BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

TV Rescue

No Signal, wrong input & frozen apps —
the fixes to try first, one calm step at a time

A plain-English guide for every TV owner

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Covers Roku, Fire TV, Google TV, Apple TV, Samsung, LG, Vizio & cable boxes · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your plain-English guide to fixing TV trouble yourself. Find the chapter that matches what you see on the screen and work down its ladder, easiest step first. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind.

Part 1 — Before You Try Anything

1 A Note from Bill
2 The Calm First Five Minutes
3 Write It Down First
4 Your Remotes, Explained

Part 2 — Picture & Sound Problems

5 "The Screen Says No Signal"
6 "Sound but No Picture"
7 "Picture but No Sound"
8 "The Picture Looks Wrong"
9 "The TV Turns Itself On or Off"

Part 3 — Frozen Apps, Restarts & "No Internet"

10 "The App Is Frozen or Spinning"
11 Restarting a Roku
12 Restarting a Fire TV
13 Restarting Google TV & Chromecast
14 Restarting an Apple TV
15 Smart TV Apps: Samsung, LG & Vizio
16 "It Says No Internet"
17 Software Updates

Part 4 — Remotes, Voices & Changed Settings

18 "The Remote Does Nothing"
19 "A Voice Is Describing Everything"
20 "Captions Won't Go Away"
21 "Everything Is in Another Language"

Part 5 — Cable & Satellite Boxes

22 "Cable Box Error"

Part 6 — Last Resorts, Hardware & Fake Help

23 Factory Reset: The Last Resort
24 When It's the TV Itself
25 Fake Help: Activation Scams, Fake Numbers & Pop-ups

Part 7 — When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

26 When to Call Bill
27 Your TV Rescue Cheat-Sheet
28 A Short Glossary

PART 1

Before You Try Anything

A calm start: the five-minute routine that fixes most TV trouble, a short list to write down first, and a plain guide to all those remotes.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you've picked this up, chances are the TV just did something it isn't supposed to do. Maybe the screen says **No Signal**. Maybe the show you were halfway through is frozen on a spinning circle, or a calm voice has started reading every menu out loud. Take a breath. Almost all of these problems have a simple fix, and you can do most of them yourself from your armchair.

I'm Bill. I've spent 30+ years in professional technology work, and these days I help folks around Portage County, Ohio, and anywhere by phone, get their gadgets behaving. TV trouble is one of the most common calls I get. Very often the fix turns out to be one button, one cable, or one restart. I wrote this guide so you can try those fixes first, in the right order, before you spend money on a visit or a new TV.

How this guide is laid out

This guide is organized by **what you see**, not by technical names. Find the chapter that matches your problem, like "The Screen Says No Signal" or "The Remote Does Nothing," and work down its ladder. Each ladder starts with the easiest, safest step and only gets more involved if the easy steps don't work. Stop as soon as the TV is happy again.

- **Part 1** gives you the routine that fixes most problems, and a list to write down first.
- **Part 2** covers the screen and the sound: No Signal, no picture, no sound, odd-looking pictures, and a TV that turns itself on or off.
- **Part 3** covers frozen apps and "no internet," with restart steps for Roku, Fire TV, Google TV, Apple TV, Samsung, LG and Vizio.
- **Part 4** covers remotes, talking menus, captions that won't go away, and menus in another language.
- **Part 5** covers cable boxes. **Part 6** covers the last resorts, real hardware failures, and the fake "support" scams that prey on people with TV trouble.
- **Part 7** is when to call me, plus a cheat-sheet to keep handy.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end you'll know the handful of fixes that solve most TV problems, which button does what on your remotes, how to restart each kind of streaming device properly, and how to tell a real hardware failure from a simple glitch. You'll also know how to spot the fake "activation" and "support" websites that charge people for help that should be free.

You almost certainly can't break it

Pressing buttons, switching inputs, restarting, unplugging for a minute, checking cables: none of these can harm your TV. The one step to treat with care is a **factory reset**, which erases your settings and sign-ins. I've put it near the end on purpose, with a clear list of what you'll lose. Until then, explore freely.

And I'm only a phone call away

If you work through a ladder and the TV still won't cooperate, you're not on your own. Call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. Often I can sort it out over the phone or a video call. Help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. Now, let's get that TV working again.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

The Calm First Five Minutes

Before you look for your exact problem, try this short routine. It solves a surprising share of TV trouble, whatever the brand. It takes about five minutes, and every step is safe.

The five-minute routine

1. **Look before you press.** Read what the screen says, word for word. "No Signal," an error code, a spinning circle, a black screen with a logo: each points to a different fix. Jot it down (Chapter 3 has a list).
2. **Check the obvious.** Is the TV's power light on? Is the cable box or streaming stick's light on? Did someone switch off a power strip, or did a lamp on the same outlet go dark too?
3. **Pick up the right remote.** Many homes have two or three. The TV's own remote changes the input and turns the TV on. The streaming or cable remote runs the apps or channels. Chapter 4 explains which is which.
4. **Press Input (or Source) on the TV's remote.** The single most common cause of a "broken" TV is that it's showing the wrong input. Step through the list slowly, pausing a few seconds on each one.
5. **Restart the thing that's misbehaving.** Turning a TV off with the remote often just puts it to sleep. A real restart means unplugging it from the wall for at least a full minute, then plugging it back in. Do the same for a streaming stick or cable box.
6. **Wait.** After a restart, give everything two or three minutes to wake up. Cable boxes can take longer. Pressing buttons while it's starting can confuse things.
7. **Try again, and note what changed.** If the problem is still there, turn to the chapter that matches it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why unplugging works so well

TVs, streaming sticks and cable boxes are small computers. Like any computer, they can get muddled after running for weeks. The power button on most remotes doesn't fully switch them off; it puts them in a low-power standby so they start faster. Pulling the plug for a minute clears that muddle completely. Roku's own help, for example, describes a system restart as removing the power cord for at least 10 seconds, and notes it's not the same as pressing the power button. I suggest a full minute, to be safe with every brand.

