BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Streaming Services Explained

What all these TV services are, which to pick,
and how to watch without overpaying — in plain English

A plain-English guide to watching what you love

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Covers Netflix, Disney+, Max, Prime Video & more · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your plain-English guide to streaming — watching TV shows and movies over the internet. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind. We'll sort out what all these services are, which ones are worth your money, how to watch on your TV or tablet, and how to avoid paying for more than you use. Prices and apps change from time to time, so where money comes up I'll give you the lay of the land rather than exact figures — and I'll always tell you where to check the current price yourself.

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PART 1

What Streaming Even Is

The whole idea in plain English, what you need to do it, and the gadgets that bring it to your television. Start here and the rest falls into place.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If the words "streaming," "Netflix," "Hulu," and "Disney Plus" have been floating around your family gatherings and you've nodded along without being quite sure what any of it means — you are in very good company, and you've come to the right place.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I wrote this book the way I'd explain it sitting right beside you: slowly, in plain English, with no rushing and no talking down. If I use a term you don't know, I'll stop and explain it on the spot. You won't have to look a single thing up.

Why streaming is worth understanding

Streaming is simply a new way to watch television — one that often costs less than cable, lets you watch what *you* want *when* you want, and brings old favorites and brand-new shows to the same screen. The catch is that there are many services, each wanting a monthly fee, and it's easy to end up paying for things you never watch. This book's job is to make you the confident boss of all of it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this book gives you

By the end you'll know what streaming is, which services suit *you*, how to watch on your TV and your tablet, how to avoid overpaying, and how to spot the scams that circle these services. You'll be able to add a service for a show you want, cancel it when you're done, and never feel at the mercy of it. That's real freedom and real savings.

And I'm only a phone call away

This book will carry you a long way. But if you ever get stuck — a sign-in that won't take, a screen that won't play — you're never stuck alone. Call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll work it out together, with no judgment and no eye-rolling. There is no such thing as a silly question. Let's begin.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What "Streaming" Actually Means

Let's start with the word itself, because once it clicks, everything else is easy. **Streaming** means watching a show or movie that comes to your screen *over the internet*, right as you watch it — instead of from a cable box, an antenna, or a disc you put in a player.

Like water from a tap

Think of it like water. In the old days, to have a movie you bought the "bottle" — a DVD or a tape — and kept it on a shelf. Streaming is like turning on a tap: the movie flows to your television from the internet the moment you ask for it, and when you're done, you simply turn it off. Nothing to store, nothing to rewind, nothing to return. The show lives out on the internet, and your screen just pours it out on demand.

"On demand" — the magic words

The phrase you'll hear is **on demand**, and it means exactly what it says: the show is there whenever you demand it. No waiting until 8 o'clock on Tuesday for your program — you press play when *you're* ready, pause it to answer the door, and pick up right where you left off. That's the heart of why people love streaming.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Streaming vs. cable, in one breath**
>
> **Cable TV** pipes channels into your house on a schedule, through a cable company, for one (often large) monthly bill. **Streaming** sends shows over your home internet, from several smaller services you can start and stop whenever you like. Many folks keep their internet, drop the cable TV part, and stream instead — often saving money. We'll weigh that up later.

What you're really paying for

Each streaming service is like its own little TV channel with its own library of shows and movies. Netflix has its shows; Disney+ has Disney, Pixar, Marvel, and Star Wars; and so on. You pay a monthly fee to each one you want, the way you might subscribe to different magazines. The skill — the one this book teaches — is subscribing only to the ones you'll actually watch, and knowing how to stop paying the moment you're finished.

CHAPTER 3

The Three Things You Need

To stream, you need just three things, and you very likely already have all three. Let's make sure, because understanding these three explains nearly every "it won't work" moment later.

1. An internet connection at home

Streaming comes over the internet, so you need internet service at home — the same thing that lets you send email or browse the web. Most homes get it from a company like Spectrum, AT&T, or a local provider, and it arrives through a small box called a **router** that broadcasts **Wi-Fi** (the invisible wireless signal your devices use). If you can get on the internet on a phone or computer at home, you have what streaming needs.

GOOD TO KNOW

Streaming uses a fair bit of internet — and that's usually fine

Video uses more internet than email or browsing, so a very slow or very limited internet plan can struggle. For most home internet plans today, streaming to one or two screens is no trouble at all. If your internet is old, slow, or has a strict monthly limit (common with some cellular-based plans), that's worth a chat — call me and we'll see if yours is up to it.

2. A device to watch on

You need something with a screen and the ability to run **apps** (small programs, one for each service). That can be a modern television, a little streaming gadget plugged into an older TV, or simply your phone, tablet, or computer. The next chapter walks through all of these — you almost certainly own at least one already.

3. An account with each service

Finally, for each service you want, you set up an **account** — your own name, email, password, and (for the paid ones) a way to pay. You do this once per service, and then you're signed in and ready. We'll set one up together, step by step, in Part 3.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Three things, and you're watching

Internet, a screen, an account. That's the whole recipe. If this all feels like a lot, take heart: you set it up once, and after that watching is as simple as picking up the remote and pressing play. The effort is all at the front; the ease lasts for years.

CHAPTER 4

The Gadgets That Bring Streaming to Your TV

There are several ways to get streaming onto the big screen in your living room. You only need *one* of them. Let's meet the family so you know what you have — and what, if anything, you might want.

A smart TV — streaming built right in

A **smart TV** is a television with streaming built in — it connects to your Wi-Fi and has the apps (Netflix, and so on) right on it, often with buttons for them on the remote. Most TVs sold in the last several years are smart TVs. If your remote has little colored buttons labeled Netflix or Prime Video, you've got one, and you may need nothing else at all.

A streaming stick or box — for any TV

If your TV isn't smart (or its built-in apps are slow and dated), a small, inexpensive gadget adds streaming to any television with an HDMI socket (the little flat port most TVs have). The common ones are:

Gadget	In a nutshell
Roku	Simple, friendly, and a favorite for its plain menus. Comes as a stick or a little box.
Amazon Fire TV Stick	Plugs into the TV; works closely with Amazon and Alexa voice.
Google / Chromecast	Google's streaming gadget, good if you use an Android phone.
Apple TV	A pricier box that pairs beautifully with iPhones and iPads.

