BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

TV Listening Headphones & Clearer Dialogue

Hear every word on TV again — settings, headphones and hearing-aid streaming, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for every TV watcher

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Covers Samsung, LG, Sony, Roku, Fire TV, Google TV & Apple TV · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your plain-English guide to hearing the TV clearly: the hidden dialogue settings on your TV and streaming box, captions, TV headphones, and streaming the TV to hearing aids. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind.

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PART 1

Getting Started

Why TV voices have become so hard to make out, what you can do about it today for free, and how to use this guide.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. I'm Bill. If you've ever turned to the person next to you and asked, "What did he just say?" — or turned the volume up for the talking, only to have the music and explosions rattle the windows — this guide is for you. You are not imagining it, and you are certainly not alone. Trouble hearing the words on television is one of the most common TV frustrations there is.

The good news is that it's also one of the most fixable. Almost every TV, streaming box and soundbar sold in the last several years has a setting built in to make voices clearer. Many of them are switched off when the TV leaves the factory, and the names are different on every brand, so most people never find them. This guide finds them for you, brand by brand, in plain English.

What this guide covers

- **Clearer dialogue** from the TV you already own: the voice settings on Samsung, LG, Sony, Roku, Fire TV, Google TV and Apple TV, plus soundbar "dialogue" and "night" modes.
- **Taming loud commercials** so you're not grabbing the remote every ten minutes.
- **Captions** — how to turn them on, make them bigger, and turn off the voice that sometimes starts describing the picture by accident.
- **Wireless TV headphones** — the dedicated kind made for TV, ordinary Bluetooth headphones, Roku's Headphone Mode, and AirPods with an Apple TV.
- **Hearing aids and the TV** — streaming the TV straight to your hearing aids, the TV adapters hearing-aid makers sell, and the new "Auracast" broadcast audio, described honestly.
- **When it's time to see an audiologist**, in a short, careful, non-medical way.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end, you'll know the free settings worth trying tonight, which kind of TV headphone fits your home, whether your hearing aids can hear the TV directly, and how to keep everyone in the room happy at the same time. The aim is simple: you hear every word, at a volume that suits you.

A promise: you can't break anything

Every setting in this guide can be turned back off. Nothing here erases your shows, your apps or your account. If you try a setting and don't like it, go back to the same menu and switch it off. I'll always tell you how. Menus vary a little from model to model and year to year, so when yours looks different, I'll tell you what words to look for instead.

One more honest note: this is a technology guide, not medical advice. I'll point out the signs that it's worth talking to a hearing professional, but I'm not one, and I won't pretend to be.

And I'm only a phone call away

I've spent more than 30 years working with technology professionally, and I help folks all over Portage County, Ohio, both in person and remotely. If you get stuck, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll sort it out together. Now, let's get those voices back.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Why TV Dialogue Got Harder to Hear

Before we fix the problem, it helps to know where it comes from. It's usually not one thing but several small things stacked together. Understanding them makes the fixes in this guide make sense.

Thin TVs have small speakers

Old tube TVs had room for a decent speaker pointing right at you. Today's flat TVs are only an inch or two deep, so the speakers are tiny and often point down or backward, toward the wall or the TV stand. Voices bounce around before they reach you. That's why a soundbar — even a modest one — can make such a difference.

Movies are mixed for theaters

Many films and streaming shows are mixed for big theater sound systems, with a separate channel just for voices. When that full mix is squeezed down to two small TV speakers, the voices can get buried under the music and sound effects. Turning the volume up makes *everything* louder, not just the words — which is why the explosions get unbearable before the talking gets clear.

Our hearing changes, gently, over the years

It's very common for hearing to change slowly with age, often starting with the higher-pitched sounds that carry the crisp parts of speech — the "s," "t" and "f" sounds. People often say they can *hear* the TV but can't *understand* it. That's exactly what dialogue settings and captions help with. If you notice this, it's worth a hearing check; Chapter 25 explains when.

The room plays a part too

- **Hard surfaces** — bare floors, big windows and high ceilings — make sound echo and blur.
- **Distance** matters. Sound gets weaker and muddier the farther your chair is from the TV.
- **Background noise** — a fan, dishwasher, furnace or a running conversation — competes with the voices on screen.

CHAPTER 3

The Free Fixes to Try First

Before you spend a dollar, try these in order. Most people find that two or three of them together solve the problem. Each one has its own chapter later with exact steps for your brand.

1. **Turn on captions.** Seeing the words while you hear them is the single most reliable fix. It's free on every TV and streaming service. See Chapter 12.
2. **Turn on your TV's voice or dialogue setting.** Samsung calls it Active Voice Amplifier, LG calls it Clear Voice, Sony calls it Voice Zoom, Fire TV calls it Dialogue Boost, Apple TV calls it Enhance Dialogue. See Part 2.
3. **Turn on automatic volume leveling.** This keeps commercials and loud scenes from jumping out at you. See Chapter 11.
4. **Turn off "surround" or "virtual surround" effects on TV speakers.** These spread sound around and can make voices less clear on small speakers. Try the plain "Standard" sound mode.
5. **Check the speaker setting.** If you have a soundbar, make sure sound is actually going to it (not to the TV's own speakers) and try its voice or dialogue mode. See Chapter 10.
6. **Move closer, or reduce background noise.** Even a few feet helps, and so does turning off a noisy fan while you watch.

> TIP
>
> **Change one thing at a time**
>
> Try one setting, watch for ten minutes, then decide. If you change five things at once and the sound gets worse, you won't know which one to undo. Write down what you changed on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 29.

When to go beyond the free fixes

If you've tried captions and your TV's dialogue setting and you still struggle — or if the volume you need is too loud for everyone else in the room — it's time to look at a listening device. That might be a soundbar with a good voice mode, a pair of TV headphones, or streaming the TV straight to your hearing aids. Parts 4 and 5 walk through each one with honest costs.

If this sounds like you…	Start here
Voices muffled, volume fine for others	Dialogue setting + captions (Part 2, Chapter 12)
Commercials far louder than shows	Auto volume or volume leveling (Chapter 11)
You need it louder than others can stand	TV headphones or hearing-aid streaming (Parts 4 and 5)
Someone sleeps nearby	Night mode, or headphones (Chapters 10 and 14)
A voice describes everything on screen	Turn off audio description (Chapter 13)

PART 2

Clearer Dialogue from the TV You Already Own

Brand-by-brand steps for the hidden voice settings on Samsung, LG, Sony and Google TV sets, Roku, Fire TV and Apple TV, plus soundbars and loud commercials.

CHAPTER 4

Samsung TVs: Active Voice Amplifier and Auto Volume

Samsung builds a voice-boosting feature into most of its recent smart TVs. It's called **Active Voice Amplifier**, and on newer, higher-end models **Active Voice Amplifier Pro**. It listens for voices in the program and lifts them above the music and effects. Samsung says it starts out **off**, so most people have never used it.

Turn on Active Voice Amplifier

Where it lives depends on the model and year. On many recent Samsung TVs it's in the **Intelligent Mode** settings; on others it's in the **Sound** menu. Try the first path, and if you don't see it, try the second.

1. Press the **Home** button on your Samsung remote, then go left and select **Settings**.
2. Select **All Settings**.
3. Select **General & Privacy**, then **Intelligent Mode Settings**.
4. Find **Active Voice Amplifier** (or **Active Voice Amplifier Pro**) and turn it on.
5. Not there? Go back to **All Settings**, open **Sound**, and look for it there.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **Some sound settings switch off when it's on**
>
> Samsung's manuals note that the **Expert Settings** sound options can't be used while Active Voice Amplifier is on. That's normal, not a fault. If you want to fiddle with expert sound settings, turn the voice amplifier off first, then turn it back on when you're done.

Turn on Auto Volume

Samsung's **Auto Volume** evens out the sound when you change channels or switch between your cable box, streaming apps and other inputs, so one isn't suddenly much louder than another.

