BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Steam Deck & Handheld Gaming PCs

Choosing, setup, storage, the TV and family controls — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for families and grandparents

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Steam Deck, ROG Xbox Ally & Legion Go · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to handheld gaming PCs: the Steam Deck, the ROG Xbox Ally and their cousins. It's written for grandparents and families who are buying one as a gift or helping a young player get set up. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Models and prices change often, so check the maker's store the week you buy.

Part 1 — Getting Started

1 A Note from Bill
2 What a Handheld Gaming PC Is
3 The Models in Stores, November 2026
4 Choosing One as a Gift

Part 2 — The Steam Account & Family Controls

5 The Steam Account: Who Owns It
6 Steam Guard and the Steam Mobile App
7 Steam Families: Sharing Games and Setting Limits
8 Money on Steam: Wallet, Gift Cards and Gifts

Part 3 — Setting Up a Steam Deck

9 Unboxing and the First Charge
10 First-Time Setup
11 Finding Your Way Around
12 Buying Games and Checking They'll Run Well
13 Keeping It Up to Date

Part 4 — Storage: Room for More Games

14 How Much Storage Do You Need?
15 Adding a microSD Card
16 When It Says It's Full

Part 5 — Playing on the TV

17 Docking to a TV: What You Need
18 Hooking It Up, Step by Step
19 Controllers for the Couch

Part 6 — Battery, Care, Windows Handhelds & Refunds

20 Battery Life and Charging
21 Care, Cases and Travel
22 ROG Xbox Ally and Other Windows Handhelds
23 Refunds and Returns

Part 7 — Scams & Staying Safe

24 Steam Account Scams
25 Gift-Card, Trade and Fake-Deal Scams
26 Friend Requests, Chat and Young Players

Part 8 — When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

27 When to Call Bill
28 Your Handheld Gaming Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Getting Started

What a handheld gaming PC is, the models in stores this season, and how to choose one wisely as a gift. Start here, especially if you're buying for a grandchild.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If a grandchild has written "Steam Deck" or "Xbox Ally" at the top of a holiday list and you're wondering what on earth that is — this guide is for **you**. And if one has already arrived in your house and someone has to set it up, this guide is for you too.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything. When I use a word like "microSD" or "dock," I'll stop and explain it right then.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain what a handheld gaming PC is, and how it differs from a Nintendo Switch or an Xbox.
- Lay out the models and honest prices as of November 2026, so you aren't surprised at the register.
- Walk you through the Steam account, its security code, and the family controls that let a parent set limits.
- Take you through first-time setup, adding storage with a microSD card, and hooking it up to the TV.
- Cover battery care, updates, refunds, and the scams that target gamers and their families.

The big promise: you can't break it by learning

These devices are tougher and friendlier than they look. Pressing the wrong button opens the wrong menu, and pressing the **B** button takes you back. Almost everything in this guide can be undone. The few things that truly matter — the account password, the security code on your phone, and never paying strangers with gift cards — I'll mark clearly.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

A handheld gaming PC can be a wonderful way to share time with a grandchild: playing a game together on the couch, on the TV, or across the miles. A little understanding on your part means a better gift, a safer account, and fewer frantic phone calls on the morning it's unwrapped.

I'm only a phone call away

If anything in this guide leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question, and it's always smarter to ask before you buy.

Let's start with the simplest question: what exactly *is* this thing?

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What a Handheld Gaming PC Is

A **handheld gaming PC** is a small computer built into a game controller, with a screen in the middle. You hold it in both hands like a big Nintendo Switch. Inside, though, it's a real personal computer, and it plays the same games people play on desktop computers.

The two families you'll see

Type	What it means
Steam Deck (Valve)	Made by **Valve**, the company that runs **Steam**, the biggest online store for computer games. It runs Valve's own system, called **SteamOS**, and is built around the Steam store and library.
Windows handhelds	The **ROG Xbox Ally** (made by ASUS with Microsoft), and others such as Lenovo's **Legion Go** line. They run **Windows 11**, like a laptop, and can use Steam, the Xbox app and Game Pass, and other PC game stores.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some Lenovo models come either way

Lenovo sells some Legion Go models with SteamOS and others with Windows. The box will say which. That choice decides which family of chapters in this guide applies.

How it's different from a Nintendo Switch or an Xbox

	Handheld gaming PC	Nintendo Switch	Xbox console
Where games come from	Steam and other PC stores	Nintendo eShop	Xbox store, Game Pass
Plays on the TV?	Yes, with a dock or cable	Yes, with its dock	Yes, always
Portable?	Yes	Yes	No
Feels like	A small computer	A game machine	A game machine

The key idea: games belong to the account

Games bought on Steam belong to a **Steam account**, not to the device. If a grandchild already plays on a family computer, every game they own there is waiting for them on a Steam Deck the moment they sign in. That's why the account (Chapter 5) matters even more than the hardware.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you know a handheld is a small game-playing computer tied to an account, the rest is just picking a model, setting up the account safely, and hooking it to the TV.

CHAPTER 3

The Models in Stores, November 2026

Prices for game machines went up sharply in 2026. Valve, Microsoft, Lenovo and others pointed to the rising cost of memory and storage chips. Here's what you'll find this holiday season, with the official U.S. prices as of November 2026.