They all do the same core job — bring the apps to your TV — and plug into the HDMI port with the picture coming through and a power cord to a USB port or the wall. You switch your TV to that HDMI "input" and the gadget's menu appears. If you have one of these and want a full walk-through, the Fire TV and Roku each have their own Bill's Home Tech manual.

Your phone, tablet, or computer

Every streaming service also works right on a phone, tablet, or computer — perfect for watching in bed, on the porch, or while traveling. On these you simply install the service's app (or visit its website on a computer). Many people watch on a tablet far more than they expected to.

TIP

You don't need to buy anything to start

Before spending a dime on a new gadget, check what you already have: a smart TV, a Roku or Fire Stick a family member set up, or just your tablet. Any one of them lets you start streaming today. Buy a new device only if what you have is genuinely too old or too slow — and I'm glad to tell you honestly which it is before you shop.

PART 2

The Big Services, Explained Plainly

A friendly tour of the main streaming services — what each one is really for, so you can pick the handful that fit your household and skip the rest.

CHAPTER 5

How to Think About All These Services

Before we tour them one by one, here's the single most useful idea in this whole book: **each service is a channel with its own shows, and you only want the ones whose shows you'll actually watch.** Nobody needs all of them. Most happy households keep two or three at a time.

They come in two flavors: with ads or without

Almost every paid service now offers two prices. The cheaper plan shows **commercials** ("ad-supported"), much like regular TV. The pricier plan has **no ads** at all. For many people the cheaper ad plan is perfectly pleasant and saves real money — don't assume you need the expensive one. We'll dig into this in Part 4.

GOOD TO KNOW

A note about prices in this book

Streaming prices change often — services nudge them up most years. So in these chapters I'll tell you roughly where each service sits (inexpensive, middle, or premium) rather than quote a dollar figure that may be wrong by the time you read this. For today's exact price, look on the service's own website, or call me and I'll check it with you.

A quick map of the landscape

Here's the whole field at a glance. Don't worry about memorizing it — the chapters ahead explain each one. Think of this as the menu before we order:

Service	What it's really for
Netflix	The big all-rounder: huge mix of shows, movies, and its own hit series.
Disney+	Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars, National Geographic. Great for grandkids. Now includes Hulu's shows too.
HBO Max	Prestige dramas, HBO classics, Warner movies, some news and sports.
Prime Video	Comes with an Amazon Prime membership; a broad library plus rentals.
Apple TV	Apple's own polished original shows and movies.
Peacock	NBC shows, some live sports, classic TV.
Paramount+	CBS shows, movies, Star Trek, some sports.

Service	What it's really for
Free services	Tubi, Pluto TV, The Roku Channel — free, with ads (Part 4).

CHAPTER 6

Netflix

Netflix is the one most people start with, and the name that became a verb. It's the big all-rounder: an enormous mix of television shows, movies, documentaries, comedy specials, and a great many *Netflix Originals* — shows and films Netflix makes itself that you can't watch anywhere else.

What you'll find on it

A little of everything: dramas and comedies, true-crime documentaries, nature films, cooking and home shows, old sitcoms, standup comedy, children's programming, and movies both new and old. If a show is "the one everybody's talking about," there's a fair chance it's on Netflix.

Good to know

- It offers a cheaper **ad-supported** plan and pricier **ad-free** plans; the top plan allows the sharpest picture and the most screens at once.
- It has cracked down on **password sharing** — more on that in Part 4 — so an account is now meant for one household.
- It keeps track of what you've watched and suggests more like it, which is handy once it learns your taste.

GOOD TO KNOW

You've likely watched Netflix without knowing it

If a family member has ever handed you the remote and said "just pick something," there's a good chance it was Netflix you were scrolling. That familiarity is an advantage — the first service you learn teaches you the pattern (rows of shows, a search box, a big play button) that nearly every other service copies. Learn one, and you've half-learned them all.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why many folks start here

Netflix is a sensible first service because it has a bit of everything, works on every device, and is simple to use. If you only ever want *one* streaming service, Netflix is a reasonable choice for the broadest variety. Start with it, get comfortable, and add others only as particular shows tempt you.

CHAPTER 7

Disney+ and Hulu

Disney+ is the home of everything Disney, and it's pure gold if there are grandchildren in your life — or if you yourself love a classic Disney film or a Marvel adventure.

What's on Disney+

- The full Disney vault: animated classics, newer Disney films, and Pixar movies.
- **Marvel** superhero movies and shows, and the entire **Star Wars** universe.
- **National Geographic** nature and science programs.
- Family shows and series the whole household can watch together without worry.

Hulu is joining Disney+

Hulu has long been a separate service known for next-day episodes of network TV shows and grown-up dramas. Disney owns Hulu, and has been folding Hulu's shows right into the Disney+ app, so increasingly you'll find both in one place. If you hear "Disney bundle," it means paying one combined price for Disney+ and Hulu (sometimes with ESPN sports too).

TIP

The grandkids' favorite — and a safe one

Disney+ is about the most worry-free service for having grandchildren over. The content is wholesome, there's a simple **Kids** profile that only shows child-friendly titles, and there's enough there to fill a rainy afternoon many times over. If little ones visit often, this is frequently the second service a household adds after Netflix.

CHAPTER 8

HBO Max

HBO Max (you may have heard it called just "Max" for a while — the HBO name came back) is the home of HBO's famously high-quality dramas, plus a big library of Warner Bros. movies and shows. If you like a rich, grown-up drama or a big Hollywood film, this is your service.

What's on it

- HBO's acclaimed series, both current and classic.
- A large catalog of Warner Bros. movies, from old favorites to recent releases.
- Documentaries, some comedy, and a selection of family and reality programming.
- Depending on the plan, some live news and sports have been added over time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Names change; the service is the same

Streaming services sometimes rename themselves — this one has been "HBO," "HBO Max," "Max," and back to "HBO Max." Don't let a name change throw you; the app on your TV updates itself, and your account and shows carry right over. If an app's name or logo suddenly looks different, it's almost always just a rename, not something you did.