1. Open **Settings**, then **All Settings**.
2. Select **Sound**, then **Expert Settings**.
3. Select **Auto Volume** and turn it on (some models offer **Normal** and **Night**).

HEADS UP

Using a soundbar? Leave Auto Volume off

Samsung notes that you'll need to turn Auto Volume off if you control the volume through a soundbar or external speakers. Use the soundbar's own night or leveling mode instead (Chapter 10).

Make the most of TV speakers

- Try the **Standard** sound mode first; some "Adaptive" or surround-style modes can soften voices.
- If the TV is on a stand close to the wall, pull it forward a few inches so sound isn't trapped.
- Combine the voice amplifier with captions (Chapter 12) for the clearest result.

CHAPTER 5

LG TVs: Clear Voice and Auto Volume

On LG TVs the dialogue setting is a sound mode called **Clear Voice**. Newer models also offer **Clear Voice Pro**, which works harder to pull voices forward. LG's own help pages recommend it for exactly the problem this guide is about: voices that get lost under background music.

Turn on Clear Voice (2021 and newer LG TVs)

1. Press the **Settings** (gear) button on your LG remote.
2. Select **All Settings**, then **Sound**.
3. Select **Select Mode**.
4. Choose **Clear Voice Pro** (on 2025 and newer TVs you'll see **Clear Voice** and **Clear Voice Pro**; try both).

Older LG TVs (2020 and earlier)

On older webOS TVs the path is **Settings** > **All Settings** > **Sound** > **Sound Mode Settings** > **Sound Mode** > **Clear Voice**. Some models label the menu slightly differently; look for the word "Mode" under **Sound**.

> TIP
>
> **Skip the theater modes for talk-heavy shows**
>
> LG points out that immersive modes like **Cinema** or **Sports** can make voices sound quieter or masked. For news, dramas and talk shows, Clear Voice is the better pick. If your TV has an **AI Sound** mode switched on, you may need to switch it off before you can pick a mode by hand.

Turn on automatic volume

LG's **Automatic Volume Adjustment** (called **Auto Volume** on older sets) keeps loud moments from jumping out.

1. Press **Settings**, then select **All Settings** > **Sound**.
2. Select **Advanced Settings**.
3. Turn on **Automatic Volume Adjustment**.

LG says this only works on shows coming through the TV's own tuner (an antenna). With a cable or satellite box, use the box's settings or a soundbar night mode instead.

CHAPTER 6

Sony and Other Google TV Sets: Voice Zoom and Dialogue Settings

Sony TVs, and TVs from brands like TCL and Hisense that run **Google TV**, keep their sound settings in the TV's own menus. Sony's voice feature is called **Voice Zoom** (on recent models, **Voice Zoom 3**).

Sony: turn up Voice Zoom

1. Press the **Quick Settings** button on your Sony remote (it looks like a gear or a wrench).
2. Select **Voice Zoom**.
3. Raise the level. Sony says values above zero make voices clearer, up to **+6**. Values below zero make voices quieter, so avoid those.

If Voice Zoom isn't in Quick Settings, Sony's longer path is **Settings** > **Display & Sound** > **Picture & Sound** > **Sound quality (TV speakers)** > **Post-process settings**, set to **Standard**, and Voice Zoom appears.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **When Voice Zoom disappears**
>
> Sony notes Voice Zoom isn't available in some situations: when sound is going to wired headphones and a Bluetooth device at the same time, when a wireless speaker is connected, or when certain sound modes are chosen. On some Sony models, a separate **Dialogue enhancer** appears instead when post-processing is set to Dolby Audio processing.

Sony's **Advanced auto volume**, in the same **Sound** settings area, keeps the volume steady across inputs; Sony suggests it if you notice jumps between, say, your cable box and an app.

TCL, Hisense and other Google TV TVs

These TVs each have their own sound menu, reached from **Settings** (the gear at the top right of the Google TV home screen) and then a sound or **Display & Sound** section. Look for any of these words: **Dialogue**, **Clear dialogue**, **Voice**, **Dialogue enhancer**, **Auto volume** or **Volume leveling**. If you find one, turn it on and listen for ten minutes. With a separate Google TV Streamer box, the voice settings that matter most are usually on the TV or soundbar, not on the box.

CHAPTER 7

Roku TVs and Players: Sound Modes, Leveling and Night Mode

Roku is a little different from the others, so it's worth slowing down here. What you get depends on whether you have a **Roku TV** (a TV with Roku built in, made by brands like TCL, Hisense or Roku itself), a **Roku streaming player** plugged into your TV, or a **Roku audio device** such as a Roku Streambar or Roku Smart Soundbar.

Volume leveling on a Roku TV

1. Start playing a show or movie.
2. Press the **Star** (*) button on your Roku remote to open the Options menu.
3. Go to **Sound settings** > **Sound mode**.
4. Select **Customize sound mode**.
5. Scroll to **Volume Leveling** and choose **Low**, **Medium** or **High**. Roku says High keeps the volume most even, so nothing sounds too loud or too quiet.

If you're watching a cable box or DVD player connected to the Roku TV, switch to that input first. If the Star button does something else in a particular app, Roku suggests opening a different app, such as The Roku Channel, changing the setting there, and going back. The setting stays.

Volume modes on a Roku player or Streambar

On players and Streambars, press **Star** during playback, choose **Sound settings**, then **Customize sound mode**. On a Streambar you can also go to **Home** > **Settings** > **Audio** > **Volume mode** at any time. You'll see some of these choices:

Setting	What Roku says it does
Leveling	Keeps volume consistent across shows, apps and commercials.
Night	Raises quiet sounds like dialogue and lowers loud ones like explosions, so you can watch late without disturbing anyone.
Dialogue	Makes conversations easier to hear over background sounds.
Off	Plays sound as it was mixed.

Roku notes that some devices only have Leveling and Night, and leveling isn't available on every Roku device.

Speech Clarity (Roku audio devices only)

If you have a Roku Streambar, Streambar Pro or Roku Smart Soundbar, you also get **Speech clarity**, which boosts voices separately from background noise. Choose **Low**, **High** or **Auto** from the same Star menu, or in the free Roku remote app under **Devices** > your device > **Settings** > **Sound settings**. Roku says Speech clarity is only available when a Roku audio device is in use; a plain Roku TV has its own manufacturer sound modes instead.

HEADS UP

Surround sound and volume modes don't mix

Roku warns that volume modes may convert surround sound to plain stereo. If you have a home theater receiver or surround soundbar and the surround effect disappears, set the volume mode back to **Off**.

CHAPTER 8

Fire TV: Dialogue Boost

Amazon calls its voice feature **Dialogue Boost**. It's an accessibility setting on many Fire TV devices, and Amazon says it improves dialogue volume and clarity relative to the background music and effects. On the Fire TV Stick 4K and Fire TV Stick 4K Max, Amazon says it works across your streaming services, including Netflix, Hulu and Disney+.

Turn on Dialogue Boost for the whole Fire TV

1. Press the **Home** button and go to **Settings** (the gear).
2. Select **Accessibility**.
3. Select **Dialogue Boost**.
4. Choose a level. Start low and work up until voices are clear.

GOOD TO KNOW

Higher levels sound "brighter"

Amazon explains that higher Dialogue Boost levels work by emphasizing the high-pitched parts of speech. That helps many people understand words, but it can sound a little sharp. If voices start to sound tinny, step down one level. Feature availability varies by Fire TV model; if you don't see it, your device may not offer it.

Prime Video's own Dialogue Boost

Prime Video also has a Dialogue Boost for select titles, on any device. While a title is playing, open the **Subtitles** or **closed caption** menu, look in the **Audio** section, and choose **Dialogue Boost** at **Medium** or **High**. If you don't see it, that title doesn't offer it.

TIP

Each family member can have their own setting

Amazon says Fire TV accessibility settings can be set per profile. If Grandpa wants Dialogue Boost and the grandkids don't, each can switch to their own profile and keep their preference.