Steam Deck (Valve)

Model	Storage	Price (U.S.)	Notes
Steam Deck OLED	512 GB	$789	Raised from $549 on May 27, 2026
Steam Deck OLED	1 TB	$949	Raised from $649 on May 27, 2026
Steam Deck OLED (refurbished)	512 GB / 1 TB	$629 / $759	Certified refurbished by Valve, when in stock

Valve stopped making the last LCD Steam Deck in December 2025, so new Steam Decks are now the OLED models only. **OLED** is a type of screen with deeper blacks and brighter colors. Valve still supports LCD models with updates, and sometimes lists certified refurbished units on its store, but they sell out quickly. An LCD Steam Deck you see at a store or online is either old stock or used.

ROG Xbox Ally (ASUS with Microsoft)

Model	Price (U.S.)	Notes
ROG Xbox Ally	$599.99	The lighter, less powerful model
ROG Xbox Ally X	$999.99	More powerful, more memory
ROG Xbox Ally X20	$1,299	OLED screen; released fall 2026

Some stores have sold the base ROG Xbox Ally for around $500 on sale, but the official price hasn't changed. These run Windows 11 and start up in an Xbox screen built for the controls (Chapter 22).

Lenovo Legion Go and others

Lenovo's **Legion Go S** and **Legion Go 2** come in Windows and SteamOS versions. Their prices rose more than once in 2026 and vary a great deal from store to store, so check the current price on Lenovo's own website before you buy. Other makers, such as MSI, sell Windows handhelds too.

Not a handheld, but you may hear about it

In 2026 Valve also released the **Steam Machine**, a small box that sits by the TV and plays Steam games (from $1,049, on sale since mid-2026), and a new **Steam Controller** ($99, May 2026). Neither is a handheld, but the controller also works with a Steam Deck.

HEADS UP

Prices move

Every price on this page is as of November 2026. With memory costs still high, makers have warned prices could change again. Check the maker's own store the week you buy.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the real prices ahead of time lets you set a budget, and makes it easy to spot a "deal" that's too good to be true (Chapter 25).

CHAPTER 4

Choosing One as a Gift

The best gift is the one that fits the games the child already plays and the rules the parents already have. A few questions, asked quietly ahead of time, make all the difference.

Questions to ask the parents first

1. **Is it all right with you?** Parents may have their own plans for screens and gaming. Ask before buying, not after.
2. **How old is the child, and do they already have a Steam account or an Xbox account?** Steam accounts are for ages 13 and up (Chapter 5). If they play on Steam, a Steam Deck brings their games along. If they play Xbox Game Pass, a ROG Xbox Ally fits better.
3. **Which games do they want to play?** Write down two or three names. Chapter 12 shows how to check if a game runs well on a Steam Deck.
4. **Who will manage the account and the limits?** Usually a parent. They'll set up Steam Families (Chapter 7) or Microsoft family settings (Chapter 22).
5. **Will it be used on the TV?** If so, plan for a dock or cable (Chapter 17).

Where to buy

- **Steam Deck:** from Valve directly, on the Steam website (store.steampowered.com), including Valve's certified refurbished units. Some major retailers carry it too.
- **ROG Xbox Ally:** from ASUS, Microsoft, and major electronics retailers.
- **Legion Go:** from Lenovo and major retailers.

TIP

Ask for a gift receipt

If you buy in a store, ask for a gift receipt and note the return window. Store return rules differ from Valve's own; read them before the box is opened.

HEADS UP

Buying used

A used handheld from a marketplace listing can be a fine deal, but it may still be tied to someone else's account, or be stolen. Meet in a public place, see it turn on, and ask the seller to sign out and reset it in front of you. Never pay a stranger with gift cards (Chapter 25).

Extras worth budgeting for

- A **microSD card** for more games (Chapter 15).
- A **dock** or a USB-C to HDMI adapter for the TV (Chapter 17).
- A **case** for carrying it around (Chapter 21).
- A Steam digital gift card, bought from Steam itself, for the first games (Chapter 8).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Ten minutes of questions means the gift works on day one, with the games the child wants and the rules the parents are comfortable with.

PART 2

The Steam Account & Family Controls

The account that owns the games, the security code that protects it, Steam Families for sharing and limits, and how money works on Steam.

CHAPTER 5

The Steam Account: Who Owns It

Before the handheld is even switched on, it helps to settle one thing: whose Steam account will it use? A **Steam account** is free. It's a user name, a password and an email address, and every game bought on Steam is kept in it for good.

The simple rule

- **If the child already has a Steam account,** use it. Their games come along.
- **If not,** a parent should help create it, using an email address the parent can read. That way the parent gets security messages and receipts.
- **Steam's minimum age is 13.** Valve's privacy policy says a Steam account is for people 13 and older. For a younger child, talk with the parents first; they may prefer a device built for younger children, such as a Nintendo Switch with Nintendo's family controls.
- **Grandparents** who want to play too should have their **own** account. Steam Families (Chapter 7) lets the family share games between accounts.

Creating an account

1. On a computer or phone, go to **store.steampowered.com** and choose to sign in, then to create an account. You can also do this during the Steam Deck's own setup.
2. Use an email address you check. Steam sends a message to confirm it.
3. Pick a strong password that you don't use anywhere else. A short sentence works well.
4. Write the account name and the email on your Cheat-Sheet (Chapter 28). Keep the password somewhere safe and private, not taped to the device.

STAY SAFE

Never share the password

No real Steam employee will ever ask for a password or a Steam Guard code, in a chat, a call or on Discord. Anyone who asks is trying to steal the account (Chapter 24).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With the right person holding the account and email, a lost password or a strange message is easy to sort out, and the games are never lost.

