget won't join a brand-new router, but newer gadgets do, the security setting is a likely cause.

1. Open your router's app or settings page and find the Wi-Fi security setting.
2. If it says **WPA3 only**, change it to **WPA2/WPA3** (mixed or transition mode). Keep the same password.
3. Restart the older gadget and give it a few minutes.
4. If it still won't join, check for a firmware update for the gadget in its app, or ask the manufacturer whether that model supports your router.

STAY SAFE

Never turn the lock off

If a gadget only connects when Wi-Fi security is turned off completely (an "open" network), don't do it. Anyone nearby could use your internet. An old gadget that can't use at least WPA2 is a sign it's time to retire it.

The newest lanes and old gadgets

Wi-Fi 6E and Wi-Fi 7 routers add the 6 GHz lane. Your older gadgets will never see it, and that's fine; they stay on 2.4 GHz. Just make sure the router still has its 2.4 GHz lane turned on. Turning off 2.4 GHz "for speed" is a sure way to send a houseful of plugs and cameras offline.

CHAPTER 8

Weak Signal, Too Many Devices, and Where Things Sit

If one gadget keeps dropping off and coming back, again and again, the most likely reason is a weak signal. Wi-Fi fades with distance and struggles through some materials.

What blocks Wi-Fi

- **Distance**: the far end of the house, the garage, the back porch.
- **Solid materials**: brick, stone, concrete, plaster with metal mesh, and floors.
- **Metal and water**: refrigerators, metal doors, mirrors, fish tanks.
- **Outdoor walls**: a camera on the outside of a brick house is often at the edge of range.
- **Hiding the router**: inside a cabinet, behind the TV, or on the floor in a corner.

Easy ways to check signal

Stand where the gadget is and look at the Wi-Fi bars on your phone. If your phone shows only one bar, the gadget is probably struggling too. Many apps also show a signal reading:

- **Ring**: the **Device Health** tile shows the signal strength for each doorbell and camera.
- **ecobee**: the thermostat shows Wi-Fi signal strength in its About screen; ecobee suggests above 75%.
- **Many other apps** show signal under a device's settings, often called Device Info, Device Health or Network.

Fixes for weak signal, cheapest first

1. Move the router out in the open, up off the floor, and as central in the house as you can.
2. Move the gadget a few feet. Even turning a camera's mount can help.
3. Add a mesh unit or a Wi-Fi extender between the router and the gadget. Bill's Mesh Wi-Fi manual explains which to choose.

Too many devices

Homes today often have 30, 40 or more things on Wi-Fi once you count phones, TVs, speakers, plugs, bulbs and cameras. Older or rented routers can struggle and start dropping the quieter gadgets. Signs include gadgets going offline at random while everything else seems fine, or things getting better right after a router restart and worse a few days later.

FROM BILL

When the router is the real problem

If you're restarting your router every week, it's not you. It's probably an older router, or a rented one that's overloaded. A modern router or mesh system is often the single best fix for a smart home that keeps dropping.

CHAPTER 9

Addresses in Plain Terms (Only If You Need Them)

You can skip this chapter unless someone mentions an "IP address" or "DHCP." Here's what those words mean, in plain English.

Term	What it means
IP address	A device's house number on your home network, like 192.168.1.23. Every phone, plug and camera gets one.
DHCP	The router's job of handing out those house numbers automatically. It's on by default and you rarely need to touch it.
MAC address	A permanent serial-number-style ID built into each gadget's Wi-Fi radio. Support staff sometimes ask for it.
Static or reserved IP	A house number that never changes. Some hubs and printers like this, but it's optional.

When addresses cause "offline"

When you get a new router, every device gets a new house number. Most gadgets don't care. A few hubs and apps remember the old number and can't find the device until it restarts and gets a new one. Restarting the hub or gadget usually fixes this. For example, if the Hue app can't find your Hue Bridge after a router change, Philips Hue suggests restarting the router and Bridge; the app can also search for the Bridge by its address.

GOOD TO KNOW

You don't need to memorize any of this

If a support person asks for an IP or MAC address, it's usually shown in the gadget's app under Device Info or Settings, or on a sticker on the gadget. Read it to them, and let them do the rest.

CHAPTER 10

Is It the Internet, Not the Wi-Fi?

Your **Wi-Fi** is the wireless network inside your house. Your **internet** is the service you pay a company for, which comes in on a cable, a phone line, fiber, or a cellular or satellite signal. Wi-Fi can be perfectly fine while the internet is down, and smart gadgets will still show offline because they can't reach their company's computers.

Quick test

1. On your phone, turn **Wi-Fi on** and cellular data **off** for a moment.
2. Try to open a web page, such as a news site.
3. If the page won't load but your phone shows full Wi-Fi bars, the Wi-Fi is working and the **internet** is the problem.
4. Turn cellular data back on when you're done.

If the internet is down

1. Look at the modem or gateway lights. A red, orange or blinking "internet" or "online" light usually means no service.
2. Restart the modem and router, as in Chapter 4.
3. Check whether there's an outage. Your internet company's app or website often shows outages in your area. Use your phone's cellular data to look.
4. Call your internet company if it's still out after 15 minutes. Their number is usually on your bill or on a sticker on the modem.

TIP

Everything comes back by itself

When the internet returns, most gadgets reconnect on their own within a few minutes. If one or two stay offline, give them the restart in Chapter 4. Bill's Internet & Modems Explained manual goes deeper into modems, gateways and outages.

SCAM ALERT

"Your internet has been compromised" calls

If someone calls, texts or shows a pop-up saying your router or internet is hacked and asks you to install software, pay, or read them a code, hang up. Your internet company doesn't make calls like that. Call the number on your own bill if you're unsure.

