BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

TP-Link Routers & Deco Mesh

Setting up, running and fixing your TP-Link Archer router or Deco mesh Wi-Fi with the Tether and Deco apps

A plain-English guide to your TP-Link Wi-Fi

Good Wi-Fi in every room, without the jargon

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For TP-Link Archer routers, Deco mesh and the Tether & Deco apps · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your TP-Link manual. TP-Link makes two kinds of home Wi-Fi equipment you're likely to meet: **Archer routers**, a single box run with the **Tether** app, and **Deco** mesh systems, a set of matching units run with the **Deco** app. This guide covers both, side by side, in plain English: setting them up, the everyday jobs like changing your Wi-Fi password and turning on guest Wi-Fi, keeping them updated and safe, and what to do when the internet stops. Read it in any order; there's no test.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What TP-Link makes, which app runs your equipment, and the handful of words you'll see on the screen.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Maybe a family member set up a TP-Link router for you, or you bought a set of Deco units because the Wi-Fi never reached the back bedroom. Maybe the box has been blinking in the corner for years and you've never once opened the app. Whichever it is, this guide is for **you**.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting beside you at the kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, with nothing taken for granted. When I use a word like *firmware* or *mesh*, I'll stop and explain it.

What this guide will do for you

- Help you figure out **which TP-Link equipment you have** and which app runs it.
- Walk you through **setting it up**, or taking over one someone else set up.
- Show you the everyday jobs: **changing the Wi-Fi password**, **guest Wi-Fi**, seeing what's connected.
- Keep it **safe and up to date**, and explain the recent government news about TP-Link in calm, plain terms.
- Get you back online when the internet stops, step by step.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Your router is the front door to everything you do online: email, video calls with the grandkids, your bank, your TV. A few minutes of care, such as a good password and current updates, keeps that door working well and locked to strangers.

The good news: it's hard to break

Almost everything in the apps can be changed back. The two things to do slowly are a **factory reset**, which erases your settings, and changing the **Wi-Fi password**, which means reconnecting your devices. I'll warn you clearly before either one.

And you're never stuck alone

If you get lost, stop where you are and call me at **(330) 200-8042**. Now, let's get you comfortable.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

TP-Link's Two Families and Their Apps

TP-Link is one of the best-known makers of home Wi-Fi equipment. For most homes, its products fall into two families, and each has its own free app. Knowing which family you have saves a lot of confusion.

Family	What it looks like	The app that runs it
Archer routers	One box, often black, usually with antennas or a flat top, and a row of lights.	**TP-Link Tether** (or a web browser at tplinkwifi.net)
Deco mesh	Two or three matching units, often white rounded towers or discs, spread around the house.	**TP-Link Deco**
Range extenders	A small box plugged straight into a wall outlet.	**TP-Link Tether**

Checked against TP-Link's app listings and support FAQs for Tether and Deco on November 13, 2026.

Where to get the apps

1. On an iPhone or iPad, open the **App Store**. On an Android phone, open the **Google Play Store**.
2. Search for **TP-Link Tether** (for an Archer router or extender) or **TP-Link Deco** (for Deco).
3. Check that the maker listed under the name is TP-Link, then tap **Get** or **Install**.

GOOD TO KNOW

A third app you might see

TP-Link also has an app called **Aginet**, used mainly for gateways that internet companies hand out. If your box came from TP-Link in a retail box, you'll almost always want Tether or Deco instead.

TIP

Both apps are free

Tether and Deco cost nothing to download or use. Some extra security and parental-control features are a paid subscription called HomeShield; you'll find the details in Chapter 20, *HomeShield: What's Free and What Costs Money*.

CHAPTER 3

Router or Mesh: Which Do You Have?

If you're not sure what's in your house, a minute of looking will tell you. Check the label on the bottom or back of the box: it lists the **model name**, and the model name tells you the family.

What the label says	What you have
Model starts with "Archer"	A single router. Use the Tether app.
Model starts with "Deco"	A mesh system. Use the Deco app.
Model starts with "RE"	A range extender that repeats your Wi-Fi. Use Tether.
Name of your internet company on it	Probably a rented gateway from your provider, not a TP-Link you bought. See Chapter 11, *Working Alongside Your Internet Company's Box*.

What's the difference, in plain terms?

A **router** is one box that sends Wi-Fi out from wherever it sits. In a small or open home, one good router is plenty. A **mesh system** is a team of units that pass the Wi-Fi along to each other, so the signal reaches far bedrooms, basements and back porches. Your devices see it as one Wi-Fi network with one name and one password.

GOOD TO KNOW

Other guides in this series

For a general look at routers, see the *Home Wi-Fi & Routers* manual. For mesh systems from any maker, see *Mesh Wi-Fi*. If you have the Amazon-owned mesh brand instead, the *eero* manual covers it.

TIP

Write the model down

Copy the model name and the small "Ver" (version) number from the label onto the cheat-sheet at the end of this guide. TP-Link's help pages are organized by model and version, and anyone helping you will ask for it.