Two habits that save a lot of grief

- **Change one thing at a time.** If you move three cables and change two settings at once, you won't know which one fixed it, or which one made it worse.
- **Don't press buttons rapidly.** When a TV is slow to respond, pressing again and again queues up a pile of commands that it then carries out one by one. Press once, then count to three.

> **TIP**
>
> **Unplug from the wall, not the back of the TV**
>
> The power cord on many TVs is easier to unplug at the wall or power strip than at the back of the set, where it can be hard to reach and easy to plug back in loosely. If the TV is on a power strip, switching the strip off and on works just as well.

The quick ladder, all in one place

Step	What to do	Fixes
1	Read the screen and write down any message or code	Points you to the right chapter
2	Check power lights and outlets	Unplugged, switched-off strips
3	Use the right remote	"Nothing happens" moments
4	Press Input / Source on the TV remote	No Signal, wrong picture
5	Unplug the TV and device for a minute	Freezes, odd behavior, most glitches
6	Wait two or three minutes	Slow startups that look like failures
7	Go to the matching chapter	Everything else

CHAPTER 3

Write It Down First

When something goes wrong, the screen often tells you exactly what's happening, and then the message disappears. A few notes on paper make every fix faster, whether you're doing it yourself, calling your cable company, or calling me. Keep a pen and this page near the TV.

What to write down when something goes wrong

- **The exact words on the screen.** "No Signal," "Not connected to the internet," "Error code 014.30," "Something went wrong." Copy them exactly, numbers and all.
- **What you were doing when it started.** Turning the TV on, switching apps, after a storm, after someone visited, after a power flicker.
- **What still works.** Does the TV menu come up? Does sound play? Do other apps work? Does the internet work on your phone?
- **Which lights are on.** The TV's small light, the cable box, the streaming stick, the router and modem.
- **What you've already tried.** So you don't repeat steps, and so a helper knows where to start.

TIP

Take a photo of the screen

If you have a smartphone, the easiest way to "write it down" is to take a picture of the TV screen with your phone's camera. Error codes, menu screens and messages are all captured exactly, and you can show the photo to whoever helps you.

Write these down once, before anything goes wrong

Some information is hard to find in a hurry. Spend ten minutes on a calm day filling in this list. It will make any future fix, or a factory reset, far less stressful.

Write down	Where to find it
TV brand and model	On a sticker on the back of the TV, or in the TV's Settings under **About**, **Support** or **System**.
Streaming device	Roku, Fire TV, Google TV Streamer or Chromecast, Apple TV, or none (apps built into the TV).
What's plugged into each input	For example: HDMI 1 = cable box, HDMI 2 = Roku, HDMI 3 = soundbar. A little label near each port helps too.

Write down	Where to find it
Wi-Fi name and password	Usually on a sticker on your router, unless someone changed it.
Account sign-ins	Your Roku, Amazon, Google, Apple or Samsung account email, and the sign-ins for Netflix, YouTube, and any other streaming apps you pay for.
TV provider account	Spectrum, another cable company, satellite, or a streaming live-TV service, with the account number from a bill.
PINs	Any parental-control or purchase PIN you set up on the TV or streaming device.

HEADS UP

Keep passwords somewhere safe

This list contains sign-ins, so treat it like your checkbook. Keep it in a drawer at home, not taped to the TV where a visitor could read it. If you use a password manager, store it there instead.

Make a simple map of what's connected

Look at the back or side of your TV once, with a flashlight. Each HDMI port has a number printed next to it: HDMI 1, HDMI 2, and so on. Follow each cable to the device it goes to and write it down. When the TV says No Signal on HDMI 2, you'll know at once which box to check. If your TV has an **antenna** or **cable** connection (a round, screw-on connector), note that too.

CHAPTER 4

Your Remotes, Explained

A lot of TV trouble is really remote trouble. Most homes now have at least two remotes, and they do different jobs. Once you know which one runs what, many "broken" moments disappear.

Who does what

Remote	What it's for
The TV's own remote	Came with the television. Turns the TV on and off, changes the **input** (which device you're watching), and opens the TV's own picture and sound settings.
The streaming remote	Came with a Roku, Fire TV, Google TV Streamer or Apple TV. Runs the apps and menus on that device. Many can also turn the TV on and change its volume.
The cable or satellite remote	Came from your TV provider. Changes channels and runs the guide and DVR on the cable box.
A TV with apps built in	If you have a Roku TV, Fire TV smart TV, Google TV, Samsung, LG or Vizio smart TV, the TV's own remote also runs the apps. One remote may be all you need.

Finding the input button

Every TV can show pictures from several sources. The button that switches between them has a different name on different brands. It's usually on the TV's own remote, often near the top.

TV brand	What the button is usually called	Notes
Samsung	**Source**, or Home then **Connected Devices**	Newer Samsung remotes have few buttons; inputs are in the Home menu.
LG	**Input** on standard remotes; on many Magic Remotes, inputs are in the Home menu	Look for the input icon or the word Input.
Vizio	**Input**	Pressing it repeatedly steps through the inputs.
Roku TV (TCL, Hisense, others)	No separate button on most; inputs are **tiles** on the Home screen	Look for tiles named HDMI 1, HDMI 2, Antenna TV.
Fire TV smart TV	Look on the Home screen for the inputs	Some remotes have an input button; it varies by model.

TV brand	What the button is usually called	Notes
Google TV sets (Sony, TCL, Hisense)	**Input** button, or the Inputs option in Settings	Names vary by maker.
Sony and others	**Input**, or a box with an arrow pointing into it	The symbol is common across brands.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menus vary by model and year

TV makers change their remotes and menus every year or two. If your remote doesn't match the table, look for a button showing a **rectangle with an arrow pointing into it**, or the words Input, Source or Inputs in the TV's Home menu. Your TV's user manual, usually on the maker's website, lists the exact button.

When one remote controls everything

Many streaming and cable remotes can turn the TV on and off and change its volume, thanks to a feature called **HDMI-CEC**. That's a standard that lets devices connected by HDMI cable send simple commands to each other. Each brand gives it its own name: Samsung calls it **Anynet+**, LG calls it **SimpLink**, Roku lists it under **Control other devices (CEC)**. It's handy, but it's also behind some puzzling behavior, like a TV that turns itself on, or switches inputs by itself. Chapter 9 explains how to tame it.