PART 3

The Big Fix: New Router, New Name, New Password

The one trick that saves hours whenever a router is replaced, what to do when the internet company swaps your equipment, power outages, and a calm plan for changing your Wi-Fi password.

CHAPTER 11

The Golden Trick: Keep the Same Wi-Fi Name and Password

Here is the single most valuable thing in this guide. Every smart gadget in your home remembers two things about your Wi-Fi: its **name** (the network name, sometimes called the **SSID**) and its **password**. When you replace a router, the new one comes with a different name and password printed on a sticker. Your gadgets keep looking for the old ones, and every single one goes offline.

The fix is simple: **give the new router the exact same name and password as the old one.** The gadgets see a network they recognize and walk right back in, usually within minutes, with nothing to set up again.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Instead of resetting and re-adding twenty gadgets one at a time, you change two settings on the new router and the whole house comes back on its own. It's the difference between a five-minute job and a lost weekend.

The companies agree

- **TP-Link (Kasa and Tapo)** says to set up the new router with the same network name, encryption type and password as the old one; the devices should then reconnect automatically.
- **Google** says that if you change your Wi-Fi name or password or replace your router, Nest and Home devices need to be connected to the new network, and keeping the same name and password is the simple way to avoid that.
- **WiZ** says lights reconnect automatically when the new router uses the same name and password as before.
- **ecobee** says a thermostat reconnects on its own if the Wi-Fi name and password stay the same.

How to do it, step by step

1. **Before** the old router comes out, find its Wi-Fi name and password. Look on the sticker on the old router, in your notes, or on your phone (iPhone and Android phones can both show a saved Wi-Fi password in their Wi-Fi settings).

2. Write them down **exactly**, including capital letters, spaces and symbols. **SmithHome** and **smithhome** are different names to a gadget.
3. Set up the new router with its app or the instructions in the box.
4. When it asks you to name your Wi-Fi, type the **old name**. When it asks for a password, type the **old password**.
5. If there's a choice of security type, pick the same one as before, usually **WPA2** or **WPA2/WPA3** (see Chapter 7).
6. Unplug the old router so there aren't two networks with the same name.
7. Wait 10 to 15 minutes. Then open each app and check. Restart any gadget that's still offline.

> **HEADS UP**
> **Exactly the same, or it doesn't count**
> A single different letter, a capital where there wasn't one, or a space at the end makes it a different network to your gadgets. Double-check against your note before you save.

When this trick isn't the right choice

If you think a stranger knows your old password, or your old password was weak (like "password123" or your street address), it's better to choose a new, strong password and reconnect your gadgets. Chapter 14 gives a calm plan for that.

CHAPTER 12

When the Internet Company Swaps Your Equipment

A technician comes to upgrade your service, or a new box arrives in the mail, and the old modem goes back. Many internet companies provide a **gateway**, which is a modem and Wi-Fi router in one box. The new gateway has its own Wi-Fi name and password on a sticker, and that's why every smart gadget in the house goes offline the day it's installed.

Before the technician arrives

1. Write down your current Wi-Fi name and password, exactly.
2. Ask the technician (or the phone agent) to set the new gateway's Wi-Fi to the **same name and password**. Most can do it in a couple of minutes.
3. Ask whether the new gateway shows **one name for all bands**. If you have older 2.4 GHz-only gadgets that struggle, ask whether a separate 2.4 GHz name is possible (see Chapter 6).
4. Ask how you can change Wi-Fi settings yourself later, such as the company's app or website.

If it's already done

No problem. Most internet companies let you change the Wi-Fi name and password in their app or on their website after you sign in. Change them to your old name and password, wait 15 minutes, and most gadgets will reconnect. If you can't find the setting, call the company and ask them to change it for you.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you have your own router too

Some homes have the internet company's gateway **and** their own router or mesh system. If the new gateway also has Wi-Fi turned on, you may now have two networks. Ask the company to put the gateway in "bridge mode" or turn off its Wi-Fi, so your own router stays in charge. That's a common request, and it's one I can help with too.

SCAM ALERT

Be sure the "technician" is real

If someone calls or knocks unexpectedly saying your equipment must be replaced today, call the company on the number on your bill before letting anyone in or paying anything.

CHAPTER 13

After a Power Outage

When the power comes back after a storm, everything in the house wakes up at once. The router takes several minutes to start; small gadgets start in seconds. A gadget that wakes up first, can't find Wi-Fi, and gives up may sit offline even after the router is ready.

What to do

1. Wait 10 minutes after the power returns. Many gadgets keep trying and come back on their own.
2. Check the modem and router lights. If they look wrong, restart them as in Chapter 4.
3. Restart any gadget that's still offline: unplug it for 10 seconds, or flip its wall switch off and on once.
4. For a thermostat, check it's showing the time and temperature. ecobee notes that after an outage you may lose the wireless signal, and suggests unplugging the router for 10 seconds and plugging it back in.

HEADS UP

Flipping a wall switch on and off several times

Some smart bulbs, including WiZ, use a pattern of switching on and off several times as a way to enter pairing mode. A flicker from a storm won't do it, but don't flip the switch over and over to "wake" a bulb. Once is enough.

Protecting against outages

A small battery backup (called a UPS, for "uninterruptible power supply") for the modem and router keeps your internet running through short outages, so your cameras and alarms stay online. They're sold at office-supply and electronics stores, and prices vary with size. It's optional, but it's a good idea if you rely on cameras, a medical alert, or a home phone that runs through your internet.

CHAPTER 14

If You Must Change the Name or Password: A Calm Plan

Sometimes changing your Wi-Fi password is the right thing to do: a neighbor has it, it's too simple, or you've moved. You can do it without chaos. The key is to know what will need reconnecting before you start, and do them in a sensible order.