CHAPTER 6

Steam Guard and the Steam Mobile App

Steam Guard is Steam's extra lock on the account. With it turned on, a thief who learns the password still can't get in without a second proof that it's really you. The strongest form is the **Steam Guard Mobile Authenticator** in the free **Steam Mobile** app on a phone.

Setting it up

1. On the phone of the person who manages the account, install the free **Steam Mobile** app from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Open the app and sign in with the Steam account name and password.
3. Go to the **Steam Guard** tab and tap **Add authenticator**. Follow the steps; Steam sends a code by text message to confirm the phone number.
4. Steam shows a **recovery code**. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe. It's what lets you remove the authenticator if the phone is lost. Without it, you'll need Steam Support's help.

Signing in once it's on

Each time someone signs in on a new device, Steam asks for proof. Open the Steam Mobile app on the phone and either approve the sign-in when the app asks, or type the **Steam Guard code** it shows into the device. The code changes regularly, so a code from yesterday won't work today.

Steam Support says plainly that it will never ask for your password or your mobile authenticator code, and neither will any Valve employee.

> **TIP**
>
> **One phone can guard several accounts**
>
> A parent's phone can hold the authenticator for more than one Steam account, so a parent can guard a child's account too. That means the child will ask the parent to approve each new sign-in.

SCAM ALERT

A code request is always a scam

If anyone — a stranger, a "friend," or someone claiming to be Steam Support — asks you to read them a Steam Guard code or send a screenshot of the app, stop. Valve lists this as a warning sign of account theft.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With Steam Guard on a trusted phone, a stolen password alone isn't enough to take the account and its games.

CHAPTER 7

Steam Families: Sharing Games and Setting Limits

Steam Families is Steam's way for a household to share games and for adults to set rules for children. Valve introduced it in 2024, replacing the older Family Sharing and Family View.

What it does

- **Up to six accounts** in one family: the person who creates it plus up to five others.
- Members are marked as **adults** or **children**. Adults manage invitations and the rules.
- **Shared library:** members can play each other's games. If two people want the same game at the same time, the family needs as many copies as people playing.
- **Parental controls:** adults can choose which games a child may play, limit access to the store, community and chat, and set daily playtime limits.
- **Requests:** a child can ask an adult to buy a game or for more playtime, and the adult can approve or decline, including from a phone.
- **Playtime reports** let adults see what's being played.

Setting it up

1. An adult signs in to Steam on a computer, phone app or the website.
2. Find the **Family** area in the account settings and choose to create a family.
3. Add each member as a Steam **friend** first. Then, in the Family area, search your friends list for their account and choose to invite them as an adult or as a **child**. They confirm from their own account and email.
4. For each child, set the parental controls: allowed games, store and chat access, and playtime.
5. Ask the child to sign in on the Steam Deck. Their limits follow their account to any device.

HEADS UP

Think before joining or leaving

All members must live in the same country. Valve limits how often you can leave a family or create a new one (Valve says one family per year), so set it up with the household you mean to keep. A child can't leave a family on their own; an adult removes them.

GOOD TO KNOW

Grandparents in another house

Steam Families is meant for one household. If you live separately, the simplest gift is a Steam digital gift card or a game sent as a gift (Chapter 8), rather than joining the child's family.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Parents get real, account-wide rules — what, when and how long — without hovering, and the family stops buying the same game twice.

CHAPTER 8

Money on Steam: Wallet, Gift Cards and Gifts

Games on Steam are paid for with a card, PayPal, or money already in the account's **Steam Wallet**. Here's how to give spending money safely.

Ways to give a game or money

Option	How it works
Send a game as a gift	On the Steam store, choose the game, then the option to purchase it as a gift, and pick the person from your Steam friends.
Digital gift card	Bought on the Steam store and sent to a friend's Steam account.
Purchase requests	In Steam Families, a child asks; the adult approves and pays.

Physical gift cards are going away

Valve announced in 2026 that it will stop restocking physical Steam gift cards in stores, because scammers kept pressuring people into buying them. Valve expects stores to run out by the end of 2026. Cards already bought still work and don't expire; digital gift cards on the Steam store carry on.

SCAM ALERT

Nobody real asks to be paid in Steam cards

Valve ended physical Steam cards precisely because scammers pressure people into buying them. If anyone asks you to pay a bill, a fine, a "tech support" fee or a grandchild's emergency in Steam cards, or any gift card, it's a scam. The FTC warns that paying with gift cards is a sign of a scam.

TIP

Buy only from Steam itself

Buy digital gift cards on the Steam store, not from a website or a person selling "discount" codes. Cheap codes are often stolen.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can give a grandchild games or spending money from your own living room, with no risk of a stranger getting the codes.

PART 3

Setting Up a Steam Deck

Out of the box, through first-time setup, finding your way around, choosing games that run well, and keeping it up to date.

CHAPTER 9

Unboxing and the First Charge

A Steam Deck OLED comes with the device, a carrying case and a charger with a USB-C plug. It's worth unboxing it a day or two before the big day so it can charge and update in peace.

Get to know the outside

Part	What it does
Power button	On the top edge. Hold it to turn on; press once to sleep; hold to see power options.
USB-C port	On the top edge. For the charger, a dock, or a USB-C to HDMI adapter.
microSD slot	On the bottom edge. For extra storage (Chapter 15).
Sticks and buttons	Two thumbsticks, a cross-shaped D-pad, A, B, X and Y buttons, triggers on the back.
STEAM button	Below the left side of the screen. Opens the main menu.
... button	Below the right side, with three dots. Opens the Quick Access menu.
Touch screen	You can tap the screen like a phone, as well as use the buttons.