TIP

Label your remotes

A strip of masking tape on the back of each remote, marked "TV," "Roku" or "Cable," saves a lot of confusion, especially for visitors and grandchildren. Some families put a colored dot on the one button each person needs most.

Remotes and batteries

When a remote seems dead, batteries are the first suspect. Roku's own help suggests installing new, matching batteries as the often-overlooked first step, and recharging a rechargeable remote. Replace all the batteries in a remote at once, with fresh ones of the same type. Chapter 18 covers remotes that still won't respond after that.

PART 2

Picture & Sound Problems

No Signal, a black screen, missing sound, a picture that looks wrong, and a TV with a mind of its own: try-this-first ladders for each.

CHAPTER 5

"The Screen Says No Signal"

"No Signal" sounds alarming, but it's one of the friendliest messages a TV can show. It means the TV itself is working fine. It's simply looking at an input where nothing is sending a picture. Either it's on the wrong input, or the device on that input is off, asleep, or not connected properly.

Try this first

1. Pick up the **TV's own remote** and press **Input** or **Source**. Step through each input slowly, pausing a few seconds on each. Roku's help puts it plainly: either the HDMI cable isn't fully plugged in, or you're on the wrong input.
2. Check that the device you want is **on**. A cable box, streaming box or stick usually has a small light. If it's dark, check its power cord and the outlet or power strip.
3. Many streaming sticks draw power from a small **USB cable and wall plug**. If that cable has come loose, the stick goes dark and the TV says No Signal. Push both ends in firmly.
4. Wake the device up by pressing **Home** or any button on **its** remote (not the TV's).
5. Push the **HDMI cable** firmly into both the TV and the device. HDMI plugs can work loose, especially if the TV has been moved or dusted.
6. Still nothing? Unplug the **device** (cable box or streaming stick) from power for a minute, plug it back in, and wait two or three minutes before checking again.

> TIP
>
> **Input names to look for**
>
> On the input list you'll see names like **HDMI 1**, **HDMI 2**, **TV**, **Antenna**, **Live TV** or **AV**. Some TVs show the name of the device instead, such as "Roku" or "Cable Box," because they read it over the HDMI cable. If you wrote down your connection map from Chapter 3, you'll know which one to choose.

If that didn't fix it

1. Try the device in a **different HDMI port** on the TV, then switch the TV to that new input. A single worn-out port is not unusual.
2. Try a **different HDMI cable**, if you have one. Roku's help suggests swapping the cable, at least temporarily, when the picture is unreliable. Cables do fail, especially ones that are bent sharply behind a TV that sits close to the wall.

3. If the device is connected through a **soundbar or receiver**, the picture passes through that box first. Make sure it's on, or connect the device straight to the TV as a test.
4. If a TV with a built-in tuner says No Signal on **Antenna** or **Live TV**, the antenna may need a fresh **channel scan**. That's covered in the Smart TVs and Cutting the Cord guides.

GOOD TO KNOW

"No Signal" on the cable box input

If the TV is on the right input and the cable box light is on, but you still see No Signal or a message from the cable box itself, the trouble may be with the box or the cable service rather than the TV. Chapter 22 covers cable box resets and error codes.

When the TV keeps jumping to the wrong input

If the TV switches to another input by itself, for example to the cable box when you turn on the Roku, a device is using HDMI-CEC to say "look at me." Roku's help describes turning off **1-touch play** under **Control other devices** on the Roku, then restarting it, to stop a Roku from grabbing the TV. Chapter 9 explains the brand names and settings for CEC.

FROM BILL

A quick win

In my experience, the input button solves No Signal more often than anything else. If you've tried every input and every cable and still see nothing, give me a call. It may be a failed port or device, and that's worth a proper look.

CHAPTER 6

"Sound but No Picture"

You can hear the show, but the screen is black, or so dark you can barely see anything. This one has a few possible causes, from a simple setting to a real hardware failure. The ladder below separates them, starting with the easy ones.

Try this first

1. Press a button that brings up a menu, like **Home** or **Settings**, on the TV's own remote. If the menu appears, the screen works, and the problem is with the input or device. Go back to Chapter 5.
2. Check for a **screen-off** mode. Some TVs, Roku TVs among them, can turn the screen off while sound keeps playing. Pressing a button on the remote usually brings the picture back.
3. Unplug the TV from the wall for a full minute, then plug it back in and turn it on.
4. Check the picture settings: an **eco** mode or very low **brightness** can make the screen look nearly black (Chapter 8).

The flashlight test

Still black, with sound? This test shows whether the TV's **backlight** has failed. LCD, LED and QLED TVs light their picture from behind; if those lights fail, the picture is there but you can't see it.

1. Turn the room lights down.
2. Turn the TV on and play something with sound, or open a menu.
3. Shine a bright flashlight a few inches from the screen and move it slowly around.
4. Look closely. If you can see faint shapes of the picture or menu where the light falls, the picture is there and the **backlight has failed**.

GOOD TO KNOW

What the flashlight test means

A faint picture under the flashlight points to a failed backlight, a hardware repair. Seeing nothing doesn't prove much either way. OLED TVs have no backlight, so the test doesn't apply to them. Chapter 24 covers repairs.

STAY SAFE

Don't open the TV

TVs contain parts that can hold a dangerous charge even when unplugged. Never take the back off a TV yourself.

CHAPTER 7

"Picture but No Sound"

The picture looks fine, but there's silence. Sound trouble is very often a setting, a mute button, or sound being sent somewhere you don't expect, like a soundbar that's switched off or a pair of headphones in another room.

Try this first

1. Press **Mute** once, then turn the volume up a few steps. Check **both** remotes: the TV's and the streaming or cable remote. Each can have its own volume and mute.
2. If you have a **soundbar or receiver**, make sure it's on and set to the right input (often called TV, ARC or HDMI ARC). Its own little display or lights usually tell you.
3. Check for **headphones**. Bluetooth headphones, or private listening through a phone app, can quietly take the sound away from the TV speakers. Turn the headphones off or disconnect them.
4. Try a different app or channel. If only one show is silent, the problem is with that show or app, not the TV.
5. Restart the device you're watching (unplug it for a minute) and then the TV.