CHAPTER 9

Prime Video, Apple TV, Peacock & Paramount+

Let's round out the tour with the other services worth knowing. You certainly don't need all of these — but it helps to know what each is, so a family member's suggestion makes sense.

Prime Video

If you (or a family member) pay for **Amazon Prime** — the membership that brings fast shipping — then **Prime Video** comes bundled in at no extra charge. It has a broad library of shows and movies, its own originals, and the option to *rent* or *buy* newer movies that aren't included free. Many people have it already and don't realize it.

Apple TV

Apple TV (the service, not the box) is Apple's streaming service, known for a smaller but very polished set of original shows and movies. It's a nice add-on when a particular Apple show catches your eye, and it's especially easy to use if you have an iPhone or iPad.

Peacock and Paramount+

- **Peacock** — from NBC, with its TV shows, classic sitcoms, some movies, and a helping of live sports and news.
- **Paramount+** — from CBS, home of Star Trek, CBS shows and movies, and some sports.

FROM BILL

Pick for the show, not the collection

Here's my honest advice: don't sign up for a service just to "have" it. Sign up when there's a specific show you want to watch, enjoy it, and cancel when you're done — you can always come back. That simple habit, which we'll practice in Part 4, is how savvy folks enjoy all of these for a fraction of what their neighbors pay. I'm always glad to help you decide.

PART 3

Getting Set Up & Watching

Making an account, signing in on your TV (the one fiddly bit), finding something to watch, and the handy settings that make everything comfortable.

CHAPTER 10

Making an Account & Signing In

Every service asks you to make an **account** once — your email, a password, and (for paid ones) a payment method. It feels like a hurdle the first time and then never again. Let's walk through it calmly.

What an account is, and why

An account is simply your personal membership with that service: it remembers who you are, what you've watched, and that you've paid. You create it with an **email address** and a **password** you choose. Write both down in a safe place — a little notebook kept away from the computer is perfect — because you'll need them again when you sign in on your TV.

Setting one up (on a phone, tablet, or computer)

1. Go to the service's website (like netflix.com) or install its app and open it.
2. Choose **Sign Up** or **Start Membership**.
3. Pick a plan (the ad-supported one is the least expensive — see Part 4).
4. Enter your email and make a password. Use a strong one you don't use elsewhere (there's a whole Bill's Home Tech manual on passwords if you'd like).
5. Enter your payment card. You'll be charged monthly until you cancel — and canceling is easy, as we'll see.
6. That's it — you're a member, and signed in on that device.

STAY SAFE

Only ever sign up on the real website or app

Create accounts only at the service's genuine website or its app from the official app store — never through a link in an email or text, which may be a fake built to steal your card. When in doubt, type the address yourself (netflix.com, disneyplus.com) or let me help. A real service will never email you a link demanding you "sign up now or lose access."

Keeping your sign-ins straight

After a few services, you'll have a few email-and-password pairs. Keep them together in one place — that notebook, or a proper password manager. It turns the single most common streaming headache ("I can't remember my login") into a two-second glance.

CHAPTER 11

Signing In on Your TV — the One Fiddly Part

Here's the one step that trips people up, so let's slow right down. Typing a long email and password using a *TV remote* — clicking one letter at a time on an on-screen keyboard — is genuinely awkward. The good news: the services know this, and most offer a far easier way.

The easy way: the sign-in code

Instead of typing on the TV, most services show you a short **code** and a web address. You do the typing on your phone or computer, where it's easy, and the TV signs itself in. It feels like magic the first time:

1. Open the service's app on your TV and choose **Sign In**. It shows a short code (like "BXQ7") and a web address (like "netflix.com/tv").
2. On your phone or computer, go to that web address.
3. Sign in there with your email and password (easy on a real keyboard).
4. Type in the short code the TV showed you.
5. In a moment, your TV screen changes on its own — you're signed in. You won't have to do this again on that TV.

> **TIP**
>
> **Have your logins in hand before you start**
>
> Before you sit down to sign in on the TV, have your email and password for that service written in front of you. Nine out of ten "I couldn't get it to work" moments are really just a forgotten password. With the login in hand, the code method above takes about a minute.

If you must type on the TV

Some older apps still make you type on the TV with the remote. Go slowly, use the on-screen keyboard's arrow keys, and watch for the tiny **caps** and **123** buttons to reach capital letters and numbers. Passwords are case-sensitive, so a capital letter typed as lowercase is the usual culprit when it won't accept your login. Take your time; there's no penalty for a wrong try.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Sign in once, watch for years

The beauty of this awkward little step is that you do it *once* per service per TV. After that, the app just opens to your shows whenever you want them. All the fuss is at the very start; everything after is press-and-play.

CHAPTER 12

Finding Something to Watch

Once you're in, a service greets you with rows upon rows of shows and movies — exciting, but a little overwhelming at first. Here's how to find exactly what you want without endless scrolling.

The three ways to find a show

- **Browse the rows** — scroll up, down, and sideways through the categories the service lays out ("Comedies," "New Releases," "Because you watched…"). Good for when you're not sure what you're in the mood for.
- **Search by name** — if you know what you want, use the **magnifying-glass** search icon and type the title or an actor's name. This is the fastest way to a specific show.
- **Your list** — when you spot something you'd like to watch later, add it to **My List** (or "Watchlist") with a plus sign. It saves it in one tidy place for next time.

Pressing play, pausing, and picking up where you left off

Tap or click a show to see its description, then press the big **Play** button. While it plays, pressing the center or **select** button on your remote pauses and resumes it. The wonderful part: the service *remembers where you stopped*, so you'll find a "Continue Watching" row that drops you right back in — even days later, even on a different device.

TIP

The ten-second rewind is your friend

Missed a line of dialogue, or dozed off for a minute? Most players let you jump back ten seconds at a tap — look for a small arrow with "10" in it, or press the left arrow on your remote. No more rewinding and guessing. It's one of those tiny conveniences that makes watching genuinely relaxing, especially with a show that mumbles.