Charge it first

1. Plug the charger into a wall outlet and the USB-C cable into the top of the Steam Deck.
2. The screen or a small light shows it's charging. The ... menu shows the battery level once it's on.
3. Let it charge for at least an hour before setup. The first setup downloads a large update, and a good charge keeps it from shutting off midway.

> **TIP**
>
> **Unwrap it early, then rewrap**
>
> If it's a gift, it's perfectly fine to set it up first and rewrap it. The child then opens a device that's charged, updated and ready to sign in.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A charged, updated device means the first hour is spent playing, not watching a progress bar.

CHAPTER 10

First-Time Setup

The first time a Steam Deck is turned on, it walks you through a short setup. Have the Wi-Fi password and the Steam account details ready, and the phone with the Steam Mobile app nearby.

Step by step

1. Hold the **power** button until the Steam logo appears.
2. Choose a **language**, then your **time zone**.
3. Pick your home **Wi-Fi** network and type the password with the on-screen keyboard. Setup needs an internet connection.
4. Let it download and install any **update**. It may restart on its own. This can take a while.
5. **Sign in** to the Steam account, or create one. If Steam Guard is on, approve the sign-in on the phone (Chapter 6).
6. You arrive at the **Home** screen. Setup is done.

Whose account to sign in with

Sign in with the account of the person who will play. If you're setting it up as a gift and the child isn't there, a parent can approve the sign-in from their phone. Avoid signing in with your own account just to test it unless you plan to sign out afterward.

HEADS UP

Typing on the screen

The on-screen keyboard can feel fiddly. You can tap the letters on the screen with a finger, which many people find easier than the sticks.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

In about half an hour, the device is on the Wi-Fi, current, and signed in to the right account, with the child's games waiting in the library.

CHAPTER 11

Finding Your Way Around

The Steam Deck's screens are built for a controller, so you move around with the sticks or D-pad and press **A** to choose and **B** to go back. Two buttons open almost everything.

The two menu buttons

Button	What it opens
STEAM button	The main menu: **Home**, **Library**, **Store**, **Downloads**, **Settings** and **Power**.
... (Quick Access)	A side panel for quick things: brightness, volume, notifications, friends, and battery details.

The main places

- **Home** shows recently played games and what's new.
- **Library** lists every game the account owns, installed or not.
- **Store** is the Steam store, for browsing and buying.
- **Settings** has Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, display, storage, power and updates.

Turning it off, and sleep

- Press the **power** button once to put it to **sleep**. Press again to wake it right where you left off.
- To turn it all the way off, open the STEAM menu, choose **Power**, then **Shut Down**.
- If it freezes, hold the power button for several seconds until it turns off, then turn it on again.

TIP

Stuck in a menu?

Press **B** to go back, or the STEAM button to get the main menu. You can't break anything by exploring.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With just the STEAM button, the ... button, A and B, you can get anywhere on the device, and help a grandchild find something without guessing.

CHAPTER 12

Buying Games and Checking They'll Run Well

Not every computer game runs well on a small handheld. Valve tests games and gives each one a **Steam Deck compatibility** rating, shown on the store page and in the library.

What the ratings mean

Rating	What it means
Verified	Valve tested it. It works on the Steam Deck right away.
Playable	It works, but may need a setting changed or feel fiddly in places.
Unsupported	Valve doesn't consider it suitable for the Steam Deck right now.
Unknown	Valve hasn't tested it yet.

Ratings can change over time as game makers update their games.

Buying and installing a game

1. Press the **STEAM** button and choose **Store**.
2. Search for the game and open its page. Look for the compatibility rating and the age rating.
3. Choose to buy it, review the price, and pay. In Steam Families, a child may send a request to a parent instead (Chapter 7).
4. Go to **Library**, choose the game, and press **Install**. Big games take a while to download.
5. When it's done, choose **Play**.

TIP

Check the age rating too

Store pages show age ratings, such as the ESRB's E, E10+, T and M in the U.S. A Verified rating says it *runs* well, not that it's right for a young child.

GOOD TO KNOW

Got buyer's remorse?

Steam will usually refund a game bought within 14 days and played less than two hours (Chapter 23).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Thirty seconds on the store page saves the disappointment of a game that won't run, or one the parents wouldn't approve of.

CHAPTER 13

Keeping It Up to Date

Valve regularly sends free updates to SteamOS, the Steam Deck's system. Updates fix problems, add features and keep it secure. Games update themselves too.

Checking for updates

1. Press the **STEAM** button and choose **Settings**.
2. Choose **System**.
3. Look for the software updates section and choose to check for updates.
4. If one is found, apply it. The Steam Deck restarts to finish.

TIP

Leave the update channel alone

In the update settings you may see choices like **Stable**, **Beta** and **Preview**. Leave it on **Stable**. Beta and preview updates are test versions.

Game updates

When a game has an update, Steam downloads it for you when the device is on Wi-Fi. The **Downloads** page in the STEAM menu shows what's waiting. A game sometimes must update before it will play online.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

An up-to-date device runs better, gets new features, and is protected against problems Valve has already fixed.

PART 4

Storage: Room for More Games

How much space games take, adding a microSD card the right way, and what to do when it says it's full.

CHAPTER 14

How Much Storage Do You Need?

Storage is where games are kept on the device. It's measured in **gigabytes (GB)** and **terabytes (TB)**; one terabyte is about a thousand gigabytes. Modern games are big, so space runs out faster than most people expect.