Check where the TV is sending the sound

Every smart TV has a **sound output** setting. If it's set to a soundbar that's unplugged, you'll hear nothing. In **Settings** under **Sound** or **Audio**, find Sound Output, Audio Output or Speakers, and pick **TV Speaker** as a test.

On Google TV devices, for example, Google's help describes the path **Settings** > **Display & Sound** > **Audio** > **Audio Output**, and suggests setting **Digital Audio Out** to **Auto** if a soundbar connected by ARC is silent. Other brands use similar words in slightly different places.

TIP

Soundbar silent? Check ARC and CEC

Soundbars connected with HDMI usually plug into a TV port labeled **ARC** or **eARC**, and they rely on HDMI-CEC to switch on with the TV. If someone moved the cable to a different port, or CEC was turned off, the soundbar may stay silent. Put the cable back in the ARC port and check that CEC (Anynet+, SimpLink, and so on) is on. Music but no voices? Set the sound mode to Standard. The Soundbars & Home Audio guide covers both.

CHAPTER 8

"The Picture Looks Wrong"

Sometimes the TV works, but the picture just looks off. Faces are stretched, the screen is too dark, colors look odd, or movies have a strange, too-smooth look, as if everything was filmed on a home video camera. These are almost always settings, and you can put them right.

Too dark or too bright

1. Open the TV's **Settings** and look for **Picture**, then **Picture Mode**.
2. Try **Standard** first. Modes called Vivid or Dynamic are very bright and blue; Movie, Cinema or Filmmaker Mode are warmer and darker, and look best in a dim room.
3. If the whole screen is dim, look for an **energy-saving**, **eco** or **power-saving** setting, and turn it down or off. Some TVs also have a light sensor that dims the picture in a dark room.
4. Still not right? Look for **Reset Picture** or **Picture Reset** in the picture menu. It puts just the picture settings back to normal, without touching anything else.

Stretched, squashed, or with black bars

Older shows were made for squarer screens, so on a wide TV they may show black bars on the sides. That's normal. If people look short and wide, or the edges are cut off, the TV's **picture size** or **aspect ratio** setting has been changed. Look in the picture settings for a choice named Picture Size, Aspect Ratio or Screen Size, and pick **Auto**, **16:9** or **Original**. On a cable box, there may be a similar setting in the box's own menu.

The "soap opera effect"

If movies look unnaturally smooth, almost like a live news broadcast, you're seeing **motion smoothing**. The TV invents extra in-between frames to make fast motion look smoother. Many people dislike how it makes films look, and nicknamed it the soap opera effect. Turning it off is safe, and you can always turn it back on.

Brand	What the setting is called	Where to look
Samsung	**Picture Clarity Settings** (older models: **Auto Motion Plus**)	**Settings** > **Picture** > **Expert Settings**. Set it to Off.
LG	**TruMotion** (some newer models use a different name)	Picture settings, usually under an advanced or clarity section.

Brand	What the setting is called	Where to look
Vizio	**Smooth Motion** or **Motion** settings; some models have **Real Cinema Mode**	Advanced Picture settings.
Sony	**Motionflow**	Picture settings, usually under motion.
Roku TVs, TCL, Hisense	Often **Action smoothing**, **Motion** or **MEMC**	Picture settings while watching; names vary by maker.
Any brand	**Filmmaker Mode**, where offered	A picture mode that turns motion smoothing and other extras off in one step.

GOOD TO KNOW

Names change from year to year

I checked Samsung's own help, which names **Picture Clarity Settings** (also called Auto Motion Plus) under Expert Settings. Other brands rename these features often, so treat the table as a guide to what to look for. If you can't find it, look for any setting with "motion," "smooth," "clarity" or "judder" in its name.

The wrong colors or a strange tint

A green, purple or pink tint over everything usually means a loose or damaged HDMI cable. Push it in firmly at both ends, or try a different cable. If the tint appears only on one input, it's that device or cable. If it's on every input, including the TV's own menus, try a picture reset and then a full unplug. A tint that remains on the TV's own menus after that may be a hardware fault (Chapter 24).

TIP

Someone "fixed" the picture for you?

If a visitor or a store adjusted the picture and you prefer how it was, use **Reset Picture** in the picture menu. It returns only the picture settings to the factory defaults, and leaves your apps, sign-ins and channels alone.

CHAPTER 9

"The TV Turns Itself On or Off"

A TV that switches on in the middle of the night, or turns off halfway through a show, can be unsettling. It's rarely a ghost and seldom a fault. Usually a timer, an energy setting, or a connected device is giving the command.

If it turns itself off

1. Check for a **sleep timer**. If someone set one, the TV will switch off after a set time. Look in the TV's settings under Timer, Time or System.
2. Check for an **auto power off** or **energy-saving** setting. Many TVs turn off after a few hours with no button presses, to save power. If you watch long stretches without touching the remote, this can catch you out. Look for it in the power, general or eco settings.
3. Check for **no-signal power off**. Some TVs switch off if an input has no signal for a while. If the cable box takes a long time to start, the TV may give up waiting.
4. Make sure the power cord is firmly plugged in, and isn't on a switched outlet or a worn power strip.

If it turns itself on

The most common cause is **HDMI-CEC**, the feature from Chapter 4 that lets connected devices control each other. When a cable box, game console or streaming stick wakes up for an update, it can wake the TV and switch it to its input. LG's own help traces exactly this behavior to CEC power commands from a connected device, often a set-top box.

Brand	What CEC is called, and where
Samsung	**Anynet+ (HDMI-CEC)**, in the connection or external device settings.
LG	**SimpLink (HDMI-CEC)**, in the HDMI or external device settings. LG suggests turning SimpLink off, then turning off power sync on the connected device.
Vizio	**CEC**, in the system settings.
Roku	**Settings** > **System** > **Control other devices (CEC)**, including **1-touch play**.
Sony	**BRAVIA Sync** on many models.