CHAPTER 9

Apple TV: Enhance Dialogue and Reduce Loud Sounds

The Apple TV 4K box has two settings that help with exactly our problem: **Enhance Dialogue**, which makes voices more prominent, and **Reduce Loud Sounds**, which narrows the gap between quiet and loud moments. You can change them while something is playing, or set them as your everyday default.

Change them while you watch

1. While a movie or show is playing, press the clickpad once to show the playback controls.
2. Select the **Audio Options** button (it looks like a speech bubble with sound waves).
3. Select **Enhance Dialogue** and choose **Enhance** or **Enhance More**.
4. Back in the same menu, turn on **Reduce Loud Sounds** if explosions and music are too loud.
5. Press **Back** to close the menu.

Enhance Dialogue choice	What Apple says it does
Enhance	Voices more prominent, with little change to the original sound.
Enhance More	Voices very prominent. Apple notes this may alter the original mix.
Off	No dialogue enhancement.

Make it the default

Go to **Settings** > **Video and Audio**. Set **Enhance Dialogue** to the level you like and turn on **Reduce Loud Sounds**. Now every movie and show starts that way.

TIP

Hear better in one ear?

In **Settings** > **Accessibility**, Apple TV has **Mono Audio** (sends the same sound to both sides) and **Balance** (shifts sound left or right). These are especially handy with headphones or AirPods.

Apple notes the options you see depend on what's playing, which speakers or headphones you're using, and your Apple TV model. They work in Apple's own player and in many apps that use it, but some apps use their own player and may not respond.

CHAPTER 10

Soundbars: Dialogue Modes and Night Mode

A soundbar is a long, slim speaker that sits under the TV. Even a modest one usually has a bigger, forward-facing speaker for voices than the TV itself — and most have a **voice** or **dialogue** button. If you already own one, it may be the best dialogue fix in the house. Bill's *Soundbars & Home Audio* guide covers buying and setup in depth; here we focus on the voice settings.

Find the voice setting

Every maker uses different words. On the soundbar's remote or in its app, look for any of these:

- **Voice**, **Dialogue**, **Clear Voice**, **Voice Enhancement** or **Speech**.
- A **Center** level control (on soundbars with a separate voice channel). Raising it a notch or two lifts the voices.
- **Night** mode, which makes quiet sounds louder and loud sounds quieter.
- A **DIALOG** button on the remote. Amazon's Fire TV Soundbar Plus, for example, uses one.

Make sure the sound is actually going to the soundbar

1. Open your TV's **Sound** settings and find **Sound Output** or **Speakers**.
2. Choose the soundbar (often listed as **HDMI ARC**, **HDMI eARC**, **Optical** or the soundbar's name), not **TV Speaker**.
3. Play a show and turn the voice mode on with the soundbar remote.

> **TIP**
> **Roku Streambar owners**
>
> Roku's Streambars and Smart Soundbar offer sound modes named **Dialogue** and **Night**, plus **Speech clarity** (Chapter 7). Press **Star** during playback and choose **Sound settings**, or use the Roku remote app.

FROM BILL

Soundbar sound but no voice button working?

If the soundbar turns on but its buttons don't seem to change anything, the TV may be sending a format the soundbar handles on its own, or the TV may still be using its own speakers. It's a common setup puzzle and one I'm glad to untangle remotely. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

CHAPTER 11

Taming Loud Commercials

You settle in, the show is at a comfortable volume, and then a commercial comes on twice as loud. Here's what's going on and what you can do.

There's actually a law about this

A federal law known as the **CALM Act** requires TV stations, cable and satellite companies to keep the *average* volume of commercials the same as the program they appear in. The FCC explains that because the rule is about *average* loudness, an ad with loud and quiet moments can still seem too loud and yet follow the rules. Streaming apps are a different matter; ads and shows in apps can still vary.

The settings that help most

Your equipment	Look for
Samsung	**Auto Volume** in Sound > Expert Settings (Chapter 4)
LG	**Automatic Volume Adjustment** in Sound > Advanced Settings (Chapter 5)
Sony	**Advanced auto volume** in the Sound settings (Chapter 6)
Roku	**Volume Leveling** or **Leveling** from the Star menu (Chapter 7)
Apple TV	**Reduce Loud Sounds** in Video and Audio (Chapter 9)
Soundbar	**Night** mode or the maker's leveling setting (Chapter 10)

Reporting a loud commercial

If a particular channel's commercials are consistently much louder, you can tell the FCC. File online at **fcc.gov/complaints**, choose **Loud Commercials** from the issues list, or call **1-888-CALL-FCC**. Include the channel, date, time, program and the advertiser. Filing a complaint is free.

SCAM ALERT

Nobody needs to "fix" your TV volume remotely

If a pop-up, email or caller says your TV or streaming account needs a paid volume or audio "repair," it's a scam. Real volume settings are in your TV's menu and cost nothing. Never give a stranger remote access or payment for this.

PART 3

Captions and Audio Description

Seeing the words on screen, making them big enough to read, and switching off the narrator voice when it starts describing the picture by accident.

CHAPTER 12

Turning On Captions (and Making Them Bigger)

Captions (often marked **CC**, for "closed captions") show the spoken words and important sounds as text on the screen. They're free, they work on nearly everything, and they're the single most dependable way to follow fast or mumbled dialogue. Many people with perfectly good hearing use them every night. There's no shame in it at all.

GOOD TO KNOW

Captions, subtitles and SDH

Subtitles usually show only the words, often for a foreign language. **Captions** also describe sounds like [door slams] or [phone rings]. **SDH** means "subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing" and works like captions. For our purposes, any of them will help — pick captions or SDH when you have the choice.

The two places captions live

This is the part that confuses everyone. There's usually a captions switch on the **TV or streaming box**, and a separate one inside each **streaming app** (Netflix, Hulu, Prime Video and so on). Many apps ignore the TV's setting and use their own. Cable and satellite boxes have their own too. If captions won't appear, turn them on in the app or box you're actually watching.

Turn on captions for your TV or streaming box

Your device	Where to find captions
Samsung TV	**Settings** > **General** (or **General & Privacy**) > **Accessibility** > **Caption Settings** > turn **Caption** on.
LG TV (2022 and newer)	**Settings** > **All Settings** > **General** > **Accessibility** > **Closed Caption** (or **Closed Caption / Subtitle**) > **On**. Older LG: **All Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Closed Caption**.
Roku	**Home** > **Settings** > **Accessibility** (or **Captions**) > **Captions mode** > **On always**. Or press **Star** during a show and choose **Closed captioning**.
Fire TV	During playback, press the **Menu** button (three lines) and choose **Subtitles**. Device-wide captions are under **Settings** > **Accessibility**.
Google TV	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Captions** > turn on **Display**. On some TVs, Accessibility is under **System**.

Your device	Where to find captions
Apple TV	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Subtitles and Captioning** > **Closed Captions and SDH**.

Turn on captions inside a streaming app

1. Start playing a show in the app.
2. Press **up** or **down** on the remote (or press the center button) to bring up the controls. On Apple TV, press the clickpad once; in some apps you then swipe up.
3. Look for a speech-bubble icon or the words **Audio & Subtitles**, **Subtitles** or **CC**.
4. Choose **English [CC]** or **English (SDH)** if offered, otherwise **English**.
5. Most apps remember your choice for next time.

Make captions big enough to read

Default captions are often small, white and hard to read from across the room. Every major platform lets you change them:

- **Samsung**: **Caption Settings** > **Digital Caption Options** for font size, color and background.
- **Roku**: **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Caption style** for text size, color, background and window; a preview shows your changes.
- **Apple TV**: **Accessibility** > **Subtitles and Captioning** > **Style**, then **Edit Styles** for font, size, color and background.
- **Netflix and others**: many apps also let you change caption appearance in their own settings or account page.