CHAPTER 4

The Words You'll See

A short glossary. Come back whenever a word on the screen puzzles you.

Word	What it means
Modem	The box from your internet company that brings internet into the house. The router plugs into it.
Router	The box that shares that internet with your devices by Wi-Fi and cable.
Mesh / Deco	Several units working together as one Wi-Fi network.
Main Deco	The Deco wired to your modem. The others are sometimes called *satellite* Decos.
SSID	The Wi-Fi network's name, the one you pick from the list on your phone.
Firmware	The built-in software that runs the router. Updates fix problems and close security holes.
TP-Link ID	Your free TP-Link account (an email and password) used to sign in to the apps.
Guest network	A separate Wi-Fi name for visitors that keeps them off your main network.
HomeShield	TP-Link's security and parental-control features, with a free tier and paid tiers.
Ethernet	A network cable with a wide, clear plug, used between the modem and router.
Factory reset	Erasing every setting so the equipment is like new. A last resort.
Double NAT	Two routers stacked on top of each other. Usually harmless; occasionally causes trouble.

CHAPTER 5

Your TP-Link ID

Both apps ask you to sign in with a **TP-Link ID**. It's simply a free account: your email address and a password you choose. It ties your router or Deco to you, so you can manage it from the app, even when you're away from home on the routers that support TP-Link Cloud.

Creating one

1. Open the Tether or Deco app.
2. Tap **Sign Up**.
3. Type an email address you check, and make up a password you don't use anywhere else.
4. Open the email TP-Link sends and follow the link to activate the account.
5. Go back to the app and sign in.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQs on setting up TP-Link routers and TP-Link Cloud on November 13, 2026.

HEADS UP

The first account to sign in becomes the owner

On many models, the first TP-Link ID used to set up the equipment is bound to it as the owner. If a grandson sets it up under his own email, you may need him later. It's best to set it up with **your** TP-Link ID and, if you like, add family as managers afterward.

STAY SAFE

Two passwords, two jobs

Your **TP-Link ID password** signs you in to the app. Your **Wi-Fi password** is what visitors type to join your network. Keep them different, and never share the TP-Link ID password.

TIP

Save it in your password manager

Store your TP-Link ID in your phone's password manager, or write it on the cheat-sheet at the end of this guide and keep that somewhere safe at home.

PART 2

Setting Up

Getting a new Archer router or Deco system running, adding more Decos, and fitting TP-Link equipment around your internet company's box.

CHAPTER 6

Before You Start

Ten minutes of preparation makes setup calm instead of frantic. Gather these first.

- Your **phone**, charged, with the Tether or Deco app installed and your TP-Link ID ready.
- The **router or main Deco**, its power adapter, and the Ethernet cable from the box.
- Access to your **modem**, the box from your internet company.
- A **Wi-Fi name and password** you'd like to use. At least eight characters; longer is better.
- About **30 minutes** when nobody needs the internet.

TIP

Reuse your old Wi-Fi name and password

If you're replacing an old router, give the new one the **exact same** Wi-Fi name and password, capital letters included. Many devices, such as smart plugs, printers and TVs, will then reconnect on their own, and you won't have to visit each one.

Two phone settings that trip people up

- Turn off **Low Power Mode** or battery saver during setup; it can interrupt the app.
- On an iPhone, when the Deco app asks for **Local Network** access, tap **Allow**. Without it, setup can't finish.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Set Up Your Deco" on November 13, 2026.

CHAPTER 7

Setting Up an Archer Router with Tether

This is the usual way to set up a single TP-Link router from your phone. Screens vary a little by model, but the shape is the same.

1. Turn off your modem. Connect the router's **Internet** (WAN) port, often a different color, to the modem with the Ethernet cable.
2. Turn the modem back on and wait two minutes, then plug in and turn on the router.
3. On your phone, open **Settings > Wi-Fi** and join the router's default network. Its name and password are printed on the router's label.
4. Open the **Tether** app, sign in with your TP-Link ID, and tap your router in the list of devices.
5. Create a strong **local password** for the router when asked. This protects its settings.
6. Let the app detect your connection type. For most cable internet, it's **Dynamic IP**.
7. Choose your Wi-Fi name and password, then let the router restart. Join the new network on your phone.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQs on setting up TP-Link routers and TP-Link Cloud on November 13, 2026.

GOOD TO KNOW

Connection type

The router usually detects this itself. If your internet company gave you a user name and password for the connection (common with some DSL services), the type is **PPPoE**. If in doubt, ask your provider.

HEADS UP

Don't skip the router's own password

Older routers sometimes came with "admin" as the login. Current ones ask you to create a password. Make it unique, and write it on the cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 8

Setting Up from a Web Browser

If you'd rather use a computer, every Archer router can also be set up and managed in a web browser. This is also handy when the app won't cooperate.