Before you change anything

1. Fill in the "My Devices" record in Chapter 30, or at least make a list of every gadget on Wi-Fi and which app runs it.
2. Make sure you know the sign-in for each app (the email and password).
3. Choose the new password and write it down. A good one is long and easy for you to type, such as three or four unrelated words with a number.
4. Pick a time when you have an hour or two and no appointments.

Change the password, then reconnect in this order

1. Change the password in your router's app or settings page.
2. Reconnect your **phones, tablets and computers** first. They'll ask for the new password.
3. Reconnect **speakers and hubs** next, such as Echo and Google Nest. (A Hue Bridge needs nothing, because it's wired to the router.)
4. Then **thermostats**, so heating and cooling stay in your control.
5. Then **cameras and doorbells**.
6. Finally **plugs, bulbs and everything else**. Some will need a quick reset and re-add; the brand chapters in Parts 4 and 5 explain which.
7. Check off each one on your list as it comes back.

> **TIP**
>
> **Some gadgets can switch networks with one tap**
>
> Ring doorbells and cameras, Echo speakers, Blink Sync Modules, some Wyze cameras, Nest thermostats and Roombas have a "change Wi-Fi" option in their app. Others, like Kasa and Tapo plugs and Google Nest speakers, need to be set up again. Each brand chapter tells you which.

PART 4

Device by Device: Plugs, Bulbs and Cameras

Kasa and Tapo plugs, Philips Hue, WiZ and Govee lights, and cameras and doorbells from Ring, Blink and Wyze. Each with the company's own reconnect steps.

CHAPTER 15

Kasa and Tapo Smart Plugs

Kasa and **Tapo** are both brands from TP-Link, and they're among the most common smart plugs, switches and bulbs. They behave the same way when Wi-Fi changes, so we'll cover them together.

First, the five-minute check

Look at the light on the plug. Unplug the plug for 10 seconds and plug it back in. Restart the router if several are offline. That fixes most cases.

After a new router or new password

TP-Link says Tapo and Kasa devices often appear offline after you change internet companies, replace your router, or reset its Wi-Fi settings. It gives two methods:

- **Method 1 (best):** set the new router to the same Wi-Fi name, encryption type and password as before. The devices should reconnect automatically.
- **Method 2:** if that's not possible, reset each device and set it up again on the new Wi-Fi. The Kasa and Tapo apps don't have a button for switching a plug to a different network.

Resetting and re-adding a Kasa plug

1. Make sure your phone is on your home Wi-Fi, and open the **Kasa** app (or the **Tapo** app; see the tip below).
2. Find the small **reset** button on the plug (on many plugs it's the same as the on/off button).
3. Press and hold it for about **5 seconds**, until the Wi-Fi light blinks amber and green. This is a soft reset: it starts setup again and keeps your settings.
4. If that doesn't work, hold it for about **10 seconds**, until the light blinks amber rapidly. This is a factory reset and erases its settings and schedules.
5. In the app, tap **+** to add a device, choose your plug type, and follow the steps.
6. Give it the same name as before, so voice commands like "turn on the porch light" keep working.

GOOD TO KNOW

Light colors vary by model

TP-Link notes the reset lights differ by model. Some plugs blink amber and blue, and power strips use their main button as the reset button. Newer Tapo plugs are reset by holding the power button for about 10 seconds, and the light may blink green or blue. Check the quick-start card if yours looks different.

TIP

Kasa gadgets can live in the Tapo app

With Tapo app version 3.0 or later, you can add Kasa devices to the Tapo app, either by linking your Kasa account on the **Me** page or by tapping **+** and choosing the Kasa brand. Both apps must use the same TP-Link ID. One app for everything can make life simpler.

If it won't finish setup

- Kasa and Tapo plugs use the 2.4 GHz lane. Try the tips in Chapter 6.
- Stand near the plug, with your phone on home Wi-Fi, not a guest network.
- Turn off any VPN app on your phone during setup.

Bill's Smart Plugs & Switches manual covers schedules, timers and voice control once your plugs are back.

CHAPTER 16

Philips Hue: The Bridge Is the Key

Philips Hue works differently from most smart bulbs, and that's good news when Wi-Fi changes. Most Hue lights talk to a small white box called the **Hue Bridge** using their own radio (called Zigbee), not your Wi-Fi. The Bridge then connects to your router with a cable. So the bulbs themselves don't know or care what your Wi-Fi password is.

What you see	Most likely reason
Lights say "Unreachable", Bridge is fine	The light has no power (wall switch off) or is too far from other Hue lights or the Bridge.
Every light is unreachable	The Bridge has lost power or its cable to the router.
App can't find the Bridge	Usually a new router, or the phone isn't on home Wi-Fi.

The Hue Bridge has no Wi-Fi of its own

Philips Hue says the Bridge doesn't connect directly to Wi-Fi. It must be wired to your router with an Ethernet cable. When you get a new router, you simply move the cable to the new one.

After a new router

1. Plug one end of the Ethernet cable into a numbered **LAN** port on the new router (not the port marked WAN or Internet), and the other end into the Bridge.
2. Make sure the Bridge has power.
3. Watch the three lights on the front: power, network, internet. When all three are **solid blue**, the Bridge is connected.
4. If any light keeps blinking, check the cable and restart the router. Philips Hue also suggests unplugging the router and the Bridge for 30 seconds and reconnecting.
5. Open the Hue app with your phone on home Wi-Fi. It should find the Bridge. If asked, press the round button on top of the Bridge.
6. Turn off any VPN or network filter on your phone if the app can't find the Bridge.

HEADS UP

Resetting the Bridge erases everything

Philips Hue lists a reset (a paperclip on the back button for about 5 seconds) as the step to try if nothing else works. A full reset of the Bridge wipes its lights, rooms, scenes and schedules, and you'd have to add every light again. Almost no router change needs it. Try everything else first, or call me.