TIP

The easiest-to-read combination

For most people, large yellow or white text on a solid black background box reads best from a distance. Try it once; you can always switch back.

HEADS UP

Captions on a cable or satellite box

If you watch live TV through a cable or satellite box, the TV's caption setting may do nothing. LG notes that captions then need to be turned on in the box's own menu. Look for a **CC** button on the cable remote, or a captions option in the box's settings.

CHAPTER 13

When the TV Starts Talking: Turning Off Audio Description and Voice Guides

Few things are as startling as a calm voice suddenly announcing, "He walks to the window and looks out." Or every button you press being read out loud. This happens to a lot of people, usually after a button was held down by accident or an app picked the wrong sound track. It's easy to fix once you know which of two different features is talking.

First, which voice is it?

What you hear	What it is
It describes the picture during a show ("She smiles and opens the letter")	That's **audio description** (also called video description, described video or AD). It's an extra sound track for people who are blind or have low vision.
It reads menus and buttons out loud ("Settings, button, 3 of 8")	That's a **screen reader**. Samsung calls it **Voice Guide**, LG **Audio Guidance**, Roku **screen reader**, Fire TV **VoiceView**, Apple TV **VoiceOver**.

Turning off audio description

Audio description is usually chosen as a **sound track** in the app, so the quickest fix is to change the track back while the show is playing:

1. While the show is playing, bring up the controls and open **Audio & Subtitles** (or **Audio**, or press **Star** on Roku).
2. Under **Audio**, choose the plain language track, such as **English** — not one labeled **Audio Description**, **AD** or **Described Video**.
3. Close the menu and keep watching.

Netflix explains that if audio description keeps coming back, a setting on the device itself is usually switched on. Turn it off in the device's accessibility settings (below), then pick the plain track in Netflix again. Netflix also suggests letting the show play for at least five minutes afterward so the choice is saved to your profile.

The device-wide audio description switches

Device	Turn audio description off
Samsung	**Settings** > **General** (or **General & Privacy**) > **Accessibility** > **Video Description** off. Some remotes have an **AD/Subtitle** button that toggles it.

Device	Turn audio description off
LG	**Settings** > **All Settings** > **General** > **Accessibility** > **Video Description** > **Off**. On 2026 models it's under **Accessibility** > **Vision Features**.
Fire TV	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Audio Descriptions** > off.
Apple TV	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Audio Descriptions** off.
Roku	Described video is chosen per show: press **Star** during playback and change the audio track.

Turning off a screen reader that reads the menus

Screen reader	How to turn it off
Samsung Voice Guide	Press and hold the **Mute** button (or **Volume**, if there's no Mute button) for about two seconds to open **Accessibility Shortcuts**, and turn **Voice Guide** off. Or **Settings** > **General** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Guide Settings**.
LG Audio Guidance	**Settings** > **All Settings** > **General** > **Accessibility** > **Audio Guidance** > **Off**.
Roku screen reader	Press the **Star** button four times quickly. Or **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Screen reader**.
Fire TV VoiceView	Press and hold the **Back** and **Menu** buttons together for a few seconds. Or **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **VoiceView**.
Apple TV VoiceOver	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **VoiceOver** off.

TIP

That's why it turned on by accident

Notice how these shortcuts work: holding Mute, pressing Star four times, holding Back and Menu. They're easy to trigger by mistake when the remote is sat on or fumbled in the dark. Now you know the same move turns it back off.

HEADS UP

Still talking? Check the cable box

LG points out that narration you hear only on live TV often comes from the cable or satellite box, not the TV. Look in the box's settings for **Descriptive Video**, **DVS** or **SAP** and turn it off. If a voice assistant is answering you instead, that's a different feature; Samsung suggests checking the voice assistant's settings.

PART 4

Wireless TV Headphones

Dedicated TV headphone systems, everyday Bluetooth headphones, Roku's Headphone Mode, AirPods with Apple TV, and how to keep the TV speakers playing for everyone else.

CHAPTER 14

Your Choices at a Glance

TV headphones solve a problem no setting can: one person needs the TV louder than everyone else wants it. With headphones, you set your own volume right at your ears, and the rest of the room can keep the TV quiet or even silent. There are several kinds, and the right one depends on your TV, your comfort, and whether others are watching with you.

Type	How it works	Good for	Watch out for
Dedicated TV headphone system	A base (transmitter) plugs into the TV; the headphones talk only to that base.	Simple daily use; little or no delay; long battery; works with almost any TV.	Costs more; needs a free audio output on the TV.
Under-chin TV listeners (e.g. TV Ears style)	A light headset that hangs under the chin, fed by a base near the TV. Many use infrared light.	People who dislike things over their ears.	Infrared needs a clear line of sight to the base.
Bluetooth headphones or earbuds	Pair straight to a TV or streaming box with Bluetooth.	Using headphones you already own.	Possible lip-sync delay; may silence TV speakers.
Phone as the receiver (Roku app)	The free Roku app plays TV sound through your phone and its headphones.	Roku homes; up to four listeners.	Phone must be on the same Wi-Fi; TV speakers go silent.
AirPods with Apple TV	AirPods connect to Apple TV through your Apple Account.	iPhone and AirPods owners.	Apple TV box needed; TV speakers go silent.
Hearing aids streaming the TV	A TV adapter or the TV itself sends sound to your hearing aids.	Hearing-aid wearers.	Brand-specific; see Part 5.

Three questions that point you to the right one

1. **Does anyone else watch with you?** If yes, you'll probably want the TV speakers to keep playing while you use headphones. Chapter 19 shows which setups allow that.
2. **Do you wear hearing aids?** If yes, start with Part 5 — your hearing aids may be able to receive the TV directly, and headphones over hearing aids are often uncomfortable.
3. **What do you already own?** A Roku, an Apple TV with AirPods, or Bluetooth earbuds may cost you nothing to try tonight.

STAY SAFE

Protect the hearing you have

Headphones make it easy to listen too loud for too long without noticing. Start with the volume low and raise it only until the words are clear. Roku's own instructions say not to put headphones on until the volume is at a safe level. If you find you need it louder and louder over time, that's a good reason for a hearing check (Chapter 25).

CHAPTER 15

Dedicated TV Headphone Systems

A dedicated TV headphone system comes in two parts: a **base** (also called a transmitter or dock) that connects to your TV, and a pair of **headphones** that receive sound only from that base. The headphones usually rest on the base to charge. Because the pair is made for each other, there's nothing to pair with your phone, and the sound arrives with little or no delay.

What's on the market (November 2026)

Sennheiser's **RS** series is one of the best-known lines of TV headphones. As an example of what these cost, here is Sennheiser's own U.S. store pricing at the time of writing. Prices change and stores often discount, so use these only as a guide.

Sennheiser model	U.S. list price and notes
RS 275	$299.95. Launched in 2026; headphones plus the **BTA 1** TV transmitter and a stand. Sennheiser describes it as Auracast-ready, designed to make sharing TV sound easier.
RS 255	$279.95. The same system sold without the headphone stand.
BTA 1 TV Transmitter	$129.95 on its own.
RS 2000	$229.95.
FLEX 5000	$249.95.
RS 120-W	$159.95, the least expensive in the line.

Other companies make TV listening systems too, including under-chin styles such as TV Ears, and many lower-priced radio-frequency headphones sold at electronics stores. Bill's guides don't recommend or sell any brand; compare return policies and comfort first.

How the base connects to your TV

Look on the back or side of your TV for one of these sound outputs. The base will come with the matching cable.

Port	What it looks like
Optical (Digital Audio Out)	A small squarish port, often with a red light inside when the TV is on. The most common choice for TV headphone bases.
Headphone or Audio Out jack	A round 3.5 mm jack, like an old headphone socket.

Port	What it looks like
HDMI ARC / eARC	Some newer bases and soundbars use this. Check the product's instructions.