HEADS UP

The tradeoff of turning CEC off

Turning CEC off stops surprise wake-ups, but it also stops the handy parts: your streaming remote may no longer turn the TV on or change its volume, and a soundbar may not switch on with the TV. LG's help notes this tradeoff. A good middle path is to leave CEC on at the TV and turn off the "wake the TV" or power-sync option on the **one device** that causes it.

Other causes worth checking

- **An on-timer** set in the TV's timer settings, perhaps by accident.
- **A voice assistant or phone app.** Smart speakers and phone apps can turn some TVs on. If you have one, check its routines.
- **A second remote** in another room, or a remote pressed by a pet or a cushion.
- **A power flicker.** Some TVs turn back on by themselves after a power outage.

FROM BILL

When it might be hardware

If a TV turns off and back on over and over, clicks, or won't stay on even after you've unplugged it and turned off CEC and timers, that points to a failing power supply. Roku's help, for example, has a separate article for a Roku TV that keeps restarting or is stuck on the logo. Chapter 24 explains your options. I'm happy to take a look: $49 remote · $99 in your home.

PART 3

Frozen Apps, Restarts & "No Internet"

The spinning circle, the app that won't open, and the dreaded "not connected": a general ladder, then exact restart steps for each brand.

CHAPTER 10

"The App Is Frozen or Spinning"

You pick a show and get a spinning circle, a frozen picture, or an app that closes the moment it opens. This is the most common streaming problem of all, and it almost always responds to the same ladder. The brand-by-brand chapters that follow give the exact buttons for your device.

First, is it one app or everything?

This one question saves a lot of time. Open a **different** app, like YouTube, and play something.

- **Only one app is stuck:** the problem is that app. Work down the ladder below.
- **Every app spins or says it can't connect:** the problem is probably the internet. Go to Chapter 16.
- **The whole device is frozen and won't respond to the remote at all:** go straight to a restart by unplugging (step 3 below).

The frozen-app ladder

1. **Back out and try again.** Press **Back** or **Home**, wait a few seconds, and open the app again. Sometimes a show just failed to start.
2. **Close the app completely.** Pressing Home doesn't always close it; it may keep running behind the scenes. Use your device's way to **force stop** or **force quit** it (see your brand's chapter).
3. **Restart the device.** Use the restart in Settings, or unplug it for a minute. This clears most glitches.
4. **Check for updates.** Update the device's software and the app itself. Chapter 17 shows how.
5. **Clear the app's cache or data.** On Fire TV and Google TV you can do this from Settings. Clearing **data** signs you out of that app, so have its password ready.
6. **Remove and reinstall the app.** Delete it, restart the device, and add it again from the app store. You'll need to sign back in.
7. **Check whether the service itself is down.** Sometimes Netflix or another service has an outage. If it fails on your phone too, it's the service, and it will come back on its own.

GOOD TO KNOW

What "cache" and "data" mean

An app's **cache** is a pile of temporary files it keeps to load faster, like a scratch pad. Clearing it is safe; the app just rebuilds it. An app's **data** includes your sign-in and settings for that app. Clearing data resets the app to new, so you'll need to sign in again. Try cache first, then data.

HEADS UP

Before you remove an app, find its password

Removing and reinstalling an app, or clearing its data, signs you out. If you don't know the password for Netflix, Hulu or your TV provider's app, find it first, or reset it on a phone or computer. Otherwise you may fix the freeze but be locked out of the show.

When only one show won't play

If everything else plays and just one movie spins, that title may be temporarily unavailable, not included in your plan, or limited by your location. Try another episode or another show. If a message mentions too many screens or devices, someone else on your account may be watching; most services limit how many can play at once.

CHAPTER 11

Restarting a Roku

Roku makes streaming sticks, boxes and the software inside many TVs from brands like TCL and Hisense. The restart steps are the same for all of them. Roku's own help suggests checking the simple things first: fresh remote batteries, whether the Wi-Fi is working on another device, and the HDMI cable. If you have a Roku TV, check whether it responds to the physical buttons on the TV itself, which are often on the bottom edge or the back.

Restart from the menu

1. Press **Home** on your Roku remote.
2. Scroll to and select **Settings**.
3. Select **System**.
4. Select **Power**. If you don't see a Power menu, skip to the next step.
5. Select **System restart**.

Roku describes this as the least invasive reset; it won't change your settings. If the remote doesn't respond at all, unplug the Roku (or the Roku TV) from power for at least 10 seconds, then plug it back in. I suggest a full minute. Both do the same job.

The remote-button shortcut

There's also a well-known button sequence for a Roku that's frozen but still sees the remote. Press these buttons, in order, a little apart:

1. **Home** five times.
2. **Up** arrow once.
3. **Rewind** twice.
4. **Fast Forward** twice.

The screen may freeze for a moment and then the Roku restarts, which can take up to half a minute or so. This sequence is widely shared in Roku's community forums and the tech press, but it isn't in Roku's official help articles, so treat it as a handy extra. The menu restart and unplugging are Roku's official methods.

Fix one app on a Roku

1. Press **Home** and highlight the app's tile on the Home screen.
2. Press the **Star** button (the button marked with an asterisk) to open the options menu.

3. Choose **Remove app** and confirm.
4. Restart the Roku (see above).
5. Add the app again from the **Streaming Store**, open it, and sign in.

GOOD TO KNOW

If "Remove app" is missing

Roku's help says you can't remove an app while you have an active subscription to it billed through Roku. If the option isn't there, that's probably why. You can still restart the Roku, check for updates, and try again.

When several apps fail: reset the network connection

Roku's help recommends a **network connection reset** when you have trouble with several streaming apps, or when a Roku voice remote stops responding even after new batteries. You'll need your Wi-Fi password afterward.

1. Press **Home** and go to **Settings**.
2. Select **Advanced system settings**. On many Rokus it sits inside **System**, so open that first if you don't see it.
3. Select **Network connection reset**, then **Reset connection**.
4. The Roku restarts. Go back to **Settings** > **Network** and set up your Wi-Fi again.

TIP

More about your Roku

For everyday Roku use, including the free phone app that works as a spare remote, see the Roku guide in this series.