Hue lights without a Bridge

Some Hue bulbs can also be used without a Bridge over Bluetooth, controlled from the phone when you're nearby. Philips Hue notes that without the Bridge you only get basic Bluetooth control. These don't use Wi-Fi at all, so a router change won't affect them; if they stop responding, check that Bluetooth is on and you're in the same room.

GOOD TO KNOW

Bridge prices, if you're thinking of one

On the Philips Hue US site in November 2026, the Hue Bridge lists at $79.99 and the newer Hue Bridge Pro at $149.99. The Bridge Pro adds Matter support and a migration tool in the app to move your lights over from an older Bridge.

CHAPTER 17

Wi-Fi Bulbs: WiZ and Govee

Unlike Hue, **Wi-Fi bulbs** connect straight to your Wi-Fi, so each bulb remembers your Wi-Fi name and password. That's convenient (no hub to buy) but it means each bulb is affected by a router change.

WiZ lights

WiZ is a Wi-Fi bulb brand sold widely in hardware stores. WiZ lights work only on 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi with WPA2 or WPA3 Personal security.

After a new router

- **Same name and password as before:** WiZ says the lights already know that network and will reconnect automatically.
- **New name or password:** you need to pair the lights again to give them the new details. WiZ notes some settings, such as fade time, may go back to their defaults.

Putting a WiZ light into pairing mode

1. Put your phone on your home Wi-Fi (WiZ lights join the network your phone is on).
2. Using the wall switch or lamp switch, turn the light **on, off, on, off, on**: on three times in a row, with one to two seconds between each. On some lights it takes five times.
3. The light pulses to show it's ready to pair.
4. In the WiZ app, add the light and follow the steps.
5. If the light blinks red, WiZ suggests checking the password or restarting the router.

Govee lights

Govee makes Wi-Fi light strips, bulbs and outdoor lights controlled by the **Govee Home** app. Like most Wi-Fi bulbs, Govee devices use the 2.4 GHz lane. After a router change, the same-name, same-password trick in Chapter 11 is the easiest fix. If that's not possible, open the device in the Govee Home app and look in its settings for a Wi-Fi option, or remove it and add it again following the app's steps.

HEADS UP

Matter-paired lights

If you added lights through Matter (with a Matter code), changing networks in the maker's app may break that link. See Chapter 27. Bill's Smart Lights manual covers scenes and schedules.

CHAPTER 18

Ring Doorbells and Cameras

Ring doorbells and cameras are a big part of many homes' peace of mind, so let's get them back quickly. Bill's Ring Doorbells & Cameras manual covers everything else in depth; this chapter is just the reconnect.

First checks

- Battery models: is the battery charged? A dead battery looks like "offline."
- Wired models: has the doorbell lost power? Check that the house doorbell chime still works.
- Restart the router if several Ring devices dropped at once.

Change the Wi-Fi network in the Ring app

1. Stand near the device with your phone on your home Wi-Fi.
2. Open the Ring app, tap the menu, then **Devices**, and choose the device.
3. Tap the **Device Health** tile.
4. Under **Network**, tap **Change Network** (or **Reconnect**) and follow the prompts.
5. If the camera is mounted out of reach, the app may let you choose **Movement** instead of pressing the setup button: you trigger its motion detection to confirm.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Owners only**
> Ring says a Shared User can't change the Wi-Fi network or reconnect a device. If a family member set it up under their account, they (the owner) need to do this step.

If there's no Change Network option

Ring says you can also simply run setup for the device again in the Ring app and choose your new network. All Ring doorbells and cameras work with 2.4 GHz, so if a device won't connect, make sure your router's 2.4 GHz lane is on. Wi-Fi passwords are case sensitive, so check capitals.

CHAPTER 19

Blink and Wyze Cameras

Blink and Wyze are two popular, affordable camera brands, and each handles a Wi-Fi change its own way. Bill's Blink Cameras and Wyze Cameras manuals have the full story.

Blink: update the Sync Module

Most Blink systems use a small box called a **Sync Module**, plugged in near the router. The cameras talk to the Sync Module, and the Sync Module talks to your Wi-Fi. So when Wi-Fi changes, you usually update the Sync Module, not each camera.

1. Be at home with the Sync Module plugged in, and your phone on the Wi-Fi you want to use.
2. In the Blink app, open the Sync Module from the Home screen and choose **Change Wi-Fi Network**.
3. Press the Sync Module's **Reset** button until its light pattern changes (some models need a pin to reach the button).
4. Tap **Discover Device** and, when asked, join the temporary **BLINK-XXXX** network.
5. Choose your Wi-Fi, enter the password, and wait for the confirmation. Then tap **Done**.

TIP

Your saved clips stay put

Blink says changing the Sync Module's Wi-Fi doesn't delete saved clips. Blink products connect only to 2.4 GHz networks, so make sure that lane is on.

Wyze: the Change button, or setup again

On some newer Wyze cameras (Wyze Cam v3, Cam v3 Pro, Cam Pan v3 and Cam Pan v4), you can change the Wi-Fi in the app **while the camera is still online**:

1. Stand near the camera. Wyze suggests removing any microSD card first.
2. In the Wyze app, open the camera, tap the settings gear, then **Device Info**.
3. Tap **Change** next to Network, then enter the new Wi-Fi name and password.

If the camera is already offline, the Change button is grayed out. In that case, press the camera's **SETUP** button and set it up again in the app with your new Wi-Fi. So if you can, use the Change button while the camera is still online.

FROM BILL

Run old and new side by side, if you can

If the new router gets a new name, run it alongside the old one for a day. Move cameras with a "change Wi-Fi" button over while they're online, then unplug the old router.