Setting it up

1. Plug the base into a wall outlet near the TV.
2. Connect the cable from the TV's sound output (usually **Optical**) to the base.
3. Set the headphones on the base and let them charge fully the first time.
4. Turn on the TV and play a show. Put the headphones on with their volume turned **down**, then raise it slowly.
5. No sound? Go to the TV's **Sound** settings, find the **Digital Audio Out** or **Audio Format** option, and set it to **PCM**. Many TV headphone bases can't play the surround formats the TV sends by default.

TIP

The TV speakers can usually stay on

With a base on the optical output, most TVs keep playing through their own speakers too. The headphone volume is separate, so you can listen loud while the room listens soft. If you want complete quiet, just turn the TV's own volume down.

HEADS UP

Infrared needs a clear view

If your system uses infrared light (many under-chin listeners do), the base must be able to "see" the headset. A person walking between you and the TV, or turning your head away, can cause the sound to drop out. Radio and Bluetooth-based systems don't have this limit.

CHAPTER 16

Bluetooth Headphones and Your TV

Bluetooth is the short-range wireless connection your phone uses for earbuds and car stereos. Most smart TVs and streaming boxes made in the last several years have it too, so you can often use headphones or earbuds you already own. You "pair" them once, and after that they usually reconnect on their own.

Pairing steps by brand

First, put your headphones in **pairing mode** (check their instructions; it's often a long press of the power button). Then:

Device	Where to pair
Samsung TV	**Settings** > **Sound** > **Sound Output** > **Bluetooth Speaker List**; select the headphones and choose **Pair and Connect**.
LG TV	**Settings** > **All Settings** > **Sound** > **Sound Out** (or **Sound Output**) > choose the Bluetooth option and pick your headphones.
Google TV / Google TV Streamer	**Settings** > **Remotes & Accessories** > **Pair remote or accessory**; select the headphones, then **Pair**.
Fire TV	**Settings** > **Controllers & Bluetooth Devices** > **Other Bluetooth Devices** > **Add Bluetooth Devices**.
Roku (supported models)	**Settings** > **Remotes & devices** > **Wireless headphones** > **Add new wireless headphones**. See Chapter 17.
Apple TV	**Settings** > **Remotes and Devices** > **Bluetooth**. AirPods connect more simply; see Chapter 18.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some headphones just won't pair with a TV

Samsung notes that some Bluetooth headphones are designed only for phones and won't pair with a TV. If yours won't show up after two tries, that may be why — not something you did wrong.

Lip sync: why voices can lag behind lips

Bluetooth takes a moment to squeeze and send sound, so with some headphones the voice arrives a fraction of a second after the lips move. Samsung's own support page warns that lip-sync errors may occur. Some people barely notice; others find it maddening.

- **Try a different app or input.** Delay can vary from one source to another.
- **Look for a lip-sync or audio-delay setting.** Many TVs and boxes have an **AV Sync**, **Audio Delay** or **Lip Sync** adjustment in the sound settings.
- **Look for low-latency headphones.** Headphones and TV transmitters that both support **aptX Adaptive** (the successor to the older **aptX Low Latency**) are designed to cut the delay. Both ends must support the same technology for it to help.
- **Consider a dedicated TV headphone system** (Chapter 15), which is built to avoid the problem.

GOOD TO KNOW

LE Audio, the newer Bluetooth

Bluetooth LE Audio is a newer version of Bluetooth sound that uses less battery and was designed with hearing aids in mind. It's also what makes **Auracast** broadcast audio possible (Chapter 22). It only helps when both the TV side and your headphones or hearing aids support it.

No Bluetooth on your TV?

A small **Bluetooth transmitter** can add it. It plugs into the TV's optical or headphone output and sends sound to your Bluetooth headphones. For the least delay, choose a transmitter that supports the same low-latency technology as your headphones.

CHAPTER 17

Roku Headphone Mode

Roku has one of the friendliest headphone features around. Roku now calls it **Headphone Mode** (you may know it by its older name, "private listening"). It sends the TV's sound to headphones and silences the TV speakers. There are three ways to use it.

Way 1: through your phone, with the free Roku app

This works with most Roku devices and any headphones that work with your phone — wired or Bluetooth.

1. Install the free **Roku** app from your phone's app store and connect it to your Roku. Your phone and Roku must be on the **same Wi-Fi network**.
2. Plug your headphones into the phone, or connect your Bluetooth headphones to the phone.
3. With the volume low, open the Roku app and tap **Remote**.
4. Tap the **Headphone** icon. Headphone Mode turns on and the TV speakers go quiet.
5. Raise the phone's volume to a comfortable level. Tap the Headphone icon again to turn it off.

> TIP
> **Up to four people can listen**
> Roku says up to **four** phones or tablets can use Headphone Mode at the same time through the app. On a Roku TV with an antenna, it even works with live over-the-air channels.

Way 2: Bluetooth headphones straight to the Roku

Roku says these devices can pair Bluetooth headphones directly (headphones must support Bluetooth 4.2 or newer):

- **Players:** Roku Streaming Stick (model 3840), Roku Streaming Stick Plus (3830), Roku Ultra (4800, 4802, 4850) and Roku Ultra LT (4801).
- **Roku audio:** Roku Streambar SE, Streambar, Streambar Pro and Roku Smart Soundbar.
- **Roku-made TVs:** Roku Select Series (2025 and later), Plus Series and Pro Series.

Roku lists the Roku Express, Roku Premiere, Roku Streaming Stick 4K and Streaming Stick 4K+ as **not** supporting Headphone Mode over Bluetooth. To find your model, go to **Settings** > **System** > **About**. To pair: **Settings** > **Remotes & devices** > **Wireless headphones** >

Add new wireless headphones. Only one pair connects directly; for more listeners, use the app.

Way 3: wired headphones in the remote

Some Roku voice remotes have a headphone jack on the side, such as the original Roku Voice Remote Pro. Plug in wired headphones and Headphone Mode starts. Be aware that Roku's comparison chart shows the newer **Voice Remote Pro (2nd edition) has no headphone jack**, so don't buy one expecting it. If your remote has no jack, use Way 1 or Way 2.

HEADS UP

Headphone Mode and Streambars

Roku notes that on a Streambar or Smart Soundbar, Headphone Mode only works with the Roku's own built-in streaming, not with a cable box or Blu-ray player connected through it.

CHAPTER 18

Apple TV with AirPods

If you have an Apple TV 4K box and AirPods (or Beats headphones), they work together beautifully. Apple says they connect when the Apple TV is signed in with the **same Apple Account** as the headphones — there's no separate pairing step for many people.

Connect your AirPods

1. Put your AirPods in your ears (or take them out of the case) near the Apple TV.
2. On the Siri Remote, press and hold the **TV** button to open **Control Center**.
3. Select the **Audio Controls** button.
4. Select your AirPods. Apple notes the TV's other speakers are turned off while they're connected.

Often it's even easier: if you put your AirPods on while the Apple TV is on, a message may appear on screen inviting you to connect them with a press of the TV button.

Two people, two pairs of AirPods

Apple TV 4K can **share audio** with a second pair of compatible AirPods or Beats. Open Control Center, select the headphones icon at the top, and choose **Share Audio**. Apple notes Spatial Audio isn't available while sharing, and sharing isn't supported on the older Apple TV HD.

Helpful AirPods settings from the TV

- **Noise Control**: **Transparency** lets you hear the room (and the doorbell) while you watch; **Noise Cancellation** shuts out a noisy furnace or dishwasher.
- **Conversation Awareness**: lowers the volume when you start talking to someone.
- **Mono Audio** and **Balance** in **Settings** > **Accessibility** help if one ear hears better than the other (Chapter 9).

GOOD TO KNOW

Ordinary Bluetooth headphones work too

You can connect non-Apple Bluetooth headphones in **Settings** > **Remotes and Devices** > **Bluetooth**. AirPods simply connect more smoothly and offer the extra controls above. Not all options are available on every AirPods or Beats model.