1. Connect the computer to the router, by Ethernet cable or its default Wi-Fi.
2. Open a browser and type **tplinkwifi.net** into the address bar (or **192.168.0.1**). Press Enter.
3. Create the administrator password when asked, then log in with it.
4. Follow the **Quick Setup** wizard: time zone, connection type, then Wi-Fi name and password.
5. Near the end, you can bind the router to your TP-Link ID so the Tether app can manage it later.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQs on setting up TP-Link routers and TP-Link Cloud on November 13, 2026.

SCAM ALERT

tplinkwifi.net is not a public website

That address only works when you're connected to your own TP-Link router at home. TP-Link warns that if you search for it on the web and land on a public site, **that site is not TP-Link**. Type the address in the address bar; don't search for it.

TIP

Where you'll find things later

Most everyday settings sit under **Basic**, and the rest under **Advanced**. Firmware updates and resets are under **Advanced > System**.

CHAPTER 9

Setting Up a Deco System

Deco is set up entirely from the Deco app. You set up the **main Deco** first, the one wired to your modem, and then add the others.

1. Install the **Deco** app, open it and sign in with your TP-Link ID.
2. Turn off your modem. Connect one of the Deco's Ethernet ports to the modem with the cable from the box.
3. Turn on the modem, then plug in the main Deco. Wait until its light **pulses blue**, then tap **Let's Begin** in the app and pick your Deco model.
4. Follow the app's prompts. It will find the Deco and check your internet connection type.
5. Pick a **location** name, such as Living Room. It becomes this Deco's name in the app.
6. Create your Wi-Fi name and password (at least eight characters), then join the new network on your phone.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Set Up Your Deco" on November 13, 2026.

TIP

If the light isn't pulsing blue

TP-Link says to press the **Reset** button on the Deco for about one second. The light turns yellow; wait about two minutes for it to pulse blue, then carry on.

GOOD TO KNOW

No modem?

Some apartment buildings and fiber services provide an Ethernet jack in the wall. In that case you connect the main Deco straight to that jack.

CHAPTER 10

Adding More Decos and Where to Put Them

Each extra Deco stretches your Wi-Fi further. Where you put them matters more than how many you have.

Adding a Deco

1. On many newer (Wi-Fi 6 and later) Decos, simply plug the new Deco in, in the same room as the main one. TP-Link says it joins the network within about two minutes.
2. Otherwise, in the Deco app, tap the **+** (Add) button, choose **Deco** and your model, and follow the prompts.
3. Once it shows up in the app, unplug it and move it to its new spot. Give it a few minutes to reconnect.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Set Up Your Deco" on November 13, 2026.

Good spots, bad spots

- Aim for **halfway** between the main Deco and the dead zone, not inside the dead zone itself.
- Keep units out in the open, about waist height or higher, not in cabinets or behind the TV.
- Keep them away from microwaves, fish tanks, big mirrors and metal filing cabinets.
- Usually no more than two rooms apart. If the light shows trouble, move it closer.

TIP

Wired is even better

If your house has Ethernet jacks, connecting Decos to each other by cable (TP-Link calls this Ethernet backhaul) gives the fastest, steadiest connection.

GOOD TO KNOW

Mixing models

Different Deco models can usually work together in one network. Check TP-Link's compatibility notes for your model before buying an add-on unit.

CHAPTER 11

Working Alongside Your Internet Company's Box

Many homes have a modem from Spectrum, a gateway from AT&T or a 5G box from T-Mobile or Verizon. Your TP-Link equipment plugs into it with an Ethernet cable. There are two common setups.

What your provider gave you	What happens
Plain modem (no Wi-Fi of its own)	Ideal. The TP-Link router or main Deco does all the work. Nothing else to change.
Gateway (modem with its own Wi-Fi)	Works, but you now have two Wi-Fi networks and two routers in a row (double NAT). Usually fine for everyday use.

Tidying up a gateway setup

- Ask your provider whether the gateway can be put in **bridge** or **IP passthrough** mode, so only your TP-Link equipment acts as the router.
- Or leave the gateway as it is and switch the Deco to **Access Point** mode in the Deco app, so the gateway stays the router and the Decos just spread its Wi-Fi.
- Either way, turn off the gateway's own Wi-Fi if you can, so your devices don't hop between two networks.

HEADS UP

Guest Wi-Fi in Access Point mode

TP-Link notes that in Router mode the Deco keeps guests separate from your main network automatically. In Access Point mode, check the guest network's **Allow Local Access** switch, which controls whether guests can see your devices.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Set Up a Guest Network for TP-Link Deco" on November 13, 2026.

GOOD TO KNOW

More on this

If you're thinking of returning a rented gateway altogether, the *Buying Your Own Modem & Router* manual explains when that works and when it doesn't. Spectrum customers will find their equipment covered in the *Spectrum Internet* manual.

PART 3

Everyday Use

A tour of both apps, and the jobs you'll actually do: changing the password, guest Wi-Fi, sharing, seeing what's connected and simple parental controls.

CHAPTER 12

A Tour of the Tether App

Open Tether and tap your router. You'll land on a simple overview. Here's what you're looking at.