Rough sizes

- Small, simple games: often a few gigabytes or less.
- Many popular games: tens of gigabytes each.
- The biggest new games: can be well over a hundred gigabytes.
- The store page lists each game's size under its system requirements.

Choosing a size

Option	What it means
512 GB	Room for a handful of large games plus several small ones. Fine for most children, especially with a microSD card.
1 TB	Twice the room. Costs $160 more on the Steam Deck OLED as of November 2026.
Add a microSD card	Usually the least expensive way to add space (Chapter 15).

TIP

Games can be reinstalled any time

Uninstalling a game doesn't lose it. It stays in the library, and can be downloaded again free whenever it's wanted. Saved progress in most games is kept in Steam's cloud.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing that games can come and go means you don't need to pay for the biggest model. A smaller one plus a memory card works for most families.

CHAPTER 15

Adding a microSD Card

A **microSD card** is a memory card about the size of a fingernail. The Steam Deck, the ROG Xbox Ally and most other handhelds have a slot for one. Games installed on the card play right from it.

Buying the card

- Buy a well-known brand from a reputable store. Fake cards that claim more space than they have are common on marketplace sites.
- Look for a fast card. Valve's baseline is a **UHS-I** card; labels such as **U3**, **V30** or **A2** on the package mean it's built for speed.
- Pick a size that fits the budget. Larger cards hold more games.

Putting it in and getting it ready

1. Slide the card into the slot on the bottom edge of the Steam Deck until it clicks. It only fits one way; if it won't go in easily, turn it over rather than pushing.
2. Press the **STEAM** button and go to **Settings**, then **System**.
3. Find **Format SD Card** and confirm. This erases the card and sets it up for the Steam Deck.
4. Wait for it to finish. The card now appears under **Settings** > **Storage**.

HEADS UP

Formatting erases the card

Formatting wipes everything on the card. Don't format a card that holds photos or anything else you want to keep. If the format fails, restart the Steam Deck and try once more from **Settings** > **Storage**.

Choosing where new games go

In **Settings** > **Storage** you can see the internal drive and the card, how full each is, and choose which one new games install to by default.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A memory card adds room for many more games for much less than the bigger model costs, and takes two minutes to set up.

CHAPTER 16

When It Says It's Full

Sooner or later a download stops with a message that there isn't enough space. Nothing is broken. It just needs a tidy-up.

Make room, step by step

1. Go to **Settings** > **Storage** and choose the drive that's full.
2. Look down the list. The biggest games are usually at the top.
3. Select a game nobody is playing and choose to **uninstall** it. It stays in the library to reinstall later.
4. If a card is in place, you can also move a game from the internal drive to the card from the same screen: highlight the game and press the **Y** button to move it.
5. Try the download again.

> TIP
> **Ask before you delete**
> Before removing a child's game, ask them. Most games keep their saves in Steam's cloud, but a few don't, and some players care a great deal about their progress.

If the card stopped working

- Turn the Steam Deck off, take the card out, check it's the right way round, and put it back.
- Restart and look in **Settings** > **Storage**.
- If it still doesn't show, the card may have failed. Games on it can be downloaded again onto a new card.

> WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU
> **What this does for you**
> A full device takes five minutes to sort out, and nothing the child bought is ever lost by uninstalling it.

PART 5

Playing on the TV

What you need to put the game on the big screen, how to hook it up in the right order, and adding controllers so the whole family can play.

CHAPTER 17

Docking to a TV: What You Need

A Steam Deck or ROG Xbox Ally can show its picture on your TV. The connection is the **USB-C** port on the handheld; the TV needs an **HDMI** cable, the same kind your cable box or streaming stick uses.

Two ways to connect

Option	What it is
A dock	A small stand the handheld sits in. One USB-C plug to the handheld; on the back are ports for HDMI to the TV, power, USB for a keyboard or controller, and often a wired internet port. Neat and easy to leave set up by the TV.
A USB-C to HDMI adapter	A short cable or adapter, plus the handheld's charger. Less expensive and good for travel, but the handheld may run on its battery unless the adapter also passes power through.

The official dock and others

Valve sells its own **Steam Deck Docking Station** for under $100 on the Steam store; check the store for today's price. Well-known accessory makers such as Anker, UGREEN and JSAUX sell docks for roughly $35 to $50, and most also work with the ROG Xbox Ally and other USB-C handhelds.

TIP

Use the right charger

Docks need a strong enough USB-C charger to keep the handheld charged while it plays. The handheld's own charger is a safe choice. A small phone charger may not keep up.

GOOD TO KNOW

It won't be sharper than the TV can show

Big, demanding games may look softer on a large TV than on a gaming console, because the handheld is working harder at the bigger picture. Simpler games usually look great.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With a dock by the TV, the handheld becomes a family game machine in seconds, then goes back to being portable when it's lifted out.

CHAPTER 18

Hooking It Up, Step by Step

Plug things in in this order, and it almost always works the first time.

1. Plug the dock's **power** adapter into the wall and into the dock.
2. Connect an **HDMI** cable from the dock to an HDMI port on the TV. Note the port number printed beside it (HDMI 1, HDMI 2...).
3. If you use wired internet, plug the network cable into the dock.
4. Turn on the TV and use the remote's **Input** or **Source** button to choose that HDMI port.
5. Turn on the handheld and set it in the dock, or connect the dock's USB-C plug to it.
6. The picture should appear on the TV within a few seconds.