CHAPTER 12

Restarting a Fire TV

Amazon's Fire TV comes as a plug-in stick, a Fire TV Cube, and built into smart TVs from brands like Insignia, Toshiba and Amazon's own Fire TV models. Amazon's help lists these fixes. (The Amazon Fire TV / Fire Stick guide in this series covers everyday use.)

Restart from the menu

1. Press **Home** and go to **Settings** (the gear).
2. Select **My Fire TV**. On Fire TV smart TVs and some newer models, it's called **Device & Software**.
3. Select **Restart**, and confirm.

Restart with the remote

If the screen is frozen, Amazon's help says to press and hold **Select** (the center button) and **Play/Pause** together for about five seconds, until the device restarts. On a Fire TV smart TV, Amazon gives the same two buttons for three to five seconds. You can also simply unplug the Fire TV's power adapter; Amazon's guidance ranges from a few seconds to a minute, and a full minute is the safe choice.

Fix one app on a Fire TV

1. Go to **Settings** > **Applications** > **Manage Installed Applications**.
2. Select the app that's misbehaving.
3. Choose **Force stop** if you see it, then open the app again to test.
4. Still stuck? Go back, select the app again and choose **Clear cache**.
5. Still stuck? Choose **Clear data**. This resets the app without deleting it, but you'll need to sign in to it again.
6. As a last step, choose **Uninstall**, restart the Fire TV, and reinstall the app from the Appstore.

GOOD TO KNOW

One button for every cache

Amazon's help also lists a **Clear all Application Caches** option on the Manage Installed Applications screen, which clears every app's cache at once. It's safe, but it can make apps a little slower to open the first time afterward.

CHAPTER 13

Restarting Google TV & Chromecast

Google TV is the software in the Google TV Streamer, the earlier Chromecast with Google TV, and many Sony, TCL and Hisense TVs. Google's own troubleshooting goes in this order: check Wi-Fi, check for updates, restart, check your profile, clear the app's data, and only then factory reset.

Restart from the menu

1. From the Google TV home screen, select **Settings** (the gear, at the top right).
2. Select **System**, then **Restart**, and confirm.
3. When it comes back, try your show again.

If the remote doesn't respond, unplug the device or TV from power for a minute and plug it back in.

Fix one app on Google TV

1. To close a stuck app, go to **Settings** > **Apps**, select the app, then select **Force stop** and **OK**.
2. To check for app updates, search for **Google Play Store** on the TV, open it, select your **profile picture** at the top right, then **Manage apps & games** > **Updates** > **Update all**.
3. To clear an app's data, go to **Settings** > **Apps** > **See all apps**, select the app, then **Clear data**. You'll need to sign in to that app again.

GOOD TO KNOW

Check which profile you're on

Google TV can have several profiles, like Netflix does. Google's help lists checking the profile as its own step: if you're on the wrong one, your subscriptions and apps may seem to be missing. You'll find it in **Settings** under **Accounts & Sign In**.

TIP

More about Google TV

The Google TV / Chromecast guide in this series covers setup, profiles, the remote and casting from your phone.

CHAPTER 14

Restarting an Apple TV

The Apple TV box is usually very reliable, but it can freeze like anything else. Apple's help gives three ways to restart it.

Three ways to restart

1. **With the remote:** press and hold the **TV** button (the one with a little TV screen) and the **Back** button together (on older remotes, the **Menu** button) until the Apple TV's status light blinks rapidly. Then let go.
2. **By unplugging:** disconnect the Apple TV from the power outlet, wait five seconds, then reconnect it.
3. **From Settings:** go to **Settings** > **System** > **Restart**.

Force quit one app

1. Press the **TV** button twice quickly. You'll see all your open apps side by side.
2. Swipe left or right on the remote's clickpad to the app that's stuck.
3. Swipe **up** on the clickpad to close it.
4. Press **Back** to leave, then open the app again.

If an app keeps misbehaving, you can delete it and download it again from the App Store on the Apple TV. Highlight the app on the Home Screen, press and hold the clickpad until the app starts to jiggle or a menu appears, and choose to delete it. Then find it in the App Store and download it again; you won't be charged twice for an app you already own.

GOOD TO KNOW

If the remote itself won't respond

Apple's help for a Siri Remote that isn't working suggests holding the **TV** button and the **Volume Down** button together for about five seconds, until the Apple TV's status light turns off and on again, then waiting for a message that the remote is connected. Chapter 18 has more.

TIP

More about Apple TV

The Apple TV guide in this series covers setup, the Siri Remote, AirPlay and everyday use.

CHAPTER 15

Smart TV Apps: Samsung, LG & Vizio

If your apps are built into the TV itself, the TV maker's own restart and app fixes apply. Menus vary by model year, so if a name doesn't match, look for something close. (The Smart TVs guide in this series covers everyday use.)

Samsung

1. **Cold boot (a full restart):** point the remote at the TV and press and hold the **power** button until the TV turns off and back on and the Samsung logo appears. Samsung says this takes about five seconds. Or unplug the TV for about 30 seconds.
2. **Fix one app:** highlight the app on the Home screen, open its options, and look for **Reinstall**, **Delete** or **View Details**. Clearing an app's data signs you out of it.
3. **Built-in checkup:** Samsung's **Device Care**, at **Settings** > **Support** > **Device Care**, can scan the TV and manage storage. If it's grayed out, Samsung suggests a cold boot first.
4. **When many apps fail:** Samsung offers **Reset Smart Hub** at **Settings** > **Support** > **Device Care** > **Self Diagnosis** > **Reset Smart Hub**. This deletes your downloaded apps and signs you out of your Samsung account and linked services, so treat it as a last step before a factory reset. The PIN is 0000 unless you changed it.

LG

1. **Restart:** LG's help suggests unplugging the TV to restart its system. Wait a full minute before plugging it back in.
2. **Turn off Quick Start+:** this feature keeps the TV half-awake so it starts faster, which also keeps glitches around. LG suggests turning it off to clear temporary errors. On many models it's under **All Settings** > **General** > **Devices** > **TV Management**; on the newest models, under **System** > **Additional Settings**.
3. **Fix one app:** press **Home**, highlight the app, and press and hold the **OK** button (the wheel) for about three seconds to enter edit mode. Select the delete (trash or X) icon. Then find the app again in the **Apps** store and reinstall it.