PART 5

Device by Device: Speakers, Thermostats and More

Echo and Alexa, Google Nest speakers and cameras, ecobee and Nest thermostats, robot vacuums, and a quick word on TVs, streamers and printers.

CHAPTER 20

Amazon Echo and Alexa

When an Echo loses Wi-Fi, its light ring usually turns orange or it tells you it's having trouble connecting. Since February 2026, Alexa+ (Amazon's newer, more conversational Alexa) is available to everyone in the US, free with Prime, but the Wi-Fi steps are the same either way.

First checks

1. Unplug the Echo for about 10 to 15 seconds, then plug it back in.
2. Restart the router if other devices are offline too.
3. If the Echo still can't connect, update its Wi-Fi in the Alexa app (below).

Change the Wi-Fi on an Echo without a screen

1. Open the **Alexa** app on your phone.
2. Tap **Devices**, then choose your Echo.
3. Open its settings (the gear) and look for **Wi-Fi Network**. Tap the option to change it.
4. Follow the prompts. If your network isn't listed, choose **Join another Wi-Fi Network**.

Change the Wi-Fi on an Echo Show (with a screen)

1. On the Echo Show, swipe down from the top and open **Settings**.
2. Tap **Device Options**, then **Network**, and make sure Wi-Fi is turned on.
3. Pick your Wi-Fi network from the list and follow the prompts.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Good to know about Echo and Wi-Fi**
>
> Amazon says Echo devices work on both 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz networks. The Alexa app can change Wi-Fi settings for Amazon devices and Matter devices; other brands' gadgets that you control through Alexa (like Kasa plugs or a Ring doorbell) are reconnected in their own apps.

"Device is unresponsive"

If Alexa says another gadget "is unresponsive," that gadget is offline, not the Echo. Fix it in its own app. Bill's Amazon Alexa & Echo manual covers the rest.

CHAPTER 21

Google Nest Speakers, Displays and Cameras

Google's speakers and displays (Nest Mini, Nest Audio, Nest Hub, the new Google Home Speaker and others) are set up in the **Google Home** app. Many now use Gemini for Home, Google's newer assistant, which has been rolling out in stages; the Wi-Fi steps are the same either way.

Speakers and displays: forget, then set up again

Google Nest speakers can't simply be switched to a new network. Google's steps are to forget the old network, then add the speaker back:

1. Make sure your phone is signed in to the same Google Account as the speaker.
2. In the Google Home app, tap **Home**, then **All devices**, then touch and hold the speaker's tile.
3. Tap **Settings**, then **Device information**, then **Wi-Fi**, then **Forget this network**.
4. Go back to the home screen and tap **Add**, then **Device**, then **Search for device**.
5. Follow the steps to set it up on your Wi-Fi.

HEADS UP

When Google says to factory reset

Google says to factory reset and set up again if those steps don't work, if you see "could not communicate with your device" when you try to forget the network, or if you can't change the network in the app. A reset erases the speaker's settings, but your Google Account, music services and routines live in your account.

Nest cameras and doorbells

In the Google Home app, Google's steps for moving a Nest camera or doorbell to a new network are to **remove the device** from the app and set it up again. If the camera was online, removing it factory resets it automatically; if it was offline, you also need to factory reset it by hand. Then tap **Add**, **Device**, and scan its QR code.

HEADS UP

Older Nest-app cameras and video history

For cameras still in the older Nest app, Google offers a **Home Wi-Fi help** tool under Settings, then Home info. If you don't see it, you'll have to remove the camera and add it back, and Google warns you'll lose video history. Save any clips you want first.

TIP

Same name and password saves all of this

Every one of these Google steps is unnecessary if your new router uses your old Wi-Fi name and password (Chapter 11). Google's own help page points out the same thing.

Bill's Google Nest & Home manual covers your speakers and displays in depth.

CHAPTER 22

ecobee Thermostats

An ecobee thermostat keeps heating and cooling your home on its schedule even while offline. What you lose is control from your phone and voice assistant, and any alerts. So there's no emergency, but it's worth reconnecting.

If your Wi-Fi name and password didn't change

ecobee says that if your Wi-Fi name and password stay the same, the thermostat reconnects on its own. If it doesn't, ecobee suggests power-cycling the router and then the thermostat. You can restart the thermostat by gently pulling it off its wall plate for a moment and pushing it back on.

If your Wi-Fi name or password changed

1. Stand at the thermostat with your new Wi-Fi password written down.
2. Tap the screen and open the **Main Menu**.
3. Look for **Settings**, then **Wi-Fi**. (On some models it's inside a **General** or **Settings** section; the words are the same.)
4. Choose your Wi-Fi name and type the password with the on-screen keyboard.
5. Wait a minute and check the ecobee app on your phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

Older ecobee models and 2.4 GHz

ecobee says the ecobee3, ecobee3 lite and ecobee4 should be connected to the **2.4 GHz** network when you have a dual-band router. ecobee also recommends a Wi-Fi signal above 75%, which you can see in the thermostat's About screen.

HEADS UP

Don't factory reset a thermostat for a Wi-Fi change

A factory reset erases your schedule, comfort settings and installer settings for your heating and cooling system. A Wi-Fi change never needs it. If the Wi-Fi menu won't cooperate, call ecobee or call me.

Bill's Smart Thermostats manual covers ecobee and Honeywell schedules and settings.

CHAPTER 23

Google Nest Thermostats

Nest thermostats reconnect on their own when your Wi-Fi name and password stay the same. If they changed, how you update the thermostat depends on which model you have.