GOOD TO KNOW

A series, an episode, a season — the words

A **series** (or "show") is made of **seasons**, and each season is made of **episodes** — just like a TV show always has been. Streaming usually plays the next episode automatically a few seconds after one ends ("autoplay"). If you'd rather stop, just press pause or back. You're always in control of the pace.

CHAPTER 13

Profiles: Keeping Everyone's Shows Separate

Most services let one account have several **profiles** — separate little spaces for each person in the household. They're worth setting up, and they're free.

Why profiles are handy

- Each person gets their own "Continue Watching" and suggestions, so your westerns don't get tangled up with your spouse's cooking shows.
- A **Kids** profile shows only child-friendly titles and a simpler screen — perfect for when grandchildren visit.
- Nobody accidentally watches ahead in a show you're enjoying together under your own profile.

Choosing your profile

When you open the app, it may ask "Who's watching?" and show the profiles as little named squares. Tap yours. If a child grabs the remote, steer them to the Kids profile. You can add, name, and remove profiles in the service's **Account** or **Manage Profiles** settings.

TIP

Make a Kids profile before the grandkids visit

Setting up a Kids profile takes a minute and saves a lot. The little ones get a safe, simple screen of cartoons and family films, and you don't have to hover. It's one of the kindest, easiest things you can set up on any service that offers it.

CHAPTER 14

Captions, Audio & Making It Comfortable

Streaming is wonderfully adjustable — you can make the words easier to read, the sound easier to hear, and the whole experience suit your eyes and ears. These settings are a gift, especially worth knowing about.

Turning on captions (subtitles)

Captions (also called subtitles) put the spoken words on screen as text — a great help when dialogue is mumbled or the music is loud. While a show plays, press up or the menu button on your remote to bring up a **speech-bubble** or **CC** icon, choose your language (English), and turn it on. Many services also let you make the caption text bigger in settings.

Audio: other languages and described video

- **Audio language** — switch between English and other languages where offered.
- **Audio description** — a narrator describes the action for those with low vision; look for "English - Audio Description" in the audio menu.

Picture and playback

You can usually jump back ten seconds to catch a line you missed, slow down the pace by turning off autoplay, and (on some services) adjust the playback. There's no harm in exploring these menus — nothing you tap here changes anything permanently or costs anything.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Television that bends to suit you

This is one of streaming's quiet kindnesses: captions you can enlarge, sound you can clarify, and the power to pause and rewind anything. Watching stops being a strain and becomes a pleasure, tuned exactly to your comfort. If you'd like help setting captions on by default, that's a two-minute job we can do together.

CHAPTER 15

Watching Offline: Downloading for Trips

Here's a trick that delights travelers: on a phone or tablet, most services let you **download** shows and movies while you're on your home Wi-Fi, then watch them later with no internet at all — on a plane, a long drive, or anywhere the signal is poor.

How to download a show

1. On your phone or tablet, open the service's app while on your home Wi-Fi.
2. Find the show or movie, and look for a **download** icon — usually a small downward arrow.
3. Tap it and wait for it to finish (a few minutes). It's now saved on your device.
4. Later, with no internet, open the app's **Downloads** section and play it like normal.

> **TIP**
>
> **Download before you leave home**
>
> Do your downloading on your home Wi-Fi the night before a trip — it uses a lot of data, so you don't want to do it on a limited cellular plan. A few downloaded shows turn a long flight or a waiting room into easy, pleasant time. Just remember to delete them afterward to free up space, which the app makes easy.

Downloading is covered more fully in the Staying Connected While Traveling manual, if travel is on your horizon — it pairs beautifully with this chapter.

PART 4

Spending Smart, Not Getting Nickel-and-Dimed

What streaming really costs, ads versus no ads, the new password-sharing rules, the "rotate and save" trick, free services, and live TV without cable.

CHAPTER 16

What Streaming Really Costs

Here's where a little wisdom saves real money. Any one service seems cheap. The trouble is that three, four, or five of them together can quietly add up to as much as the cable bill you were trying to escape. Let's make sure that doesn't happen to you.

The quiet pile-up

Each service bills you **automatically every month**, whether you watched it or not. It's easy to sign up for a service for one show, forget about it, and keep paying for months. The single most valuable habit in streaming is knowing exactly what you're paying for — and dropping what you're not using.

Take stock of what you pay

Once or twice a year, list every streaming service you pay for and what it costs. Your bank or card statement shows them — look for monthly charges from Netflix, Disney, Amazon, and the like. Add them up. People are often surprised by the total, and by a service or two they forgot they had.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A yearly 'streaming checkup' pays for itself

Fifteen minutes once or twice a year, listing your services and canceling the ones you've drifted away from, commonly saves people a good deal over a year. It's the highest-value habit in this whole book. If you'd like, we can do your first checkup together — I'll help you read the statement and spot what you no longer use.

CHAPTER 17

Ads or No Ads: Which Plan to Pick

Nearly every service now sells two versions: a cheaper plan with **commercials**, and a pricier one with **none**. Choosing well can cut your bill without hurting your enjoyment.

The honest trade-off

Plan	What you get
Ad-supported (cheaper)	You see commercials, roughly like regular TV — a few minutes per show. In exchange, you pay noticeably less each month. Perfectly pleasant for most people.
Ad-free (pricier)	No commercials at all, and often the sharpest picture and the most screens at once. Worth it if ads truly bother you or you watch a great deal.

My plain suggestion: start with the **ad-supported** plan on any service. If the ads genuinely spoil it for you, you can switch up anytime in a few taps. Most folks find the cheaper plan more than fine and enjoy keeping the difference in their pocket.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Free trials" and the calendar trick

Services sometimes offer a **free trial** — a week or a month at no charge. They're genuinely free *if* you cancel before the trial ends; otherwise they roll into a paid month automatically. The trick: the day you start a trial, set a reminder on your calendar or phone a day or two before it ends. Then you decide on purpose, not by forgetting.

CHAPTER 18

The New Password-Sharing Rules

For years, families freely shared one streaming login across several homes. That era is ending: Netflix, Disney+, and others now limit an account to a single **household** — the people living under one roof. It's worth understanding so you're not caught off guard.