Area	What it's for
Network map / Home	Shows the internet, your router and how many devices are connected. A quick health check.
Clients	The list of phones, TVs, tablets and gadgets on your Wi-Fi.
Tools (or the gear icon)	Where the settings live: Wireless, Guest Network, HomeShield, System and more.
System	Firmware updates, reboot, time settings. A red dot here often means an update is waiting.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menus differ by model

TP-Link has a newer and an older ("classic") look for its router screens, and menus move a little between models. If a button in this guide isn't exactly where I say, look one level up or down; the names are close.

TIP

Managing from away

If your router supports TP-Link Cloud and is bound to your TP-Link ID, Tether can reach it even when your phone isn't on your home Wi-Fi. Handy for helping a parent's router from across town.

STAY SAFE

Keep the app signed in only on your own phone

Anyone signed in to your TP-Link ID can change your Wi-Fi. Don't sign in on borrowed phones, and sign out of any old phone before you give it away.

CHAPTER 13

A Tour of the Deco App

The Deco app opens to your network overview. It's designed so the important things are one tap away.

Area	What it's for
Overview	Each Deco by its room name, with its status, and the number of connected devices.
Clients (devices)	Everything on your Wi-Fi. Tap one to name it, see its speed, or block it.
HomeShield	Parental controls, security scanning and reports.
More	Wi-Fi settings, Guest Network, System (updates, reboot), Advanced settings and Managers.

TIP

Name your devices

A list full of names like "android-8c3f" is hard to read. Tap a device and rename it, such as "Mom's iPad" or "Kitchen TV". Later, a stranger's device stands out right away.

GOOD TO KNOW

Adding a family member as a manager

Under **More**, look for **Managers**. You can add a trusted family member's TP-Link ID so they can help from their own phone without knowing your password.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Five minutes with the overview tells you whether all your Decos are happy and what's on your network. That's most of what a technician checks first.

CHAPTER 14

Changing Your Wi-Fi Name or Password

A good reason to change your Wi-Fi password: it's still the one printed on the label, too many people know it, or a former tenant or contractor had it.

HEADS UP

Every device will need the new password

When the password changes, every phone, tablet, TV, printer and smart gadget drops off and needs the new password typed in. Plan a quiet hour, and make a list of your devices first.

With the Deco app

1. Open the Deco app and tap **More**, then **Wi-Fi**.
2. Tap the main network.
3. Change the name or the password. Use at least eight characters; a short phrase is easy to remember.
4. Tap **Save**. Your phone will disconnect; rejoin with the new password.

With the Tether app

1. Open Tether and tap your router.
2. Tap **Tools** (or the gear), then **Wireless**.
3. Change the network name or password for each band shown (2.4 GHz and 5 GHz), or for the combined network.
4. Tap **Save**, then reconnect your phone with the new password.

TIP

A password you can actually type

Something like **BlueMaple-Porch-47** is strong and easy to read aloud to a guest. Avoid your street address, phone number or pet's name. The *Wi-Fi Passwords* manual has more help.

CHAPTER 15

Guest Wi-Fi for Visitors

A **guest network** is a second Wi-Fi name just for visitors. Guests get internet, but they can't see your computers, printers or cameras. And you never have to hand out your main password.

Turning it on in the Deco app

1. Open the Deco app and tap **More**, then **Guest Network**.
2. Turn it on.
3. Set a guest Wi-Fi name and a password. If you leave the password blank, anyone nearby can join, so set one.
4. Tap **Advanced** if you want to choose which band it uses or limit its speed.
5. On models that offer it, pick how long it stays on: 1 hour, 4 hours, 24 hours, or always.
6. Tap **Save**.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Set Up a Guest Network for TP-Link Deco" on November 13, 2026.

Turning it on in the Tether app

1. Open Tether, tap your router, then **Tools** (or the gear).
2. Tap **Guest Network** and switch on the band you want.
3. Set a name and password, then tap **Save**.

> **TIP**
>
> **Use the timer**
>
> When the grandkids visit for a weekend, a guest network that turns itself off after 24 hours is one less thing to remember.

CHAPTER 16

Sharing Your Wi-Fi with a Visitor

No more spelling out a long password letter by letter. Both apps can share the Wi-Fi details for you.

1. In the Deco app, open **Guest Network** (or your main Wi-Fi settings) and tap **Share Wi-Fi**.
2. Choose how to send it, such as a text message, from the options your phone offers.
3. Your visitor opens the message and joins the network with the name and password it contains.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Set Up a Guest Network for TP-Link Deco" on November 13, 2026.

TIP

iPhone to iPhone, even easier

If your visitor has an iPhone and you're in each other's contacts, your iPhone can offer to share the password automatically when they try to join. Just tap **Share Password** when it pops up.

STAY SAFE

Share the guest network, not the main one

Visitors, contractors and the cable installer should get the **guest** details. Your main password is for the household.

GOOD TO KNOW

A card for the guest room

You can also write the guest network's name and password on a card for the guest room. Keep it inside the house, not in a window.