Nest Learning Thermostat (4th gen) and Nest Thermostat

1. Stand near the thermostat; Google says you need to be close by.
2. In the Google Home app, tap **Home**, then **All devices**, and select your thermostat.
3. Tap **Settings**, then **Device information**, then **Wi-Fi**.
4. The app walks you through changing the network.

Nest Learning Thermostat (3rd gen or earlier) and Nest Thermostat E

1. Press the thermostat's ring to bring up the **Quick View** menu.
2. Select **Settings**.
3. Turn the ring to **Network** and select it.
4. Choose your new Wi-Fi name and enter the password. It may take a moment for the network to appear.

HEADS UP

1st and 2nd gen Nest thermostats can't come back online

Google ended support for the Nest Learning Thermostat 1st and 2nd generation on October 25, 2025. Those models no longer connect to the Nest or Google Home app and get no software or security updates. The good news: the thermostat still works from its own ring and keeps running its schedule. If yours is one of these, no amount of Wi-Fi fixing will bring the app back; Chapter 29 talks about what to do.

Bill's Google Nest Thermostat manual covers schedules, Eco temperatures and more.

CHAPTER 24

Robot Vacuums

A robot vacuum offline in its app will usually still clean when you press its button. You lose scheduling, maps and control from your phone. Most robot vacuums use the 2.4 GHz lane and don't like guest networks.

Roomba (iRobot Home app)

1. Connect your phone to the Wi-Fi you want the Roomba to use.
2. Open the iRobot Home app and go to the robot's settings.
3. Choose **Wi-Fi Settings**. Depending on your app version, pick your network, or choose **Reconnect or Change Product Wi-Fi**, then enter the password.

GOOD TO KNOW

What iRobot says about networks

iRobot says some Roomba models don't support 5 GHz, so you may need your 2.4 GHz network, and that a guest network isn't recommended. During setup, a Roomba always joins whatever network your phone is on at that moment.

Other brands (Shark, Roborock, Eufy and others)

Most other robot vacuums need to be set up again in their app after a Wi-Fi name or password change. The usual pattern: hold the robot's Wi-Fi or reset button combination listed in its manual until it chimes or the light blinks, then add it in the app with your phone on home Wi-Fi. Your maps may need to be relearned on some models, so try the same-name trick in Chapter 11 first.

Bill's Robot Vacuums manual covers maps, schedules and care.

CHAPTER 25

Smart TVs, Streamers and Printers

TVs, streaming sticks and printers have their own screens or buttons, so they're usually the easiest to reconnect. Here are the quick versions.

Roku

1. Press **Home** on the Roku remote.
2. Go to **Settings**, then **Network**, then **Set up connection**.
3. Choose **Wireless**, pick your network, and enter the password. If it's not listed, choose **Scan again**.
4. To test it, use **Settings**, then **Network**, then **Check connection**.

Google TV Streamer and Chromecast with Google TV

From the top right of the TV screen, select **Settings**, then **Wi-Fi network**, then the network name, then **Forget network**. Then set the device up again on your new network. Older Chromecasts (3rd gen and earlier) are moved in the Google Home app: Device information, Wi-Fi, Forget this network, then set up again.

Fire TV, Apple TV and smart TVs

On a Fire TV, an Apple TV, or a TV with its own apps (Samsung, LG, Vizio and others), look in **Settings** for **Network**, then choose your Wi-Fi and enter the password. Bill's Smart TVs manual and the manuals for each streamer go into more detail.

Printers

HP says that when you get a new router, change internet companies, or change your Wi-Fi name or password, a previously installed printer needs to be reconnected. On many HP printers you first **restore Wi-Fi setup mode**:

- **Touchscreen printers:** open the Wireless or Setup menu, choose Network setup or Settings, and select **Restore Network Settings**. Then use the **Wireless Setup Wizard** to pick your network.
- **Printers without a touchscreen:** the button combination depends on the model. On many inkjets it's holding the Wireless and Cancel buttons together for about five seconds. Check HP's page for your model.
- Then, within two hours, open the **HP Smart** app and add the printer again.

GOOD TO KNOW

Printers and guest networks don't mix

HP notes that your computer or phone must be on the same network as the printer, and that printers can't be connected through guest-style networks. Bill's HP Printers manual has more.

PART 6

Last Resorts and Smarter Setups

Factory resets and what they erase, Matter and Thread in plain terms, separate networks for gadgets, and what to do when a gadget is never coming back.

CHAPTER 26

Factory Resets: The Last Resort, and What They Erase

A **factory reset** puts a gadget back the way it came out of the box. It forgets your Wi-Fi, your account and your settings. Sometimes it's the only way to give a gadget new Wi-Fi details, and the brand chapters tell you when. But it should always be the **last** step, not the first.

Restart is not the same as reset

What you do	What happens
Restart (reboot)	Turning it off and on. Erases nothing. Always safe. Try this first.
Soft reset / setup mode	On some gadgets (like Kasa plugs), a short button press that starts setup again but keeps settings.
Factory reset	Erases everything on the gadget. You'll set it up again from scratch.

What a factory reset usually erases

Gadget	What you'll lose or redo
Smart plug or bulb	Its name, schedules, timers and scenes. Voice assistants may see it as a new device, so re-check names and routines.
Hue Bridge	All lights, rooms, scenes and schedules on the Bridge. Avoid unless told to.
Camera or doorbell	Its settings. On some systems (such as older Nest-app cameras), video history. Save clips you want first.
Thermostat	Schedules, comfort settings and the installer settings for your system.
Smart speaker	Its settings on the device. Your account, music and routines are kept in your account.
Robot vacuum	Its link to the app; on some models, its saved maps.

Before you reset anything

1. Make sure you've done the five-minute check in Chapter 4, and the brand chapter's steps.
2. Write down the gadget's name in the app and any schedules you'd want to rebuild.
3. Know the sign-in for the gadget's app.
4. Find the reset instructions for **your exact model** on the maker's website or the quick-start card. Hold times and lights differ even between models from the same company.