What changed

- An account is now meant for **one home**. Everyone living with you can still use it freely, on all your devices.
- Sharing with a grown child or friend in *another* home may now trigger a prompt to pay a small extra fee to add them, or ask them to get their own account.
- You may occasionally be asked to confirm a device is really part of your household.

What it means for you

If you've been using a relative's login, it may stop working or start asking for verification — that's the new rule, not a mistake you made. Likewise, if you've been sharing yours, you may be nudged to add the other person for a fee. Neither is a scam; it's simply how the services now work.

SCAM ALERT

But beware fake 'household verification' messages

Scammers have pounced on this change. If you get an **email or text** saying "verify your household" or "your account is on hold — click here to confirm," do **not** click it. Real verification happens *inside the app on your TV*, never through a link in a message. When in doubt, open the app directly, or call me at **(330) 200-8042** before clicking anything.

CHAPTER 19

The 'Rotate and Save' Trick

Here's the single cleverest way to enjoy many services for a fraction of the cost — and it's the opposite of what the companies hope you'll do. It's called rotating, and once you see it, you'll never go back to paying for five services at once.

How rotating works

1. Keep just **one or two** services at a time — the ones you're actively watching.
2. When a show you want lands on another service, **subscribe to that one for a month**, binge what you came for, and then **cancel** it.
3. Pick up a different service when its turn comes. You're never paying for more than you're watching right now.

Because canceling and re-subscribing is quick and keeps your account details, you can hop on and off freely. A service you cancel today welcomes you right back next year, remembering your profiles and history.

Canceling the right way

Canceling almost never means losing anything right away — you usually keep access until the end of the month you've already paid for. To cancel, sign in on the service's **website** (easier than the TV), go to **Account**, and choose **Cancel Membership**. The service may try to tempt you to stay; politely decline and confirm.

> **FROM BILL**
>
> **This one habit is the heart of smart streaming**
>
> If you take just one money lesson from this book, make it this: subscribe for the show, not forever. Watch what you wanted, cancel, and move on. Done well, rotating lets you enjoy everything these services offer while paying for only one or two at a time. I'm glad to help you set up a simple rotation that fits what your household likes to watch.

CHAPTER 20

Free Services Worth Knowing

Not everything costs money. Several genuinely **free** services offer loads of shows and movies, paid for by commercials — just like old-fashioned television. They're a lovely way to fill in around your paid services, and perfect if you'd rather spend nothing at all.

The main free services

Free service	What it offers
Tubi	A huge free library of on-demand movies and shows. A favorite for "I just want something to watch."
Pluto TV	Free **live** channels that play around the clock, like flipping through cable — news, movies, old TV, and more.
The Roku Channel	Free movies and shows; built into Roku devices but also available as an app elsewhere.
Sling Freestream	A big batch of free live channels and on-demand titles.

They're free to install and free to use — usually you don't even need an account. The only "cost" is watching commercials, which many people happily accept for a no-charge library that's far bigger than you'd expect.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Never 'nothing to watch' — for free

With a couple of free services installed, you're never truly out of something to watch, even if you drop every paid service for a while. For folks on a careful budget, Tubi and Pluto TV alone can supply plenty of entertainment without a single monthly bill. That's worth knowing.

CHAPTER 21

Live TV & Sports Without Cable

"But what about the news, and the game?" is the question I hear most from folks considering dropping cable. Live television — things that air in real time — is very much available through streaming, in a few forms.

Your choices for live TV

- **A free antenna** — a modern indoor antenna pulls in your *local* channels (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, PBS) over the air, free, in crisp quality. Wonderful for local news and network shows, with no bill at all.
- **Free live-channel apps** — Pluto TV and Sling Freestream (above) offer many live channels for free, though not usually your local stations or major live sports.
- **Paid live-TV streaming** — services like **YouTube TV** and **Hulu + Live TV** deliver a full cable-like channel lineup, including local channels and sports, over the internet. They cost about as much as cable, but with no equipment to rent and no contract.

For sports in particular

Live sports are the trickiest corner of streaming, because the rights are split among services that change year to year. Depending on the sport and team, you might need a specific service (like ESPN's, or a league's own app) or a paid live-TV package. If a particular team or sport is a must-have for you, that's exactly the kind of thing to call me about — I'll help you find the current, cheapest way to watch it without paying for a dozen things you don't need.

TIP

Don't overlook a simple antenna

For local news and your evening network shows, a one-time inexpensive indoor antenna beats any subscription — it's free forever after you buy it, and the picture is often sharper than cable. Many people pair a free antenna (for local and news) with one or two streaming services (for everything else) and happily wave goodbye to the cable bill entirely.

PART 5

Getting the Most From Streaming

The everyday skills that make streaming a pleasure: working the remote, talking to it, sending shows from your phone to the TV, and keeping it all tidy.

CHAPTER 22

Working the Remote With Confidence

Whether you use a smart TV, a Roku, or a Fire Stick, a small remote runs the whole show. They all share the same handful of buttons, and once those are in your fingers, every menu feels familiar. Let's learn them so nothing on screen can stump you.

The buttons that matter

Button	What it does
Arrows (the ring/pad)	Move the highlight up, down, left, and right through the rows of shows. Nothing happens until you press OK.
OK / Select (the center)	Chooses the thing you've highlighted — opens a show, presses a button, plays. Also pauses and resumes while watching.
Back	Steps back one screen, undoing a wrong turn. Your safety net — press it anytime you feel lost.
Home	Jumps all the way out to the main screen, like going back to the front porch. Always gets you un-stuck.
Play / Pause	Starts and stops the show. The center button usually does this too.

TIP

Back and Home are your 'get me out of here' pair

Whenever a screen confuses you or you've wandered somewhere you didn't mean to, press **Back** to step back one screen, or **Home** to leap all the way out to the start. Between them, you can never get trapped. Knowing this makes exploring the menus feel safe — because it is.

When the remote stops responding

If buttons stop working, it's almost always the batteries. Pop the back off and swap in fresh ones. If that doesn't do it, restarting the TV or streaming device usually wakes the remote back up. A remote rarely truly breaks — it's nearly always batteries or a quick restart.