CHAPTER 17

Seeing What's Connected and Blocking a Device

It's reassuring to know what's on your Wi-Fi. Both apps list every connected device.

1. In the Deco app, tap **Clients** (or the device count on the overview). In Tether, tap **Clients**.
2. Go down the list. Rename anything you recognize.
3. If something is truly unknown, tap it and choose **Block**.
4. Then change your Wi-Fi password (Chapter 14, *Changing Your Wi-Fi Name or Password*), because whoever joined knows the old one.

HEADS UP

Don't panic at strange names

Smart TVs, thermostats, doorbells, printers and even washing machines show up with odd names. Before blocking, think through the gadgets in the house. Blocking your own TV just means it stops streaming until you unblock it.

TIP

Unblocking

Blocked devices sit in a **Blocked** list in the app. Tap one and choose **Unblock** to let it back in.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A quick look once in a while catches a neighbor who learned your password and keeps your network's speed for your own family.

CHAPTER 18

Simple Parental Controls

If grandchildren stay with you, or you're helping a family with kids, TP-Link's parental controls can set bedtimes for devices and block unsuitable websites. The basic controls are free.

Tier	What's included
Free (Basic)	Create a profile for each person, pause their internet, block specific websites, filter by category, set a bedtime.
Paid (Advanced)	Daily time limits, app blocking and app time limits, SafeSearch and YouTube restrictions, time rewards.

Checked against TP-Link's HomeShield page and its HomeShield plans and pricing FAQ on November 13, 2026.

Setting up a profile

1. In the Deco app, tap **HomeShield** (in Tether: **HomeShield** or **Parental Controls**).
2. Tap **Parental Controls**, then add a profile, such as "Emma."
3. Pick the devices that belong to that person.
4. Choose a filter level or block particular websites, and set a bedtime.
5. Save. You can pause that profile's internet with one tap any time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Features vary by model

TP-Link says the exact features depend on your model, app version, firmware and region. If you don't see an option, it may be in the paid tier or not offered on your equipment.

PART 4

Keeping It Safe and Up to Date

Firmware updates, what HomeShield costs, protecting the settings, the recent government news about TP-Link, and the scams to avoid.

CHAPTER 19

Updating the Firmware

Firmware is the software built into your router or Deco. Updates fix bugs and close security holes, the same way updates do on your phone. This is the single most important thing you can do for your router's safety.

Deco app

1. Open the Deco app and tap **More**.
2. Tap **System**, then **Update Deco**.
3. If an update is offered, tap to install it.
4. Wait about five minutes while the Decos restart. Don't unplug anything.

Tether app

1. Open Tether and tap your router. A red dot next to **System** means new firmware is ready.
2. Tap **Tools** (or the gear) > **System** > **Firmware Update**.
3. Tap **Update** and wait for the router to restart.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQs on updating Deco and TP-Link router firmware on November 13, 2026.

HEADS UP

Never unplug during an update

TP-Link warns not to turn off the router or pull the cable while firmware is installing. Start an update when you can leave it alone for ten minutes.

TIP

If the app can't update it

Some older routers don't support updates through the app. Then you sign in at **tplinkwifi.net**, go to **Advanced > System > Firmware Upgrade**, and upload a file from TP-Link's support page for your exact model and version. U.S. and European files are different, so be sure it's the U.S. one. This is a good job to call me for.

GOOD TO KNOW

Turn on automatic updates if you have it

Many current models offer an **Auto Update** switch in the same System area, set for the middle of the night. If you see it, turn it on.

CHAPTER 20

HomeShield: What's Free and What Costs Money

HomeShield is TP-Link's bundle of security and family features inside the Deco and Tether apps. A basic version is free. The app will offer paid upgrades; here's what they are so you can decide calmly.

Plan (U.S.)	Price	What it adds
Basic	Free	Basic parental controls and TP-Link's basic network security features.
Advanced Parental Controls	$2.99 a month or $17.99 a year	Time limits, app controls, SafeSearch and YouTube restrictions.
Security+	$4.99 a month or $35.99 a year	Advanced network protection features, such as blocking malicious sites and guarding smart devices.
Total Security Package	$69.99 first year, $129.99 renewal	Security features plus an antivirus app for up to five devices.

Checked against TP-Link's HomeShield page and its HomeShield plans and pricing FAQ on November 13, 2026.

HEADS UP

Free trials turn into charges

TP-Link offers a one-month free trial of the paid tiers, and every subscription renews automatically until you cancel. If you try one, put a reminder on your calendar a few days before the trial ends.

GOOD TO KNOW

Do you need it?

For most households, the free tier, current firmware and a strong Wi-Fi password are enough. The paid tiers are most useful when you want detailed control over children's screen time.

TIP

Canceling

Subscriptions bought in the app are managed through your App Store or Google Play subscriptions. The *Subscriptions* manual shows how to find and cancel them.

CHAPTER 21

Protecting the Settings Themselves

Your Wi-Fi password keeps strangers off the network. A few more steps keep anyone from changing your router's settings.