5. Have your Wi-Fi name and password written down.

TIP

Remove it from the app, too

After a factory reset, it often helps to remove the old, offline copy of the gadget from its app (and from Alexa or Google Home) before adding it again. Otherwise you can end up with two "Porch Light" entries, one that works and one that doesn't.

FROM BILL

When in doubt, call before you reset

Resetting the wrong thing, like a Hue Bridge or a thermostat, can turn a small problem into a big afternoon. If you're not sure, a quick call to me costs less than redoing a whole system.

CHAPTER 27

Matter and Thread in Plain Terms

You may see a **Matter** logo on newer smart-home boxes. Matter is a shared language, backed by Amazon, Apple, Google, Samsung and many others, that lets a gadget work with more than one brand's app and voice assistant. A Matter plug can be controlled from Alexa, Google Home and Apple Home at the same time.

Word	Plain meaning
Matter	The common language. Says how gadgets and apps talk to each other.
Matter over Wi-Fi	A Matter gadget that uses your Wi-Fi, just like other Wi-Fi gadgets.
Thread	A low-power wireless mesh just for smart gadgets. Thread gadgets pass messages to each other and don't use your Wi-Fi password at all.
Thread border router	A device that connects the Thread mesh to your home network. Several Echo, Google Nest and Apple devices can do this job, often without you noticing.
Matter-paired	The gadget was added by scanning its Matter code (a QR code or a number) in Alexa, Google Home, Apple Home or SmartThings.

What "Matter-paired" means for reconnecting

- **Matter over Wi-Fi gadgets** remember your Wi-Fi name and password like any other gadget. The same-name trick in Chapter 11 works for them. If the name or password changed, look for a Wi-Fi option in the app you added it to (Amazon says the Alexa app can change Wi-Fi settings for Matter devices). If there isn't one, the usual fix is to remove the gadget, factory reset it, and add it again with its Matter code.
- **Thread gadgets** don't use your Wi-Fi password, so a Wi-Fi change usually doesn't affect them, as long as a Thread border router (like a compatible Echo, Nest Hub or HomePod mini) is still plugged in and online.
- **Keep the Matter code.** It's printed on the gadget or in the box. Take a photo of it and keep it with your "My Devices" record (Chapter 30). You'll need it to add the gadget again.

HEADS UP

Don't move a Matter gadget's Wi-Fi in a different app

If a gadget was added through Matter, changing its Wi-Fi in the maker's own app can break the Matter link. Use the app you added it to, or remove and re-add it with the Matter code.

Echo devices that can be Thread border routers

Amazon lists the Echo (4th Gen) and several newer models, including the Echo Hub and recent Echo Show and Echo Dot Max models, as having a built-in Thread border router. On the Google side, the Nest Hub (2nd gen), Nest Hub Max, Nest Wifi Pro and Google TV Streamer (4K) can do it. If you have Thread gadgets, leaving one of these plugged in keeps them connected.

Bill's Building a Smart Home manual explains Matter and choosing compatible gadgets in more depth.

CHAPTER 28

A Separate Network for Gadgets? Guest and IoT Networks

Some people like to put smart gadgets on their own network, separate from their computers and phones. You'll hear this called an **IoT network** (IoT means "Internet of Things," a fancy name for smart gadgets) or you may use the router's **guest network**. It can make sense, but it can also cause "offline" problems, so here are the honest pros and cons.

The case for a separate network

- If a cheap gadget has a security weakness, it's kept away from your computer and banking.
- You can change your main Wi-Fi password without touching the gadgets.
- Some routers and mesh systems offer a dedicated "IoT" or "smart home" network made for this.

The case against

The Connectivity Standards Alliance, the group behind Matter, says Matter devices belong on your **main** Wi-Fi network. Guest networks keep devices apart from each other, so Matter setup can fail and Matter gadgets can't talk to your speakers or hubs. It still recommends a guest network for visitors and for some older, pre-Matter gadgets.

- iRobot says a guest network isn't recommended for Roombas.
- HP says printers can't be connected over guest-style networks.
- Many apps need your phone and the gadget on the same network to set it up or find it.

FROM BILL

My plain advice

For most homes, keep smart gadgets on your main Wi-Fi with a strong password, and use the guest network for visitors. Even with a gadget network, keep Matter gadgets on the main one.

Good security habits for any network

- Use WPA2 or WPA3 security with a long password (the Matter group suggests at least 15 characters). Change the router's admin password from the default.

CHAPTER 29

When a Gadget Won't Ever Come Back, and Scams to Avoid

Sometimes a gadget is offline because the company has stopped supporting it. No router or password change will fix that. It's not your fault, and it's worth knowing so you don't spend hours chasing it.

Signs a product has been retired

- The app shows a message about "end of support" or the device disappeared from the app.
- The company emailed you about it (check your email for the brand name).
- Every reconnect step works, but the app still never shows it online.
- The gadget is very old and can't use WPA2 or newer Wi-Fi security.

An example: early Nest thermostats

Google ended support for the 1st and 2nd generation Nest Learning Thermostats on October 25, 2025. They no longer connect to the app, but they keep working from their own controls with their saved schedule. Google offered affected owners a discount toward a newer model in the US and Canada.

What to do with a retired gadget

1. Check the maker's website for an end-of-support notice and any trade-in or discount offer.
2. Decide whether it still does a useful job without the app (a thermostat often does).
3. If you replace it, factory reset the old one before recycling it, so your account details go with it to no one.
4. Recycle electronics properly. Many electronics stores take them back; your county's recycling office can tell you about other drop-off options.