Vizio

1. **Soft power cycle:** on newer Vizio TVs, press **Menu** and go to **Admin & Privacy** > **Soft Power Cycle** (on some models, **Restart TV**). On older models, look under **System** > **Reset & Admin**. The TV turns off and back on, without erasing anything.
2. **Or unplug it:** unplug the TV for a full minute, then plug it back in.

3. **Then try the app again.** If one app keeps failing, check for a TV software update (Chapter 17).

HEADS UP

Look-alike menu names

Samsung's **Reset Smart Hub**, LG's **Reset to Initial Settings** and Vizio's **Reset to Factory Settings** all erase much more than a restart. They sit right next to the gentle options in the menus. Read the words twice before you select anything with "reset" in it.

CHAPTER 16

"It Says No Internet"

When a streaming app says it can't connect, or the TV says "not connected to the internet," the problem could be the TV, the Wi-Fi, or the internet service coming into your home. The first job is to work out which. Your phone is the best tool for that.

Is it the TV, or the internet?

1. On your phone, **turn off cellular data** for a moment (or just make sure it's on Wi-Fi), and open a website or a video.
2. **If the phone can't get online either,** the problem is your Wi-Fi or internet service, not the TV. Restart the router and modem (below).
3. **If the phone works fine,** the problem is between the TV and the Wi-Fi. Check the TV's network settings, and restart the TV or streaming device.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **A quick way to tell**
> Roku's help uses the same test for jerky, pixelated streaming: try streaming on another device on the same network. If the other device struggles too, it's the network, not the Roku.

Restart the router and modem, the right way

Your internet usually comes through two boxes, or one box that does both jobs: a **modem** (which connects to the outside line) and a **router** (which makes the Wi-Fi). Restarting them in order clears most internet hiccups.

1. Unplug the **power** cord from the modem and the router. Leave the other cables alone.
2. Wait a full minute.
3. Plug the **modem** back in first. Wait until its lights settle, often two to five minutes.
4. Plug the **router** back in, if it's a separate box. Wait another two minutes.
5. Restart the TV or streaming device, then try again.

HEADS UP

Don't press the tiny reset hole

Many routers and modems have a small, recessed **Reset** button. Pressing and holding it can erase the Wi-Fi name and password, and every device in the house would lose its connection. Unplugging the power cord is the safe restart. Leave the reset hole to your internet provider or a technician.

When only the TV can't connect

1. Open the TV or streaming device's **Settings** and look for **Network**, **Network & Internet** or **Wi-Fi**. Google's help, for example, starts at **Settings** > **Network & Internet**.
2. Check that it's connected to **your** network, not a neighbor's or a guest network.
3. If the Wi-Fi password was changed recently, the TV still has the old one. Choose your network and enter the new password.
4. Many routers have two networks with similar names, one ending in 5G or 5GHz. Google's help notes a 5 GHz network can be faster when the router is close. If one doesn't work well, try the other.
5. Restart the device. On a Roku, if several apps fail, try the network connection reset in Chapter 11.

When it's your internet service

If nothing in the house can get online, even after restarting the modem and router, the problem may be an outage. Check your internet provider's app or website on your phone, using cellular data, for outage notices in your area, or call the number printed on your bill. Storms, construction and maintenance can all cause outages, and there's nothing to fix at your end except to wait.

TIP

Weak Wi-Fi near the TV?

If shows often buffer in one room, the TV may be too far from the router or behind thick walls. Google's help suggests moving the router closer or connecting the TV with a network cable. The Home Wi-Fi & Routers guide covers better coverage in depth.

CHAPTER 17

Software Updates

TVs and streaming devices get software updates that fix bugs, improve apps, and patch security problems. Most update themselves overnight. But if a device has been unplugged a lot, or an app has started misbehaving, checking for an update by hand is a good step.

Device	Where to check for updates
Roku	**Settings** > **System** > **System update**, then choose to check for an update
Fire TV	**Settings** > **My Fire TV** (or **Device & Software**) > **About** > **Check for System Update**
Google TV	**Settings** > **System** > **About** > **System update** > **Check for update**
Apple TV	**Settings** > **System** > **Software Updates**
Samsung, LG, Vizio	Look in **Settings** under **Support**, **General** or **System** for Software Update or TV Information. Names vary by model year.

GOOD TO KNOW

Let updates finish

An update can take several minutes and the device may restart once or twice on its own. Don't unplug it during an update. If the screen seems stuck on a progress bar, give it a good 20 or 30 minutes before you consider unplugging.

Updating apps

Apps often update separately. On Google TV, use the Play Store steps in Chapter 13. Elsewhere, apps usually update automatically. Real updates are always free and come from Settings; a pop-up or call demanding payment for an update is a scam (Chapter 25).

GOOD TO KNOW

Very old devices stop getting updates

After some years, makers stop updating older models, and some apps eventually stop working on them. If one app after another stops working on an old stick or TV, it may be time for a new streaming device. A plug-in stick is usually far cheaper than a new TV, and it can give an older TV years more life.

PART 4

Remotes, Voices & Changed Settings

A remote that does nothing, a voice reading every menu, captions that won't leave, and a TV suddenly speaking another language.

CHAPTER 18

"The Remote Does Nothing"

A dead remote makes a perfectly good TV feel broken. The fix is usually batteries, pairing, or simply using the right remote for the job. Work down this ladder.

Try this first

1. **Is it the right remote?** The TV's remote changes inputs and the TV's own settings; the streaming remote runs the apps (Chapter 4).
2. **Fresh batteries.** Replace all of them with new ones of the same type, the right way round. If the remote is rechargeable, like the Apple Siri Remote or some Roku remotes, charge it for a while.
3. **Point and get closer.** Older-style remotes use infrared light and need a clear line to the front of the TV or box. Move anything in the way, like a soundbar, a vase or a picture frame.
4. **Try the buttons on the TV or device itself.** Most TVs have a power button and sometimes volume and input buttons, often under the bottom edge or on the back. If the TV responds to its own buttons, the TV is fine and the remote is the problem.
5. **Restart the device** by unplugging it for a minute. A streaming device that has frozen won't respond to any remote.