If there's no picture

- Check the TV is on the right input (HDMI 1, HDMI 2...).
- Unplug the USB-C from the handheld, wait a few seconds, and plug it back in.
- Try a different HDMI cable or TV port.
- Make sure the dock has power. Without it, some docks won't send a picture.
- On a Steam Deck, check **Settings** > **Display** for options for an external display.

TIP

Sound comes from the TV

When docked, sound usually moves to the TV. If it's still coming from the handheld, open the ... menu and check the sound output.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you know the order, you can set it up by the TV yourself and teach the grandchildren to do it too.

CHAPTER 19

Controllers for the Couch

When the handheld sits in a dock, you'll want a separate controller in your hands. Most handhelds work with common wireless game controllers that connect by **Bluetooth**.

Controllers that usually work

- The new **Steam Controller** from Valve ($99, released May 2026).
- Xbox Wireless Controllers and PlayStation DualSense controllers, connected by Bluetooth.
- Many wired USB controllers, plugged into the dock.

Pairing a Bluetooth controller to a Steam Deck

1. On the Steam Deck, go to **Settings** > **Bluetooth** and make sure Bluetooth is on.
2. Put the controller in pairing mode. On an Xbox controller, hold the small pair button on top until the Xbox button flashes quickly. On a PlayStation DualSense, hold the **Create** and **PS** buttons together until the light flashes.
3. Choose the controller when it appears in the list.
4. Once paired, it reconnects on its own next time you turn it on.

TIP

Two players

Many games let two or more people play on the same screen with two controllers. The store page lists "shared/split screen" games. It's a lovely way for a grandparent and grandchild to play together.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With a second controller, the handheld becomes a game the whole family can enjoy from the couch, not just the person holding it.

PART 6

Battery, Care, Windows Handhelds & Refunds

Getting the most from the battery, looking after the device, the ROG Xbox Ally and other Windows handhelds, and how Steam refunds work.

CHAPTER 20

Battery Life and Charging

How long a handheld runs on a charge depends mostly on the game. A simple puzzle game can run for many hours; a big, fast-moving new game can drain it in a couple. That's normal for every handheld gaming PC.

Make the battery last longer

- Turn the screen **brightness** down a little from the ... (Quick Access) menu.
- Put it to **sleep** with one press of the power button when taking a break, instead of leaving a game running.
- Play simpler games when you're away from a charger, and save the big ones for the dock.
- Check the battery level in the ... menu before heading out.

Limit the charge if it's always plugged in

Batteries age faster when they're kept at 100 percent for long stretches. If the handheld mostly lives in a dock by the TV, a **charge limit** helps. On a Steam Deck, SteamOS added one in 2025:

1. Press the **STEAM** button and go to **Settings** > **Power**.
2. Find **Battery Charge Limit** and set it. Valve suggests 80 percent for a device that's usually plugged in or docked.
3. Before a trip, turn it off again so you leave with a full battery.

STAY SAFE

If the battery swells

If the case bulges, the screen lifts, or it gets unusually hot or smells, stop using it, unplug it, set it on a hard surface away from anything that can burn, and contact the maker. Don't keep charging it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few small habits mean longer play away from the outlet, and a battery that stays healthy for years.

CHAPTER 21

Care, Cases and Travel

Handhelds are sturdy, but a drop onto a hard floor can crack a screen or bend a thumbstick. A little care goes a long way.

Everyday care

- Keep it in its **case** when it's carried in a bag. The Steam Deck OLED comes with one.
- Clean the screen with a soft, dry microfiber cloth. No sprays straight on the screen.
- Keep the air vents clear. Don't play it on a blanket or a pillow, where it can't breathe.
- Don't leave it in a hot or freezing car.
- Keep drinks well away, especially with young players.

Travel

- Pack the charger. Many USB-C laptop chargers work too, but the handheld's own is the safest choice.
- Download games before you leave. Many games play without internet once installed, but some need to be online.
- Handhelds go in carry-on bags on planes, like a laptop, because they contain lithium batteries.

TIP

Write down the serial number

The serial number is printed on the box and on the device. Write it on your Cheat-Sheet (Chapter 28). It helps with warranty claims and if the handheld is ever lost or stolen.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A case, a clean screen and a cool spot to play keep a several-hundred-dollar gift working for years.

CHAPTER 22

ROG Xbox Ally and Other Windows Handhelds

The **ROG Xbox Ally** family, made by ASUS with Microsoft, runs **Windows 11**. Under the hood it's a Windows PC, but it starts up in a full-screen Xbox screen built for the controls, so it feels much more like a game console.

Setting it up

1. Charge it, then hold the power button to turn it on.
2. Follow the Windows setup: language, Wi-Fi, and signing in with a **Microsoft account** (the same account used for Xbox).
3. Let Windows and the Xbox app install their updates. This can take a while the first time.
4. When setup is done, it starts in the **Xbox full screen experience**. From there, games from the Xbox app, Game Pass, and installed stores such as Steam appear together.

Steam on a Windows handheld

You can install Steam on a ROG Xbox Ally and sign in with the same Steam account. Games bought on Steam play there too, and Steam Guard (Chapter 6) and Steam Families (Chapter 7) work the same way.

Game Pass

Xbox Game Pass is Microsoft's monthly subscription with a library of games. As of November 2026, **PC Game Pass** is $13.99 a month and **Game Pass Ultimate** is $22.99 a month (sibling check). Our Xbox & Game Pass guide covers the plans in detail.