Scams that target offline gadgets

When something stops working, it's natural to search the web for "Kasa support phone number" or "Ring help line." Scammers know this. They buy ads and set up look-alike websites with phone numbers that reach them, not the company.

SCAM ALERT

Fake support numbers and remote-access requests

Get support numbers only from the company's own app (look under Help or Support) or the box. A real company won't ask you to buy gift cards, pay a "router security" fee, or let a stranger take over your computer to fix a smart plug. If anyone asks for those, hang up.

SCAM ALERT

"Your device has been hacked" alerts

A pop-up, text or call that says your camera or Wi-Fi is hacked and you must call a number now is a scam. Close the page, ignore the text, and if you're worried, change your Wi-Fi and app passwords yourself or call me.

PART 7

Keep It Running

A fill-in record of your devices, a simple routine that prevents surprises, when to call Bill, and a one-page cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 30

Your "My Devices" Record

The single best thing you can do for a calm smart home is keep a simple record of what you have. When something goes offline, or when you change routers, you'll know exactly what to reconnect and how. Print this page and keep it near your router, or keep it in a notes app.

My Wi-Fi

Item	Write it here
Wi-Fi name (exactly)	
Wi-Fi password (exactly)	
2.4 GHz name, if separate	
Guest network name / password	
Router or mesh brand and app	
Internet company and phone	
Date router last changed	

My devices

Device and room	Brand / app	App sign-in email	Wi-Fi change?	Matter code photo?
Example: Porch light plug	Kasa (Tapo app)		Reset and re-add	No
Example: Front doorbell	Ring		Device Health	n/a

Device and room	Brand / app	App sign-in email	Wi-Fi change?	Matter code photo?

TIP

The "Wi-Fi change?" column

Use the brand chapters to fill this in once: "same-name trick only," "change in app," or "reset and re-add." Then, on router day, you'll know exactly which gadgets need attention.

STAY SAFE

Keep the record somewhere safe

It holds your Wi-Fi password. Keep it at home, and never post a photo of it.

CHAPTER 31

A Calm Routine to Prevent Offline Surprises

A few small habits keep most gadgets online for years. None of them take long.

Once a month

- Open each smart-home app and look for offline devices or update messages.
- Charge any battery cameras or doorbells showing low battery.

Every few months

- Let apps and gadgets update. Most update themselves overnight if they're online and plugged in.
- Check that the router is still out in the open and not covered or moved behind something.

Before any planned change

1. Update your "My Devices" record.
2. Write down the current Wi-Fi name and password exactly.
3. Plan to reuse them on the new router (Chapter 11), or plan the reconnect order (Chapter 14).
4. For gadgets with a "change Wi-Fi" button, move them while they're still online if you can.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this routine does for you

Instead of discovering on a cold morning that the thermostat app hasn't worked for a week, you catch problems while they're small, and router day becomes a non-event.

Things not to do

- Don't turn off your router's 2.4 GHz lane.
- Don't switch Wi-Fi security to "WPA3 only" unless you know every gadget supports it.
- Don't factory reset as a first step.
- Don't rename your Wi-Fi "just to tidy up" without a plan for every gadget.

CHAPTER 32

When to Call Bill

This guide will get most gadgets back online. But some days you just want someone who's done it a thousand times. That's what I'm here for.

Good reasons to call

- You're getting a new router or new internet service and want every gadget moved over smoothly.
- The internet company installed a new gateway and half the house went offline.
- A thermostat, doorbell, medical alert or other important device won't reconnect.
- You have two routers or two networks and aren't sure which is which.
- You'd like a separate guest or gadget network set up properly.
- You're not sure whether a gadget is worth fixing or has been retired.
- You'd simply like someone to fill in the "My Devices" record with you.

SCAM ALERT

Real help never cold-calls

Real help never cold-calls you, never pops up on your screen with a phone number, and never asks for gift cards. I won't call you out of the blue about your Wi-Fi, and neither will Ring, Amazon, Google or TP-Link. If someone does, hang up and call a number you trust.

How to reach me

- **Call or text:** (330) 200-8042. If I'm with another client, my assistant **Sophie** answers the main line and can book a time for you.
- **Book online:** billshometech.com/book
- **Price:** $49 remote · $99 in your home. The guides and manuals are free to read.

I've spent more than 30 years helping people with their technology, and I'm glad to serve Portage County and the surrounding area. There's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 33

Your Offline Cheat-Sheet

Print this page and keep it handy, next to your router or with your "My Devices" record.

I want to...

I want to...	Do this
Fix one offline gadget	Check power, reopen the app, phone on home Wi-Fi, unplug the gadget for 10 seconds, wait two minutes.
Fix everything offline	Restart modem and router (modem first). Wait five minutes. Check the internet on your phone.
Replace my router	Give the new one the exact same Wi-Fi name and password (Chapter 11).
Handle a new internet-company gateway	Ask the installer to use your old Wi-Fi name and password.
Change my Wi-Fi password	Follow the reconnect order in Chapter 14.
Get a 2.4 GHz-only gadget to join	Stand farther from the router, use a 2.4 GHz helper, or a separate 2.4 GHz name (Chapter 6).
Reconnect a Ring device	Device Health, then Change Network.
Reconnect a Blink system	Sync Module, then Change Wi-Fi Network.
Reconnect an Echo	Alexa app, Devices, your Echo, Wi-Fi Network.
Reconnect a Google Nest speaker	Device information, Wi-Fi, Forget this network, then add again.
Reconnect Hue lights	Plug the Bridge's cable into the new router. No Wi-Fi password needed.
Decide on a factory reset	Only after everything else; check what it erases (Chapter 26).

Write these down

What	Yours
Wi-Fi name	
Wi-Fi password	
Internet company phone	
Router app / sign-in	
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book