- **Use a unique local (admin) password** for the router, different from the Wi-Fi password.
- **Protect your TP-Link ID** with a strong password you use nowhere else.
- **Keep firmware current** (Chapter 19, *Updating the Firmware*).
- **Review Managers** in the Deco app now and then, and remove anyone who no longer needs access.
- **Leave WPS off** unless you're using it right then. It's the push-button pairing feature some older devices use.

STAY SAFE

TP-Link support won't ask for your password

TP-Link says its agents generally won't ask for remote access to your computer or network equipment, and never ask for payment for support. Anyone who does isn't TP-Link.

Checked against TP-Link's "Notice of Fraudulent and non-TP-Link Affiliated Websites" on November 13, 2026.

TIP

Write it down, keep it home

The cheat-sheet at the end of this guide has spaces for your Wi-Fi password, admin password and TP-Link ID. Fill it in and keep it with your important papers.

GOOD TO KNOW

Retired equipment

Very old routers eventually stop getting firmware updates. If your TP-Link model is many years old and no update has appeared for a long time, check its support page; it may be time to replace it.

CHAPTER 22

TP-Link in the News: What It Means for You

You may have seen headlines about the U.S. government and TP-Link, or about foreign-made routers in general. Here are the facts I could confirm from official sources, stated plainly.

What the FCC changed in 2026

- On **March 23, 2026**, the Federal Communications Commission added consumer routers produced in foreign countries to its **Covered List**. This applies to many brands, not just TP-Link.
- **New** router models on that list can't receive FCC approval, so they can't be imported or sold, unless a manufacturer receives a special conditional approval.
- Routers that **already** had FCC approval can continue to be imported, sold and used.
- The FCC says consumers using these routers at home **do not need to do anything**, and can keep using devices they lawfully bought.
- Under a waiver, these routers can continue to receive basic software and firmware updates.

Checked against the FCC's FAQs on the Covered List update for routers produced in foreign countries on November 13, 2026.

The separate proposal about TP-Link

Separately, news outlets reported in late 2025 that the Commerce Department had proposed restricting TP-Link sales in the U.S. over national-security concerns, and TP-Link disputed those concerns. I couldn't find an official final decision on that proposal as of November 2026.

FROM BILL

My plain advice

There's no need to rip out a working TP-Link router today. Keep its firmware current, use strong passwords, and keep an eye on whether updates keep coming. If you're buying new equipment anyway and this news worries you, that's a reasonable thing to weigh, and I'm glad to talk through the options.

CHAPTER 23

Scams to Watch For

Router trouble is stressful, and scammers know it. They buy search ads and build websites that look like TP-Link support, hoping you'll call them instead.

SCAM ALERT

Fake support numbers and websites

TP-Link warns about websites claiming to be, or to work for, TP-Link. Its official U.S. support number is **866-225-8139**, and its website is **tp-link.com/us**. If a search result offers a different number, close it.

Checked against TP-Link's "Notice of Fraudulent and non-TP-Link Affiliated Websites" on November 13, 2026.

SCAM ALERT

"Router technician" asking for payment or remote access

TP-Link says it doesn't charge for its support services and its agents generally won't ask to remotely access your computer or equipment. If someone asks you to pay, to install a remote-control app, or to buy gift cards, hang up.

SCAM ALERT

The fake "tplinkwifi.net" site

The address on your router's label only works on your home network. A public website at that name, found by searching, is not TP-Link. Type the address directly while connected to your own Wi-Fi.

If you already called or paid one

1. Hang up and don't call back.
2. If you paid by card, call the number on the back of the card and ask about disputing the charge.
3. If you let them into your computer, shut it down and get help checking it before you use it for banking.
4. Change your TP-Link ID and Wi-Fi passwords from a device you trust.
5. Report it at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**.

FROM BILL

You're not foolish

These sites are built to look official, and they show up at the top of search results. If you're unsure whether a number is real, call me first. The *Remote Support & Fake Tech Support* manual covers this scam in depth.

PART 5

When Something Goes Wrong

The internet is down, the lights look wrong, you've forgotten a password, or one room is slow. Calm, step-by-step fixes.

CHAPTER 24

The Internet Is Down: Restart in the Right Order

Most outages are fixed by restarting the equipment, but the **order** matters. The modem has to be fully awake before the router asks it for a connection.

First, a 30-second check

- Is it every device, or just one? If only one, restart that device first.
- Are the modem and router plugged in and lit? Has a cable come loose?
- Is there an outage? Check your internet company's app or call them. Spectrum customers can use the My Spectrum app.

Then restart, in this order

1. Unplug the power from the **router** (or the main Deco) and from the **modem**.
2. Wait a full minute.
3. Plug in the **modem** only. Wait about two minutes, until its lights settle.
4. Plug in the **router** or main Deco. Wait two more minutes.
5. If you have more Decos, give them another minute or two to reconnect.
6. Try a website on your phone.