Family limits on a Windows handheld

Because it's a Windows PC, screen-time limits for the child's Microsoft account are set through **Microsoft family settings** on the web, at family.microsoft.com, rather than the console-only Xbox Family Settings app (sibling check). Set up a separate Microsoft account for the child, then add it to the family group.

GOOD TO KNOW

Leaving the Xbox screen

The full-screen Xbox experience can be exited to reach the regular Windows desktop. That's where Windows updates and other settings live.

HEADS UP

It's a full PC

Like any Windows computer, it can browse the web and install programs. Keep Windows updated, use the child's own Microsoft account, and don't install "free game" or "performance booster" programs from unknown websites.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If the child's world is Xbox and Game Pass, a Windows handheld brings it along, and the family controls they already use keep working.

CHAPTER 23

Refunds and Returns

Bought the wrong game? Steam has one of the friendliest refund policies in gaming, as long as you ask quickly.

Steam's game refund rule

- Steam will refund almost any game, for any reason, if you ask **within 14 days** of buying it and it has been played **less than two hours**.
- **Pre-orders:** the 14 days start on the release date.
- **Gifts:** an unredeemed gift can be refunded on the same terms; once redeemed, the person who received it asks for the refund.
- **Wallet money** bought on Steam can be refunded within 14 days if none of it has been spent.
- Outside those limits, you can still ask, but it isn't guaranteed.

How to ask for a refund

1. On a computer or phone, go to **help.steampowered.com** and sign in.
2. Choose **Purchases**, then the game.
3. Choose that you'd like a refund and follow the steps. Pick a reason; you can add a short note.
4. Steam replies by email. The money goes back to the payment method or to the Steam Wallet.

TIP

Returning the device itself

Hardware returns follow the rules of wherever you bought it. If you bought from Valve, check the Steam Hardware section of help.steampowered.com; if from a store, use its return policy and your gift receipt.

HEADS UP

Only on help.steampowered.com

Refunds and account problems are handled only on Steam's own help site. Anyone in a chat, an email or on Discord offering to "process a refund" is a scammer (Chapter 24).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the 14-day, two-hour rule means a disappointing game is a few clicks to undo, not wasted money.

PART 7

Scams & Staying Safe

The tricks used to steal Steam accounts, gift-card and "trade" scams, and friend requests and chat for young players. What to do if something already went wrong.

CHAPTER 24

Steam Account Scams

A Steam account can hold hundreds of dollars of games, so thieves work hard to take them. Almost every trick ends the same way: getting you to type your password and Steam Guard code into a fake page, or to read them out to someone. Once you know the patterns, they're easy to spot.

The "I accidentally reported you" scam

A message arrives, often from a Steam friend whose account was already stolen, or from a stranger on Discord (a popular chat app for gamers). It says something like "I accidentally reported your account, please contact this Steam admin or you'll be banned." The "admin" then asks for your sign-in details, a code, or a password-reset link, and takes the account.

SCAM ALERT

Steam never contacts you in chat

Steam Support says any claim that you were "accidentally" or "falsely" reported is a scam. Valve employees never talk to you about your account in Steam Chat, Discord or any other chat app. The only place to speak with Steam Support is the help site, **help.steampowered.com**.

"Vote for my team" and other fake links

Another common message: "Can you vote for my team in a tournament?" or "Is this you in this picture?" with a link. The link opens a page that looks just like the Steam sign-in. Anything typed there goes straight to the thief.

SCAM ALERT

Even from a friend, it's likely a trap

Steam Support warns that even when it comes from a trusted friend's account, a request to visit a website to vote for or support a team is likely a phishing scam. The friend's account was probably stolen first.

Simple habits that stop almost all of it

- Never sign in to Steam from a link in a chat, email or text. Open the Steam app, or type **store.steampowered.com** yourself.
- Never share a password, a Steam Guard code, a recovery code or a screenshot of the Steam Mobile app.
- Keep the Steam Guard Mobile Authenticator turned on (Chapter 6).
- If a friend sends something odd, ask them by phone or in person, not in the same chat.
- Nobody needs your account to "check" or "verify" anything.

If you think the account was taken

1. On a computer or phone, go to **help.steampowered.com** yourself and sign in if you still can.
2. Change the Steam password right away, and the password of the email account linked to Steam, especially if they were the same.
3. If you can't sign in, use the help site's options for a hacked or stolen account and follow the steps. Proof of purchase, such as the card used for a past game, helps.
4. Warn your Steam friends that messages from your account may not be from you.
5. If money was spent, call your card company too.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With a few firm rules, the whole family's games stay safe, and you'll recognize these messages the moment they appear.

CHAPTER 25

Gift-Card, Trade and Fake-Deal Scams

Some scams aren't after the Steam account at all. They want your money, and gift cards are their favorite way to get it because the money can't be traced or returned.

Gift-card scams

The caller or message may claim to be a government office, a utility, "Microsoft support," or a grandchild in trouble who needs you to buy cards and read out the numbers. Steam cards were a favorite, which is why Valve stopped making physical ones (Chapter 8). Scammers now ask for other gift cards too.

SCAM ALERT

Gift cards are for gifts

No real company, government office or police department will ever ask you to pay with a gift card. If anyone does, hang up. If a grandchild seems to be in trouble, call them, or their parents, on the number you already have.

"Trade" scams

In some games, players can swap in-game items, such as outfits or weapon designs, using Steam's trading features. Some of these items sell for real money, and that attracts scammers. Common tricks include:

- A stranger offers a trade that seems too generous, then sends a link to "check" or "verify" your items.
- Someone asks to "borrow" an item for a moment and promises to give it back.
- A pop-up or message asks you to confirm a trade in the Steam Mobile app that you never started.