CHAPTER 23

Talking to Your TV: Voice Search

Typing with a remote is tedious, so most modern remotes let you simply **speak** what you want. It's one of the friendliest features there is, and a real gift if typing is a strain.

How voice search works

1. Find the **microphone button** on your remote — a little picture of a microphone.
2. Press and hold it, and speak naturally: "Find comedies," or "Play the news," or the name of a show or an actor.
3. Let go. The TV searches and shows you the results. Use the arrows to pick one and press OK.

You can ask for a title you can't quite spell, an actor's films, or just a mood ("funny movies"). The remote does the hard part of typing for you. It isn't perfect — it may mishear a name now and then — but for most searches it's far quicker than pecking at letters.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

No more spelling with a remote

Voice search turns the single most tedious part of streaming — typing a title letter by letter — into a quick spoken request. For anyone whose hands or eyes find the on-screen keyboard fiddly, it's a genuine kindness. Give it a try; you may never type on the TV again.

CHAPTER 24

Sending a Show From Your Phone to the TV

Here's a clever trick: you can find a show on your **phone or tablet** — where searching and typing are easy — and then send it to play on the big TV with a tap. This is called **casting**, and it feels a bit like a magic trick the first time.

The idea in plain terms

Your phone becomes the remote and the "finder," while the TV does the showing. You browse comfortably on the small screen, press one button, and the show leaps to the television — still controlled from your phone. It works when your phone and TV are on the same home Wi-Fi.

How to cast

1. Make sure your phone and your TV (or streaming device) are on the **same Wi-Fi**.
2. In the show's app on your phone, start playing the show, then look for the **cast icon** — a little rectangle with curved lines in the corner, like a small screen with a signal.
3. Tap it, and pick your TV's name from the short list that appears.
4. The show jumps to the TV. Use your phone to pause, skip, and adjust the volume.

GOOD TO KNOW

Casting vs. the TV's own app

Casting is handy, but you don't *need* it — the apps right on your TV work perfectly on their own. Think of casting as a nice shortcut for when you've already found something on your phone, or when a show lives only on your phone. If it ever confuses you, just use the TV's own app instead; both get you to the same show.

CHAPTER 25

Adding, Tidying & Updating Your Apps

The streaming services live on your TV or streaming device as **apps** — the same little programs you have on a phone. Knowing how to add a new one, tidy the screen, and keep them current rounds out your confidence.

Adding a new service's app

1. From the Home screen, find the **app store** (on Roku it's "Streaming Channels"; on Fire TV and smart TVs it's an "Apps" or store icon).
2. Search for the service by name (voice search helps here).
3. Choose **Add**, **Get**, or **Download** — it's free to add the app; you still sign in with your account.
4. The new app appears on your Home screen, ready to open and sign into.

Tidying and removing apps

You can rearrange the apps so your favorites sit first, and remove ones you don't use so the screen isn't cluttered. Highlight an app, press the **options** or **star** button (or press and hold OK), and you'll find choices to **Move** or **Remove**. Removing an app doesn't cancel the service or cost anything — it just clears it off the screen, and you can always add it back.

TIP

Let updates happen on their own

Apps improve themselves now and then with updates. These usually install quietly in the background — you don't have to do a thing. If an app ever looks different one day, that's just an update, not something you broke. Keeping your device plugged in and connected lets these happen smoothly.

CHAPTER 26

Movie Night: Watching With Others

Streaming is lovely on your own, and even better shared. A few small skills make watching with a spouse, visiting family, or far-away loved ones a real joy.

Watching with visitors

When family visits, your profiles (Chapter 13) keep everyone's shows separate, and the Kids profile keeps little ones in safe waters. If a guest wants to check their own service, they can sign into their account on your TV and **sign out** again before they leave — their login stays private, and yours is untouched.

Watching with someone far away

Some services offer a **watch party** or **group watch** feature, letting you and a distant friend or grandchild watch the same show at the same time, in sync, chatting as you go. It's a heartwarming way to share an evening across the miles. Look for "Group Watch" or a party icon on a show's page; it's offered on a growing number of services.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A simple pleasure, made easy

At its best, streaming is just a warm, easy evening — a film you both wanted to see, captions on if you like, paused whenever the phone rings, shared with someone you love whether they're beside you or across the country. That's the whole point of all these buttons: more of those good evenings, with less fuss.

CHAPTER 27

Streaming Away From Home

Your streaming comes with you. On a phone, tablet, or laptop, you can watch your services wherever there's internet — a hotel, a relative's house, a waiting room — by signing in just as you do at home.

A few travel tips

- **Download before you go** (Chapter 15) so you can watch on planes and in spots with weak signal, using no internet at all.
- On hotel or public Wi-Fi, your apps work as usual, but be mindful of **safety** — avoid signing into banking on open networks. The Staying Connected While Traveling manual covers this fully.
- If you sign into your account on someone else's TV while visiting, remember to **sign out** before you leave, so your account doesn't stay on their device.

STAY SAFE

Sign out of shared and hotel devices

If you ever sign into a streaming service on a hotel TV, a cruise-ship screen, or a friend's device, always **sign out** when you're done — otherwise the next person has your account. If you forget, most services let you "sign out of all devices" from your account page on a phone or computer. When in doubt, do that, or call me and we'll take care of it.

CHAPTER 28

Your Internet Speed & Streaming

Streaming leans on your home internet more than almost anything else you do, so a word about **internet speed** is worth having. Don't worry — you don't need to become an expert, just to know enough that a sales pitch or a glitch doesn't rattle you.

How much speed do you really need?

Internet speed is measured in **megabits per second**, usually shortened to "Mbps" — think of it as how wide the pipe is. Streaming one TV in good quality needs only a modest amount; even streaming to two or three screens at once is fine on most ordinary home plans today. You very likely already have plenty. The number you're sold is often far more than you need.

Signs your internet might be the weak link

- Shows buffer or drop quality on more than one device at the same time.
- Trouble only appears in the evening, when the whole neighborhood is online.
- A far room gets a weak Wi-Fi signal while the room near the router is fine — often a Wi-Fi reach problem, not a speed one.