CHAPTER 19

Speakers and Headphones at the Same Time

A very common question about TV headphones is: "Can I wear headphones while my spouse listens to the TV speakers at a normal volume?" The honest answer is: it depends on the equipment. Here's who allows it.

Equipment	Speakers and headphones together?
Samsung TVs	**Yes. Multi-output Audio** plays the TV speakers and one Bluetooth headphone or hearing device together, with separate volumes. 2020 and newer: **Settings** > **All Settings** > **General & Privacy** > **Accessibility** > **Multi-output Audio**. It's grayed out until a Bluetooth device is connected.
LG TVs	**Often.** Many recent LG TVs offer a **Bluetooth Device + TV Speaker** choice in the **Sound Out** menu. Whether it appears depends on the model.
Fire TV smart TVs	**For hearing aids, on some models.** Amazon's **Dual Audio** plays the TV speakers and compatible hearing aids together (Chapter 20).
Roku	**No.** Roku says the TV speakers go silent in Headphone Mode.
Apple TV	**No.** Apple says other speakers turn off when headphones connect.
Dedicated TV headphone system	**Usually yes**, when the base is on the TV's optical output (Chapter 15).

Samsung: two Bluetooth devices at once

Samsung says newer TVs also have **Multi Connect**, which sends sound to two Bluetooth audio devices at the same time — two pairs of earbuds, or a Bluetooth speaker and a pair of earbuds. Pair the first device in **Sound** > **Sound Output** > **Bluetooth Speaker List**. When you pair the second, choose **Multi Connect** instead of **Replace**.

TIP

The simplest way to keep everyone happy

If your TV doesn't allow both at once, a dedicated TV headphone system on the optical output almost always does. The room hears the TV speakers at a gentle volume, and the headphone wearer turns their own volume up. It's a dependable setup for couples.

PART 5

Hearing Aids and the TV

How modern hearing aids can hear the TV directly, the TV adapters hearing-aid makers sell, the new Auracast broadcast audio, and hearing loops.

CHAPTER 20

How Hearing Aids Connect to the TV

Many hearing aids made in the last several years can receive sound wirelessly — from a phone, and often from the TV. When it works, the TV's sound goes straight into your ears at your own volume, with no headphones over your hearing aids. But there isn't one standard. Which method your aids use decides what will work. Here are the four you'll hear about, in plain English. (Bill's *Hearing Help Tech* guide covers hearing aids in general; this chapter sticks to the TV.)

Method	What it means
Made for iPhone (MFi)	Apple's system for streaming to hearing aids from Apple devices. Apple's list of compatible devices names iPhone, iPad, Mac and Apple Vision Pro. **Apple TV is not on that list**, so don't count on MFi hearing aids connecting to an Apple TV box directly.
ASHA	"Audio Streaming for Hearing Aids," Google's system for Android phones, built on low-energy Bluetooth. Some Fire TV devices support it too (below).
Classic Bluetooth	Some hearing aids can pair like ordinary Bluetooth headphones. Samsung, for example, notes that some hearing aids work with its TVs' Bluetooth.
Bluetooth LE Audio	The newest standard, designed with hearing aids in mind. It also enables **Auracast** broadcasts (Chapter 22). Support is growing but still limited.

TIP

The one question to ask your hearing provider

"Which way do my hearing aids stream, and what's the best way to get the TV into them?" Your audiologist or hearing-aid provider knows your exact model and can usually answer in a minute. It saves buying the wrong gadget.

Fire TV and hearing aids

Amazon has done more than most to let hearing aids connect straight to the TV. Its help pages list **ASHA** hearing-aid support on several Fire TV devices, including the Fire TV Cube (2nd and 3rd generation) and Fire TV smart TVs such as the Omni Mini-LED, Omni QLED and 2-Series, with compatible hearing devices from makers including Starkey, Widex and Cochlear. Support varies by model, so check Amazon's list for yours.

Dual Audio: hearing aids and TV speakers together

Amazon's **Dual Audio**, which launched on the Fire TV Omni Mini-LED, lets the TV speakers and your hearing aids play at the same time. In the TV's audio output settings, choose **TV**

Speaker and Hearing Aids. Amazon says the hearing-aid volume is then controlled from **Quick Settings**, while the remote's volume buttons control the TV speakers — so you and your family each get the volume you need.

Samsung TVs and Bluetooth hearing aids

Samsung says some hearing aids are compatible with its TVs' Bluetooth, and its **Multi-output Audio** setting (Chapter 19) lets the hearing device and TV speakers play together, with the hearing device set louder. Whether your aids will pair depends on the hearing-aid model.

HEADS UP

Pairing your aids to the TV can unpair them from your phone

Some hearing aids only stay connected to one device at a time. If you pair them to a TV and your phone calls stop coming through, that's likely why. Ask your provider, or use a TV adapter made for your aids (next chapter), which is designed to share nicely.

CHAPTER 21

TV Adapters from Hearing-Aid Makers

Most major hearing-aid makers sell a small box that plugs into the TV and streams its sound straight to that company's hearing aids. These are often the most reliable way to hear the TV through your aids, because they're designed for them. The catch: **each one only works with its own brand**, and usually only with certain models.

Maker	TV accessory	Works with (per the maker, November 2026)
Phonak	TV Connector	Phonak Infinio, Lumity, Paradise and Marvel hearing aids
Oticon	TV Adapter 3.0	Oticon More, Zircon, Play PX, Opn S, Opn, Opn Play, Xceed, Xceed Play, Ruby and Siya; Oticon Intent needs a firmware update
ReSound	TV-Streamer+	ReSound Sensia, ENZO IA, Vivia, Nexia and Savi; supports Auracast
Starkey	StarLink Edge TV Streamer	Omega AI+ and Edge AI hearing aids; uses Bluetooth LE Audio and is described as Auracast-ready
Starkey	StarLink TV Streamer	Starkey's earlier G Series AI family
Signia	StreamLine TV	Signia's TV streamer; ask your provider about model compatibility

Model lists change as new hearing aids come out, so confirm with your provider or the maker's website before buying.

How setup usually goes

1. Plug the adapter into power and connect it to the TV's sound output — usually the **optical** port, sometimes the headphone jack. The cable is in the box.
2. Pair it with your hearing aids. Each brand does this a little differently: some pair automatically when the aids are near, others need a button press or the brand's phone app. Follow the leaflet, or ask your provider to do it at your next visit.
3. Play a show. Your aids switch to the TV stream, and you set the TV-stream volume with your aids' buttons or app.
4. No sound? Check the TV's digital audio output format; setting it to **PCM** often helps, just as with TV headphones (Chapter 15).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why many wearers love these

With a TV adapter, the TV's sound arrives inside your hearing aids, tuned to your hearing, at a volume only you control. Everyone else can keep the TV speakers at a normal level, or off. Oticon, for example, describes its adapter as letting you watch at your own volume while others keep theirs.

GOOD TO KNOW

Cost and where to buy

Prices vary by brand and change often; your hearing provider can quote the current price, and some makers also list where to buy their accessories online. Ask whether your hearing-aid purchase or warranty includes accessories — sometimes it does.

CHAPTER 22

Auracast Broadcast Audio, Honestly

You may have read that a new technology called **Auracast** will let you hear any TV through your hearing aids or earbuds. It's real and it's promising. It's also early days, so here is a plain, no-hype account of where it stands in November 2026.

What Auracast is

Auracast is part of the newer **Bluetooth LE Audio** standard. Instead of pairing one pair of headphones to one TV, a TV or transmitter **broadcasts** its sound, a bit like a tiny radio station. Any number of compatible earbuds, headphones or hearing aids nearby can tune in. Down the road, the idea is that airport gates, theaters, places of worship and gyms will broadcast too.