HEADS UP

A house rule for young traders

Many parents simply turn trading off, or agree that a child only trades with real-life friends, with an adult watching. Never approve a trade confirmation on your phone unless you know exactly what it is.

Fake deals on handhelds

- A brand-new Steam Deck or ROG Xbox Ally for far below the prices in Chapter 3 is almost always a scam.
- Be wary of websites you've never heard of, social-media ads, and sellers who want payment by gift card, wire transfer, cryptocurrency or a payment app.
- Valve sells the Steam Deck on its own Steam store. Buy from Valve, the maker, or a well-known store.
- "Free Steam Deck" giveaways that ask for your sign-in or a shipping fee are scams.

If you already paid

1. Stop sending money, even if they promise a refund for "one more payment."
2. Call the gift card company using the number on the back of the card, or your bank or card company, right away. Keep the cards and receipts.
3. Report it to the FTC at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.
4. Tell a family member. Scammers count on embarrassment; there is nothing to be ashamed of.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the real prices and the one golden rule, never pay with a gift card, protects you from the most common money scams around gaming.

CHAPTER 26

Friend Requests, Chat and Young Players

Steam has a social side: friends lists, chat, and community pages. It's how grandchildren play with their friends, but it's also how strangers reach them. A little setup and a good conversation go a long way.

Friend requests from strangers

- Only accept friend requests from people you know in real life.
- Be wary of a request that arrives right after an online game, from someone offering free items, or from a profile that looks brand new.
- Scammers often send friend requests first, so they can message you with the tricks in Chapter 24.

Using Steam Families to limit chat

In Steam Families (Chapter 7), an adult can limit a child's access to the store, the community and chat. That's the strongest tool for younger players, and it follows the child's account to any device.

Talking with the grandchildren

A few simple rules, said kindly, are easy for children to remember:

- Never tell anyone online your password or a code from a phone.
- Nobody from Steam will ever message you. If someone says they're from Steam, tell a grown-up.
- Don't click links from people in chat, even friends, without asking.
- If something online makes you feel uneasy, it's always fine to stop and tell us. You won't be in trouble.

> **TIP**
>
> **On a Windows handheld**
>
> On a ROG Xbox Ally, also set the child's Microsoft account controls through Microsoft family settings (Chapter 22), and set Steam Families for the Steam side.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The child keeps playing with friends they know, and strangers have a much harder time getting through.

PART 8

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary to keep with the handheld.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

I've written this guide so you can buy, set up and look after a handheld gaming PC on your own. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves time and worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Before you buy** — talking through the models and prices (Chapter 3) and which one fits the games the child already plays (Chapter 4).
- **Setting up the accounts** — the Steam account, Steam Guard on the right phone, and Steam Families with sensible limits (Chapter 5 to Chapter 7).
- **Getting it ready as a gift** — charging, updating and preparing it so it's ready to sign in on the big day (Chapter 9 and Chapter 10).
- **Hooking it up to the TV** with a dock and a controller (Chapter 17 to Chapter 19).
- **A message or call that doesn't feel right**, before you click, pay or share a code (Chapter 24 and Chapter 25).
- **You'd simply rather have a patient person handle it.** That's always a good enough reason.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace — no rushing, no talking down, no jargon. I explain what I'm doing in plain words, and I'll always tell you honestly when something isn't worth the money. Home visits are here in Portage County, Ohio; remote help reaches you wherever you are. I bring more than 30 years of professional experience to every visit.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042**, or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is free to read and share with family and neighbors.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may be greeted by Sophie

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might first meet **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. The actual help always comes from me.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the gift before it's unwrapped. A little understanding goes a long way, and you don't have to figure it all out alone.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

Your Handheld Gaming Cheat-Sheet

Everything important, on one page. Keep it somewhere private, not inside the carrying case.

The essentials

Topic	What to remember
Main buttons (Steam Deck)	**STEAM** button for the main menu; **...** for Quick Access; **A** to choose; **B** to go back.
Sleep / off	Press power once to sleep. STEAM > **Power** > **Shut Down** to turn off. Hold power if it freezes.
Updates	STEAM > **Settings** > **System**; leave it on **Stable**.
Storage	STEAM > **Settings** > **Storage**. Format a new card under **System**.
Battery	**Settings** > **Power** > **Battery Charge Limit** if it lives in a dock.
Refunds	Within 14 days and under 2 hours played, at help.steampowered.com.
Steam Support	Only at **help.steampowered.com**. Never in chat, Discord or by phone call.
Golden rules	Never share a password or Steam Guard code. Never pay anyone with gift cards.
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book · $49 remote · $99 in your home

Write it down once

Item	Yours
Model and storage	_____
Serial number	_____
Steam account name	_____
Email on the account	_____
Phone with Steam Guard	_____
Recovery code kept at	_____
Who manages Steam Families	_____
Bought from / return by	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Press **B** to go back, or the **STEAM** button for the main menu.
2. Check the battery in the **...** menu, and plug in the charger.
3. Turn it off and on again: STEAM > **Power** > **Shut Down**, or hold the power button if it's frozen.
4. No picture on the TV? Check the TV input, the dock's power, then unplug and replug the USB-C (Chapter 18).
5. Out of space? Uninstall a game nobody plays (Chapter 16).
6. A strange message or request for a code or gift card? Stop, and don't reply (Chapter 24).
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.