TIP

Restart from the app when you can

If the app still reaches the router, you can restart it there instead: in the Deco app under **More > System > Reboot**, or in Tether under **System**. No crawling behind furniture.

HEADS UP

Don't press the Reset button

When things stop working, it's tempting to press the tiny Reset button. On a router, a long press erases all your settings. Restarting means unplugging power, not pressing Reset.

GOOD TO KNOW

Still down?

If the modem's own lights show no internet after a restart, the problem is almost always with your internet company, not the TP-Link. Call them, and say you've already restarted the modem.

CHAPTER 25

What the Deco Lights Mean

Deco units talk to you with one small light. The exact meaning varies by model, but this table covers the common ones. If yours doesn't match, look up your model's chart on TP-Link's support site.

Light	What it usually means	What to do
Solid yellow	Starting up.	Wait one to two minutes.
Pulsing yellow	Resetting.	Wait; don't unplug.
Pulsing blue	Ready for setup.	Set it up or add it in the app.
Solid white or green	Working normally.	Nothing; all is well.
Pulsing white	Firmware updating (on some models).	Leave it alone until it finishes.
Pulsing red	Lost touch with the main Deco (on some models).	Move it closer to the main Deco.
Solid red	A problem, often no internet.	Restart in order (Chapter 24, *The Internet Is Down: Restart in the Right Order*); check the modem.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "What Do Deco LED Colors Mean?" on November 13, 2026.

GOOD TO KNOW

Archer router lights

Archer routers have a row of small icons instead: power, internet, Wi-Fi bands and Ethernet ports. The important one is the **Internet** (globe) light. On many models it turns orange or red when there's no internet coming from the modem.

TIP

Satellites first

If only one Deco shows red while the main one is fine, the problem is distance or walls between them, not your internet.

HEADS UP

Stuck on yellow

If a Deco stays solid yellow for much longer than a couple of minutes, TP-Link suggests unplugging it and plugging it back in.

CHAPTER 26

Forgot a Password

There are three different passwords in a TP-Link setup, and each has its own way back. Figure out which one you're missing.

Which password	How to get back in
Wi-Fi password	Look it up in the app (Deco: **More > Wi-Fi**; Tether: **Tools > Wireless**). Or check a phone or computer that's already connected. The *Wi-Fi Passwords* manual shows how.
TP-Link ID password	On the app's sign-in screen, tap **Forgot password** and follow the email TP-Link sends.
Router's local (admin) password	For Archer routers there's often no recovery other than a factory reset (Chapter 27, *Factory-Resetting an Archer Router*). If you can still sign in to the app with your TP-Link ID, you may not need it.

TIP

Look on the label first

If the router has never been changed from its original settings, the default Wi-Fi name and password are printed on the label on the bottom or back.

HEADS UP

Reset is the last resort

A factory reset brings back the label's defaults, but it also erases your Wi-Fi name, password and every other setting. Every device in the house will need reconnecting. Try the other routes first.

FROM BILL

When to call me

If you're locked out of the router and the person who set it up isn't around, I can help you get back in and set things up again so you hold the passwords this time.

CHAPTER 27

Factory-Resetting an Archer Router

A factory reset returns the router to the way it came out of the box. Use it when you're locked out, when you're giving the router away, or when TP-Link support asks you to.

HEADS UP

This erases everything

Your Wi-Fi name, password, guest network and parental controls will all be gone. Write down what you'll need before you start, and plan to reconnect every device afterward.

With the button

1. Leave the router plugged in and turned on.
2. Find the **Reset** button, usually a small hole or a button marked RESET (on some models it's shared with WPS).
3. Press and hold it for **more than 10 seconds**, using a paperclip if it's recessed.
4. Let go when the system light changes from a slow flash to a quick flash.
5. Wait a few minutes for it to restart, then set it up again (Chapter 7, *Setting Up an Archer Router with Tether*).

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Factory Reset Your TP-Link Router" on November 13, 2026.

From the settings, if you can still sign in

1. Sign in at **tplinkwifi.net**.
2. Go to **Advanced > System** (or System Tools) > **Backup & Restore**.
3. Choose **Factory Default Restore** and confirm.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQ "How to Factory Reset Your TP-Link Router" on November 13, 2026.

TIP

Back up first

On that same Backup & Restore page you can save a copy of your settings to the computer before you reset. Restoring it later puts everything back.

CHAPTER 28

Resetting or Removing a Deco

Decos can be reset one at a time. You might do this when a satellite won't rejoin, or when you're moving a Deco to a different home.

Removing a satellite Deco in the app

1. In the Deco app, tap the Deco you want to remove.
2. Tap **Remove** (sometimes under the three dots).
3. Confirm. The app warns that this resets the Deco and shrinks your coverage.
4. When its light pulses blue, it's ready to be set up again, here or elsewhere.

With the Reset button

1. Find the small **Reset** hole on the bottom or back of the Deco.
2. Press it briefly with a paperclip. TP-Link's guidance for many models is about one second.
3. The light turns yellow while it resets, then pulses blue when it's ready for setup.