FROM BILL

Don't let anyone upsell you blindly

Internet companies love to sell a bigger, pricier plan as the cure for any streaming hiccup — and sometimes it's genuinely not the problem. Before you pay more every month, let me take a quick look. Often a better-placed router, a small Wi-Fi helper, or a simple restart fixes it for free. That's **(330) 200-8042**.

CHAPTER 29

Renting & Buying Movies

Alongside the shows included with your subscriptions, most services (and Amazon and Apple in particular) let you **rent** or **buy** individual movies — handy for a brand-new release that isn't included free anywhere yet.

Rent versus buy

Option	What it means
Rent	You can watch it for a limited window (often 30 days to start, 48 hours once you press play), then it's gone. Cheaper. Good for a one-time watch.
Buy	It's yours to watch any time, as often as you like, stored in your account. Costs more. Good for a film you'll return to.

You pay once, right then — this is separate from your monthly subscription. It's a perfectly fair way to see a new movie at home instead of the theater, but do keep an eye on it, because little rentals can add up if you forget they're separate charges.

HEADS UP

Mind the 'one-click' purchase

On some devices, renting or buying is a single press away — which is convenient, but means an accidental press (or a grandchild exploring) can ring up a charge. If that worries you, most services let you set a **PIN** that must be entered before any purchase. It's a smart little safeguard, and I'm glad to help you switch it on.

CHAPTER 30

A Plain-English Streaming Glossary

Streaming has its own vocabulary. Here's a dictionary of the words you'll meet, so none of them ever trips you up. Flip here whenever a term is unfamiliar — it's a reference, not a quiz.

Term	What it means
Streaming	Watching video over the internet, as you watch it.
On demand	Available to watch whenever you choose, not on a set schedule.
App	A small program for one service (Netflix, etc.) on your TV or device.
Smart TV	A television with streaming apps built in.
Streaming device	A gadget (Roku, Fire Stick) that adds apps to any TV.
Account / login	Your personal membership — an email and password — with a service.
Profile	A separate space within one account for each person.
Subscription	A service you pay for monthly until you cancel.
Ad-supported	A cheaper plan that shows commercials.
Buffering	The pause while a show loads more of itself over the internet.
Casting	Sending a show from your phone to play on the TV.
Captions / subtitles	The spoken words shown on screen as text.
Download	Saving a show on a device to watch later with no internet.
Original	A show or movie a service makes itself, found only there.
Bundle	Several services sold together for one combined price.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Knowing the words keeps you in charge

Half of feeling lost with technology is just not knowing what the words mean. With this little glossary, the salesperson, the on-screen menu, and the family member rattling off jargon all become easy to follow. Understanding the words is quiet power — and now it's yours.

CHAPTER 31

A Sample Streaming Setup on a Budget

Let's pull it all together with a few sample setups — real, sensible combinations that give you plenty to watch without a big monthly bill. Treat these as starting points, not rules; mix and match to suit what *you* love to watch.

The thrifty setup (little or nothing per month)

- A one-time **indoor antenna** for free local channels and the evening news.
- **Tubi** and **Pluto TV** for free movies and live channels.
- One paid service at a time, added only when a show tempts you, then canceled.

The comfortable setup (one modest bill)

- **Netflix** (ad-supported) as your everyday all-rounder.
- A free antenna or a free app for local news.
- Rotate in **Disney+**, **HBO Max**, or another for a month when there's something you want.

The grandkids-friendly setup

- **Disney+** with a **Kids** profile for safe, wholesome viewing.
- **Netflix** for the grown-ups, with its own kids' section too.
- Tubi's free children's section as a no-cost backup.

> **FROM BILL**
>
> **Let's build the setup that fits you**
>
> These are just examples — your perfect setup depends on what you like, who visits, and what you want to spend. That's exactly the kind of thing I enjoy helping with: a short, friendly chat about what you watch, and I'll map out a setup that covers it for the least money. No pressure, no upselling — just a sensible plan. Call me at **(330) 200-8042**.

PART 6

Staying Safe, Fixing Snags & Getting Help

The scams that target streaming customers, the handful of problems that actually happen and how to fix them, and knowing when to call.

CHAPTER 32

Streaming Scams & How to Dodge Them

Streaming has become a favorite playground for scammers, precisely because so many people are new to it and unsure how it's supposed to work. The good news: once you know their handful of tricks, they're easy to spot and shrug off. Let's inoculate you.

The classic streaming scams

The scam	How it works
"Your account is on hold"	An email or text claiming your Netflix/Disney payment failed, with a link to "update your card." The link goes to a fake page that steals your card. Real services don't fix billing through text links.
"Verify your household"	Plays on the new sharing rules — a link to "confirm" your account. Verification only ever happens inside the app on your TV.
"Free lifetime subscription"	An ad or email offering free or absurdly cheap lifetime access. There's no such thing; it's bait for your card or password.
Fake 'customer support' numbers	A search for "Netflix phone number" turns up fake support lines run by scammers who ask for remote access or payment. Use only the Help section inside the official app.

SCAM ALERT

The golden rule for every streaming message

If a message about your streaming account arrives by email or text and wants you to click a link, enter your card, or call a number — **stop**. Don't click, don't call. Instead, open the app on your TV or type the service's real address yourself to check your account. And if you're ever unsure whether something's real, call me first at **(330) 200-8042**. I would much rather answer a quick question than help clean up after a scam.

A safe mindset

Real streaming services almost never contact you with urgent demands. They don't call you, they don't threaten, and they don't need your password or card "to verify." Urgency and pressure are the scammer's tools, not a real company's. When a message makes your heart race, that feeling is the warning — slow down and check.

CHAPTER 33

When the Picture Buffers or Won't Play

Now and then a show freezes, spins, or looks fuzzy. The word for that spinning pause is **buffering** — the show is waiting for more of itself to arrive over the internet. It's almost always a small internet hiccup, not a broken anything, and it's usually quick to fix.