Where it's actually available

- **Some Samsung TVs.** Samsung announced Auracast for its 2023 Neo QLED 8K and Micro LED TVs by software update, and its support pages describe an Auracast option on some models, noting that availability varies by model, year and software version.
- **Some LG TVs.** LG's 2025 OLED TVs and selected QNED models were widely reported to include Auracast. Check your exact model's specifications.
- **Add-on transmitters.** Sennheiser's BTA 1 TV transmitter (sold with the RS 275 and RS 255) and ReSound's TV-Streamer+ are described by their makers as Auracast-capable. Starkey calls its StarLink Edge TV Streamer Auracast-ready.
- **Listening devices.** Only earbuds, headphones and hearing aids that support LE Audio and Auracast can listen. Several newer hearing aids and earbuds do; many older ones never will.

HEADS UP

Don't buy a TV just for Auracast yet

Both ends have to support it: the TV (or transmitter) *and* your hearing aids or earbuds. Menus are often buried in Bluetooth settings under names like "broadcast" or "Auracast." If your hearing aids don't support it, an Auracast TV won't help you. Ask your hearing provider first.

If you want to try it

1. Confirm with your provider (or your earbuds' maker) that your device supports **Auracast**.

2. On the TV, look in the **Bluetooth** or sound output settings for an **Auracast** or **broadcast** option and start the broadcast.
3. On your phone or hearing-aid app, look for a list of nearby broadcasts and choose the TV.
4. If it doesn't appear, the TV or your listening device may not support it yet. A brand TV adapter (Chapter 21) is the dependable alternative today.

CHAPTER 23

Hearing Loops and Telecoils

Long before Bluetooth, there was a simpler, very effective technology for hearing-aid users: the **hearing loop**. It's still widely used in theaters, places of worship and service counters, and it can be installed in a TV room at home.

How it works

A hearing loop is a thin wire run around the edge of a room, connected to a small amplifier that carries the sound from a microphone or the TV. The wire creates a magnetic field that a **telecoil** — a tiny receiver inside many hearing aids and cochlear implants — picks up directly. You switch your hearing aid to its telecoil setting, often marked **T** or **MT**, and the sound comes straight to your ear with little background noise.

GOOD TO KNOW

Look for the blue ear

Places with a loop often display a blue sign showing an ear, sometimes with a letter T. That's the international symbol for hearing-loss access. The Hearing Loss Association of America notes that most prescription hearing aids and cochlear implants include a telecoil.

Loops at home

A TV-room loop is a modest installation: a wire around the room (often under the carpet edge) and a small loop amplifier connected to the TV's audio output. Smaller "neckloops" worn around the neck do the same job for one person. Anyone in the room with a telecoil can listen at once.

TIP

Your telecoil may need to be switched on

Not every hearing aid has a telecoil, and on some it has to be activated by your provider. Ask at your next appointment: "Do my aids have a telecoil, and is it turned on?" It's useful well beyond the TV.

PART 6

Your Hearing, Briefly and Carefully

A short, non-medical word on over-the-counter hearing aids and AirPods Pro, the signs that it's time to see a hearing professional, and how to shop without getting taken.

CHAPTER 24

Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids and AirPods Pro, in Brief

If TV dialogue is a daily struggle, it may be a sign your hearing has changed. Two developments in recent years have made it easier to get help. This chapter is a short overview only; Bill's *Hearing Help Tech* guide goes into more depth, and a hearing professional is the right person for advice about your own ears.

Over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids

In 2022 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) created a new category of **over-the-counter hearing aids**. The rule took effect on **October 17, 2022**. The FDA says OTC hearing aids are for adults **18 and older** with **perceived mild to moderate** hearing loss, and can be bought in a store or online without a medical exam, prescription or fitting by an audiologist.

The FDA is clear that OTC hearing aids are **not** meant for severe or profound hearing loss, and that anyone younger than 18 needs a prescription hearing aid. Prescription hearing aids are still available through licensed hearing professionals for all levels of hearing loss.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> **Signs the FDA lists for mild to moderate loss**
>
> The FDA requires OTC hearing-aid boxes to list signs such as: trouble hearing speech in noisy places, finding it hard to follow speech in groups, trouble hearing on the phone, listening making you tired, and needing the TV or radio louder than others like. That last one may sound familiar.

The AirPods Pro Hearing Aid feature

Apple's **AirPods Pro 2** and **AirPods Pro 3** include a **Hearing Aid** feature. Apple describes it as a clinical-grade feature for people 18 and older with perceived mild to moderate hearing loss, and Apple's specifications note it has received FDA authorization. It works with a compatible iPhone or iPad, and Apple also offers a **Hearing Test** that takes about five minutes.

1. With your AirPods Pro connected to your iPhone, open **Settings** and tap your AirPods' name near the top.
2. Tap **Hearing Health**, then **Hearing Assistance**.

3. Follow the steps to take the Hearing Test or use an existing audiogram (a hearing test chart from a professional).

Apple notes the Hearing Aid feature isn't available in every country, and that its settings are stored on the AirPods themselves. Apple also offers **Media Assist**, a separate option that adjusts music, video and calls for clearer sound. When you then connect your AirPods to an Apple TV (Chapter 18), the TV's sound comes through them.

STAY SAFE

This is not a diagnosis

Neither an OTC hearing aid nor a phone-based hearing test replaces a proper exam when something is wrong. The next chapter lists warning signs the FDA says call for a doctor.

CHAPTER 25

When to See an Audiologist or Doctor

An **audiologist** is a licensed hearing health professional who tests hearing and fits hearing aids. An **ENT** is an ear-nose-throat doctor. Many people put off a hearing check for years. If you've read this far because the TV is hard to follow, a check is a reasonable, low-stress next step.

Reasons it's worth booking a hearing test

- Family members say the TV is too loud, or you keep raising it over the months.
- You can hear people talking but often can't make out the words, especially in noisy places.
- You find yourself asking people to repeat themselves, or nodding along.
- Phone calls are getting harder.
- You've tried the settings and headphones in this guide and still struggle.

Warning signs the FDA says call for a doctor

The FDA requires OTC hearing-aid packaging to tell people to see a doctor, preferably an ENT, if any of these apply:

- Your hearing changed suddenly in the past six months, or it gets worse and then better again.
- Worse hearing in one ear, or ringing or buzzing in only one ear.
- Pain or discomfort in the ear, or blood, pus or fluid from the ear in the past six months.
- Feeling really dizzy, or a spinning or swaying sensation.
- A lot of ear wax, or you think something could be in your ear.
- An ear injured, deformed, or shaped unusually from birth.

Questions to bring about the TV

- "Which way do my hearing aids stream — MFi, ASHA, classic Bluetooth or LE Audio?"
- "Is there a TV adapter for my model, and can you pair it for me?"
- "Do my aids have a telecoil, and is it switched on?"
- "Do my aids support Auracast, now or with an update?"

CHAPTER 26

Buying Smart and Avoiding Scams

Hearing products attract more than their share of overblown ads and outright scams, often aimed at older adults. A few simple habits will protect your wallet.

Before you buy any TV listening device

1. Try the free settings first (Parts 2 and 3). They cost nothing.
2. Check that the device matches your TV's outputs (optical, headphone jack, Bluetooth).
3. If you wear hearing aids, ask your provider before buying headphones or adapters.
4. Buy from the maker's own store or a well-known retailer, and read the **return policy**. You want time to try it at home.
5. Keep the box and receipt until you're sure.

SCAM ALERT

"FDA Registered" doesn't mean what it sounds like

The FDA itself warns that labels like "FDA Registered" or "FDA Certified" and use of the FDA logo on hearing-aid packaging may be misleading. A legitimate OTC hearing aid says **OTC** and **hearing aid** on the box. Be wary of cheap "hearing amplifiers" advertised as if they were hearing aids.

SCAM ALERT

Fake support numbers for TVs and streaming boxes

If you search online for "Roku support" or "Samsung TV help," some of the top results can be look-alike sites run by scammers who ask for payment or remote access to "activate" or "fix" your device. Roku, Amazon, Apple, Google, Samsung and LG don't charge to turn on captions, dialogue settings or headphones. Use the help pages listed in this guide, or the support link in the device's own Settings menu.