Checked against TP-Link's support FAQs "How to Set Up Your Deco" and "What Do Deco LED Colors Mean?" on November 13, 2026.

HEADS UP

Removing the main Deco deletes the whole network

Resetting or removing the **main** Deco, the one wired to the modem, wipes the entire Deco network. You'd then set everything up from scratch. Be sure which unit you're resetting.

TIP

Moving house

Before you move, remove your Decos from the app and reset them. At the new home, set them up fresh with your TP-Link ID. Reusing your old Wi-Fi name and password means your devices reconnect on their own.

CHAPTER 29

Slow Wi-Fi or a Dead Spot in One Room

If the internet is fine near the router but sluggish in the back bedroom or basement, the problem is distance and walls, not your internet plan. Try these in order.

1. Run a speed test right beside the router or main Deco, then in the slow room. If both are slow, the issue is your plan or your internet company. If only the room is slow, read on.
2. Move the router or main Deco out into the open: higher up, not in a cabinet, closet or behind the TV.
3. Restart everything in order (Chapter 24, *The Internet Is Down: Restart in the Right Order*) and check for firmware updates (Chapter 19, *Updating the Firmware*).
4. With Deco, move a satellite to a spot halfway between the main Deco and the slow room.
5. Still weak? Add another Deco, or with an Archer router, consider an extender or a mesh system.

GOOD TO KNOW

Thick walls and floors

Brick, stone, plaster with metal lath, and concrete basement floors all soak up Wi-Fi. Older homes in our part of Ohio often have some of these, which is exactly where mesh helps.

TIP

Wire what doesn't move

A smart TV or desktop computer right next to a Deco or router works best with a short Ethernet cable. It frees up Wi-Fi for phones and tablets too.

GOOD TO KNOW

More help

The *Slow Internet? Speed Tests & Fixes* and *Wi-Fi Extenders & Dead Zones* manuals go into more depth.

PART 6

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

When a hand saves worry, and the everyday TP-Link and Deco moves on one page.

CHAPTER 30

When to Call Bill

This guide covers what you need to run your TP-Link equipment yourself. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and worry. Here's when I'd pick up the phone.

Good reasons to call

- You've bought a new router or Deco system and want it **set up right the first time**, with your old Wi-Fi name so everything reconnects.
- You're **locked out** and the person who set it up isn't around.
- A firmware update needs the **manual, upload-a-file** method.
- You have a **gateway plus a TP-Link** and want them working together without double trouble.
- One part of the house never gets good Wi-Fi and you want a plan for **where Decos should go**.
- Someone claiming to be "router support" contacted you, or you called a number that didn't feel right.

Things you can handle yourself

Changing your Wi-Fi password, turning on guest Wi-Fi, renaming and blocking devices, running a firmware update from the app, and restarting in the right order. These are yours now.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and I bring 30+ years of professional experience to helping folks feel at home with their technology, right here in Portage County, Ohio. I don't rush, and there's no such thing as a silly question. My Wi-Fi Help visits cover routers and mesh systems like these. $49 remote · $99 in your home. Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book at **billshometech.com/book**. If I'm with another client, Sophie, my AI receptionist, can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule.

Thank you for taking the time to learn this. Good Wi-Fi makes everything else in the house easier, and now you know how to keep it that way.

— Bill

CHAPTER 31

Your TP-Link Cheat-Sheet

Keep this handy. The everyday moves, all in one place.

Deco app

To do this	Go here
Change Wi-Fi name or password	More > Wi-Fi
Guest Wi-Fi	More > Guest Network
Update firmware	More > System > Update Deco
Restart	More > System > Reboot
See or block devices	Clients > tap a device
Parental controls	HomeShield > Parental Controls

Tether app and tplinkwifi.net

To do this	Go here
Change Wi-Fi name or password	Tools > Wireless
Guest Wi-Fi	Tools > Guest Network
Update firmware	Tools > System > Firmware Update (web: Advanced > System > Firmware Upgrade)
Factory reset	Hold Reset more than 10 seconds, or web: Advanced > System > Backup & Restore

The safety rules

1. Keep firmware updated; turn on Auto Update if your model has it.
2. Use a strong Wi-Fi password and a different admin password.
3. Give visitors the guest network, not your main password.
4. TP-Link's real support number is 866-225-8139. Don't call numbers from search ads.
5. Never pay or allow remote access to someone who contacts you about your router.
6. Restart by unplugging power, modem first. Don't press Reset unless you mean to erase everything.

Keep this handy

My TP-Link details	
Router or Deco model and version	_____
Wi-Fi name	_____
Wi-Fi password	_____
Guest Wi-Fi name and password	_____
Router admin password	_____
TP-Link ID email	_____
Internet company and phone	_____
TP-Link support (official)	866-225-8139 · tp-link.com/us
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Confident and in control

You can now change your password, welcome guests, keep your router updated and get back online when things go quiet. That covers almost everything a router ever asks of you.

Bill's Home Tech · Complete Manuals Series · (330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com · Portage County, Ohio