The buffering checklist

1. **Wait a moment.** A brief buffer often clears itself as the internet catches up.
2. **Check other devices.** If your phone and computer are also slow, the issue is your internet, not the TV.
3. **Restart your streaming device or TV app.** Close the app and reopen it, or turn the streaming stick off and on.
4. **Restart your internet.** Unplug your router/modem for 30 seconds, plug it back in, wait two minutes. This cures a great many streaming troubles.
5. **Move closer to the Wi-Fi**, or lower the picture quality in the app's settings if your internet is slow.

> TIP
>
> **The two-restart cure**
>
> Most streaming glitches — buffering, a black screen, an app that won't open — melt away after two restarts: first the streaming app or device, then your internet router. Try that calmly before assuming anything is wrong. It's the streaming equivalent of "turn it off and on again," and it works far more often than not.

If one app misbehaves but others are fine

When only a single service acts up while the rest play perfectly, the problem is that one app. Try signing out and back in, or removing and reinstalling that app. And occasionally a service simply has an outage on its end — nothing you can fix, and it'll right itself in a while.

CHAPTER 34

"It Won't Let Me Sign In"

Sign-in troubles are the most common streaming snag, and nearly always come down to a small, fixable thing rather than anything serious. Work through these calmly.

The usual culprits

- **A typo in the password.** Passwords are case-sensitive — a capital letter typed small is the number-one cause. Retype it slowly, watching each character.
- **The wrong email.** You may have signed up with a different email than you remember. Try your others.
- **Signed up through someone else.** If a family member set it up, the login may be theirs, not yours — ask them.
- **The household rule.** If you're using a relative's account from your own home, it may now refuse to sign in (Chapter 18) — that's the new rule, not a mistake.

Resetting a forgotten password

If the password is truly lost, every service has a **Forgot Password** link on its sign-in page. Tap it, and the service emails you a link to set a new one. Do this on a phone or computer (easier than the TV), then use the new password to sign in on the TV with the code method from Chapter 11. Write the new password down the moment you set it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Almost never broken, almost always fixable

Take comfort: a sign-in that won't take is almost never a broken account or a lost subscription. It's a typo, a forgotten email, or the household rule — all of which you can now handle. And if one defeats you, it's a perfect, quick thing to call me about. We'll have you back to your shows in minutes.

CHAPTER 35

Should You Cut the Cable Cord?

Many folks reading this are weighing the big question: should I drop cable TV and just stream? It's a fair question with no single right answer. Here's how to think it through honestly.

Streaming may suit you if…

- Your cable bill has crept up and you watch only a handful of channels.
- You have decent home internet already (or can get it).
- You're comfortable with a remote and willing to learn a few apps (this book has you covered).
- You mostly watch shows and movies on your own schedule rather than live.

Cable may still be worth keeping if…

- You watch a lot of **live** TV — local news, many live sports, channel-surfing — and value the simplicity of one lineup.
- Your internet is poor or unreliable where you live.
- A simple, unchanging setup matters more to you than saving a few dollars.

FROM BILL

My honest take on cutting the cord

For many households, a free antenna for local channels plus one or two streaming services replaces cable and saves a meaningful amount every month. For others — heavy live-sports fans, or folks who just want one simple remote — cable's simplicity is worth the cost. There's no wrong answer, only the right one for you. I'm glad to sit down, look at your cable bill and what you actually watch, and give you my straight opinion — with no one trying to sell you anything.

CHAPTER 36

When to Call Bill

This book is meant to make you confident and independent with streaming, and most days it will. But you should never feel you have to wrestle alone with something frustrating. Calling for help is a smart move, not a failure — here's when it makes good sense.

Good reasons to call

- Setting up a new smart TV, Roku, or Fire Stick and getting your services signed in on it.
- A sign-in that won't work no matter what you try, or a forgotten password tangle.
- Doing a "streaming checkup" — figuring out what you're paying for and trimming what you don't use (this often saves far more than a visit costs).
- Deciding whether to cut the cable cord, and setting up the antenna-plus-streaming combination that replaces it.
- Finding the cheapest way to watch a particular sport, team, or show without over-subscribing.
- Any time a message, email, or caller about your streaming account makes you uneasy — call me before you click or pay anything.

SCAM ALERT

Never let a 'streaming support' caller onto your computer

No real streaming service will phone you and ask to "remote in" to your computer or have you buy a gift card to fix your account. That is always a scam. If anyone pressures you that way about Netflix, Disney, or any service, hang up and call me at **(330) 200-8042**. A two-minute "is this real?" call is always welcome.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and I help folks right here in **Portage County, Ohio** with exactly this sort of thing. Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a visit online at **billshometech.com/book**. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. With 30+ years of professional experience, there's very little about these services I haven't untangled, and no question too small to ask.

— Bill

CHAPTER 37

Your Streaming Cheat-Sheet

Fold the corner of this page and keep it by the remote. It's the whole book boiled down to the things you'll reach for most.

Which service is for what

If you want…	Look at…
A bit of everything	Netflix
Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars, grandkids	Disney+ (with Hulu)
Prestige dramas & big movies	HBO Max
Already have Amazon Prime	Prime Video (included)
Free, with ads	Tubi, Pluto TV, The Roku Channel
Live TV like cable	YouTube TV or Hulu + Live TV (paid); antenna for local

The money habits that matter

1. Keep only **one or two** services at a time; rotate for the shows you want.
2. Start with the **ad-supported** plan; upgrade only if ads truly bother you.
3. Set a **reminder** before any free trial ends.
4. Do a **streaming checkup** once or twice a year and cancel what you've drifted from.
5. Cancel on the service's **website** > Account > Cancel. You keep access till month's end.

When something goes wrong

Problem	Do this
Spinning / buffering	Restart the app, then the internet router; wait two minutes.
Won't sign in	Check for a password typo (capitals!); use Forgot Password; have logins handy.
Suspicious email/text	Don't click. Open the app directly or call Bill.
Nothing to watch, no budget	Install Tubi and Pluto TV — free.

Keep these handy

Keep handy	Fill in
My services & logins	kept in: _____
My yearly checkup month	_____
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

FROM BILL

You're the boss of it now

Streaming is only confusing until someone lays it out plainly — and now someone has. Keep this book by the TV, rotate your services, watch for the scams, and remember I'm one phone call away for the rest. You can't break it, and you're not alone. — Bill, (330) 200-8042