SCAM ALERT

Too-good-to-be-true TV headphone ads

Social media ads promising "miracle" TV hearing for a tiny price, with a countdown timer and no real company address, are a common trap. If you can't find the company's return policy and a real phone number, skip it.

Honest costs at a glance

Option	Typical cost
Captions, dialogue modes, auto volume	Free; already in your TV or box.
Roku Headphone Mode through the app	Free, with your phone and headphones.
Bluetooth headphones you already own	Free to try.
Dedicated TV headphone system	Sennheiser's U.S. line runs from $159.95 to $299.95 (Chapter 15); other brands vary.
Hearing-aid maker's TV adapter	Varies by brand; ask your provider.

PART 7

Fixes, Help and Your Cheat-Sheet

Quick answers to the most common TV-listening problems, when it's worth calling Bill, and a one-page summary to keep near the remote.

CHAPTER 27

Common Problems and Quick Fixes

Here are the snags people run into most, with the first thing to try for each. Work down the list calmly; most of these take a minute.

"The dialogue setting is grayed out or missing."

- Sound may be going to a soundbar or headphones; many TV voice settings only work on the TV speakers. Use the soundbar's own voice mode instead.
- Another sound setting may be blocking it (for example, LG's AI Sound or a Sony sound mode). Switch the sound mode to **Standard** and look again.
- Your model may simply not have it. Captions and a soundbar are the next best steps.

"My headphones connect, but there's no sound."

1. Turn the headphone volume up a little (carefully) and make sure they're charged.
2. For a TV headphone base on the optical port, set the TV's digital audio format to **PCM**.
3. For Bluetooth, check the TV's sound output is set to the headphones, not **TV Speaker**.
4. Turn the headphones off and on, or unplug the TV or streaming box for 30 seconds and try again.
5. Still nothing? Remove ("forget") the headphones in the Bluetooth menu and pair them again.

"The voices are out of sync with the lips."

That's Bluetooth delay (Chapter 16). Look for an **AV Sync**, **Audio Delay** or **Lip Sync** setting, try a different app, or use a dedicated TV headphone system made to avoid lag.

"The TV speakers went silent when I put on headphones."

That's normal on Roku and Apple TV, and on many TVs. If others need to hear the speakers, see Chapter 19 for Samsung's Multi-output Audio, LG's TV Speaker option, or a headphone base on the optical output.

"Captions won't turn on — or won't turn off."

- Check the captions setting in the **app** you're watching, not just the TV (Chapter 12).
- On cable or satellite, use the box's **CC** button or menu.

- Captions that pop up only when you press Replay or Mute may be set to **On replay** or **On mute** on a Roku. Change **Captions mode** to **On always** or **Off**.

"A voice is describing everything on screen."

That's audio description or a screen reader. Chapter 13 shows exactly how to turn off each one.

"Commercials are still much louder."

Turn on your TV's auto volume or your Roku's leveling, or try a soundbar's night mode (Chapter 11). Remember that on a cable box, the TV's own auto volume may not apply.

> **TIP**
>
> **The two-minute restart**
>
> When something that used to work stops working, unplug the TV (and streaming box, and soundbar) from the wall for 30 seconds, plug them back in, and try again. It fixes a surprising number of sound problems and can't hurt anything.

CHAPTER 28

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But some situations are much easier with a second pair of hands, and there's no prize for struggling alone. Here's an honest list of when a call or visit is worth it.

Good reasons to call

- You've followed the steps but your TV's menus look nothing like the ones described.
- You're deciding between TV headphones, a soundbar and a hearing-aid TV adapter, and want help matching one to your TV's connections.
- You need the TV speakers and headphones (or hearing aids) to work at the same time.
- A voice guide, audio description or captions keep coming back no matter what you try.
- You've bought a TV headphone system or hearing-aid adapter and want it connected and tested.
- Your setup involves several boxes — cable box, streaming stick, soundbar — and the sound path is a mystery.

What working with me is like

I've spent more than 30 years working with technology professionally, and I help folks throughout Portage County, Ohio — in person and remotely. I'll explain what I'm doing as I go, in plain English, and I'll write down your settings so you have them for later. I don't sell headphones or hearing products, so my only interest is what works in your living room. I'm not a hearing professional, so for anything about your ears themselves, I'll point you to an audiologist.

FROM BILL

Call or text anytime

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book online at **billshometech.com/book**. Help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. My AI receptionist, Sophie, may answer the main line and can take your details and set up a time.

— Bill

CHAPTER 29

Your TV-Listening Cheat-Sheet

Keep this page handy near the remote.

Dialogue settings by brand

Brand	Look for
Samsung	**Active Voice Amplifier** (General & Privacy > Intelligent Mode Settings, or Sound) · **Auto Volume** (Sound > Expert Settings)
LG	**Clear Voice** / **Clear Voice Pro** (Sound > Select Mode) · **Automatic Volume Adjustment** (Sound > Advanced Settings)
Sony	**Voice Zoom** (Quick Settings) · **Advanced auto volume**
Roku	**Star** > Sound settings: **Volume Leveling**, **Night**, **Dialogue**; **Speech clarity** on Roku audio devices
Fire TV	**Dialogue Boost** (Settings > Accessibility)
Apple TV	**Enhance Dialogue** and **Reduce Loud Sounds** (Audio Options during playback, or Settings > Video and Audio)

Headphones and hearing aids

Situation	Do this
Roku	Roku app > **Remote** > **Headphone** icon (up to 4 phones)
Apple TV + AirPods	Hold **TV** button > **Audio Controls** > your AirPods
Samsung both at once	**Accessibility** > **Multi-output Audio**
Fire TV + hearing aids	**Dual Audio**: TV Speaker and Hearing Aids (some models)
No sound from a headphone base	Set TV digital audio out to **PCM**

Make it stop talking

What you hear	Quick fix
Describes the picture	Change the audio track to plain **English**; turn off **Audio/Video Description** in Accessibility
Reads the menus	Samsung: hold **Mute** · Roku: press **Star** 4 times · Fire TV: hold **Back** + **Menu**

Keep this handy

Item	Write it here
My TV brand and model	_____
My streaming box	_____
My soundbar or TV headphones	_____
My hearing aids (brand/model)	_____
Settings I turned on	_____
My hearing provider's phone	_____
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

CHAPTER 30

A Short Glossary

Term	Plain-English meaning
Audio description (AD)	A narrated sound track describing what's happening on screen, for people who are blind or have low vision. Also called video description.
Auracast	A newer Bluetooth feature that lets a TV or transmitter broadcast sound to any number of compatible earbuds, headphones or hearing aids.
ASHA	Audio Streaming for Hearing Aids, Google's way of sending sound to hearing aids.
Bluetooth	Short-range wireless used by phones, TVs, earbuds and many hearing aids.
Captions (CC)	On-screen text of what's said, plus important sounds.
HDMI ARC / eARC	A TV connection that sends sound from the TV to a soundbar over an HDMI cable.
LE Audio	The newer, lower-power version of Bluetooth sound, designed with hearing aids in mind.
Lip sync	Whether voices line up with mouths on screen. Bluetooth can cause a small lag.
MFi	Made for iPhone, Apple's hearing-aid streaming system for iPhone, iPad and Mac.
Night mode	A setting that makes quiet sounds louder and loud sounds quieter.
Optical	A digital audio output on TVs that uses a thin light cable; common for TV headphone bases.
PCM	A plain digital sound format many headphone bases and adapters need.
Screen reader	A voice that reads menus aloud: Voice Guide, Audio Guidance, VoiceView, VoiceOver.
SDH	Subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing; works like captions.
Telecoil (T-coil)	A tiny receiver in many hearing aids that picks up hearing loops.

Thank you for reading. I hope you're hearing every word again. If you need a hand, I'm only a call away at (330) 200-8042.

— Bill