> TIP
> **The phone-camera test for infrared remotes**
> Point the remote at your phone's camera, look at the phone's screen, and press a button. Many phone cameras show a faint flicker of light from the tip of an infrared remote. If you see it, the remote is sending. If you don't, try new batteries. (Some phones filter this light out, and remotes that use Bluetooth or Wi-Fi won't show anything, so no flicker isn't proof on its own.)

Pairing a streaming remote again

Many newer streaming remotes don't use infrared. They connect by radio, like a wireless headset, and need to be **paired** with their device. If the pairing is lost, the remote does nothing even with fresh batteries.

Device	How to reconnect the remote
Fire TV	Amazon's help: restart the Fire TV, wait for "Cannot detect your remote" on screen, then press and hold **Home** on the remote for about 10 seconds. If that fails, Amazon describes resetting the remote by holding **Left**, **Menu** and **Back** together for 12 seconds, then removing the batteries, unplugging and replugging the Fire TV, putting the batteries back, and pressing **Home**.
Apple TV	Apple's help: hold the **TV** button and **Volume Down** together for about five seconds, until the status light on the Apple TV turns off and on, then wait for a connection message.
Roku voice remote	Roku's help suggests a **network connection reset** (Chapter 11) if a voice remote doesn't respond after new batteries. Many Roku voice remotes also have a small pairing button, often in the battery compartment.
Google TV	Google's help suggests removing and reinserting the batteries, and checking for a remote update under **Settings** > **Remote & Accessories**.

Use your phone as a spare remote

Roku, Fire TV, Google TV and Apple TV all have free phone apps that work as a remote over your Wi-Fi. Roku's own help, for instance, mentions controlling a Roku with the free Roku mobile app for iPhone or Android. On an iPhone, an Apple TV remote is built into Control Center. A phone remote is a lifesaver when the real one is lost or dead, and it's a good thing to set up now, before you need it. Your phone must be on the same Wi-Fi as the TV.

SCAM ALERT

Use the official remote app only

Search the app store carefully. Some look-alike "TV remote" apps are stuffed with ads or push paid subscriptions. The real ones are made by Roku, Amazon, Google or Apple, and are free. Check the maker's name under the app before you install it.

When to replace the remote

If a remote has been dropped or had a spill, and new batteries and pairing don't help, a replacement is usually the answer. Buy it from the device maker or a reputable store, and make sure it matches your model. A **universal remote** can also run a TV and a cable box together; your cable provider may offer one.

CHAPTER 19

"A Voice Is Describing Everything"

Suddenly the TV is talking: reading out every menu as you move, or describing what's happening in the show ("She walks to the window..."). These are genuine accessibility features, very helpful for people with low vision. They're often switched on by accident, by holding a button too long or pressing one several times. Here's how to turn them off.

First, which voice is it?

What you hear	What it is
A voice reads the menus as you move	That's a **screen reader**: Audio Guide on Roku, VoiceView on Fire TV, TalkBack on Google TV, VoiceOver on Apple TV, Voice Guide on Samsung, Audio Guidance on LG.
A voice describes the action in the show	That's **audio description** (also called descriptive audio or described video), a separate soundtrack for that show. It's turned off in the show's audio options, or in the device's accessibility settings.

Turning off the menu-reading voice

Device	How to turn it off
Roku	Press the **Star** button four times quickly. Roku's help says this shortcut turns the screen reader on or off from any screen when the shortcut is enabled.
Fire TV	Press and hold **Back** and **Menu** together for about two seconds. Amazon's help says you'll hear "VoiceView exiting."
Apple TV	Go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **VoiceOver** and select VoiceOver to turn it off. If an accessibility shortcut is set up, pressing **Back** (or Menu) three times quickly also works.
Samsung	Press and hold the **Volume** button (or **Mute**, on remotes that have one) to open Accessibility Shortcuts, and turn off **Voice Guide**. Or go to **Settings** > **General & Privacy** (or General) > **Accessibility** > **Voice Guide Settings**.
LG	Press and hold **Mute** on the remote to open Accessibility, or go to **All Settings** > **General** > **Accessibility** > **Audio Guidance**, and set it to Off.
Google TV	Look in **Settings** for **Accessibility**, then **TalkBack**, and turn it off. The exact place varies by TV maker.

GOOD TO KNOW

Using a screen reader to turn off the screen reader

With a screen reader on, the remote may behave differently: some systems ask you to press **Select** twice to choose an item. Go slowly, and listen. Once it's off, the remote goes back to normal.

HEADS UP

Samsung's shortcut menu may still talk

Samsung notes that even with Voice Guide off, the Accessibility Shortcuts menu itself can still be spoken aloud. That's normal; once you close the menu, the TV should be quiet again.

Turning off audio description

1. While the show is playing, open its **audio** or **audio and subtitles** options. Most apps have a speech-bubble or audio icon in the playback controls.
2. Look at the audio tracks. A track marked **AD**, **Audio Description** or **Described** is the narrated one. Choose the plain **English** track instead (or your language).
3. If it comes back in every app, the device's setting is on. On Apple TV, it's at **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Audio Descriptions**. On Samsung, look in Accessibility for **Audio Description**. Other devices keep it in Accessibility or Audio settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

It might be the cable box or the app

LG's help points out that some narration comes from a streaming app or a connected device such as a cable box, not from the TV. If the TV's own settings are off and you still hear narration on just one input, check that box's or app's audio or accessibility options.

CHAPTER 20

"Captions Won't Go Away"

Captions (words on the screen) are wonderful when you want them, and maddening when you don't. The tricky part is that captions can be turned on in **three different places**: the app, the streaming device, and the TV or cable box. If you turn them off in one place and they're still on in another, they stay. (If you'd rather keep them but make them easier to read, the Hearing Help Tech guide covers caption styles.)

The caption ladder

1. **In the app:** while the show plays, open the playback options (often a speech-bubble or **CC** icon) and choose **Off** under subtitles or captions. Most apps remember this for next time.
2. **On the streaming device:** turn captions off in its settings (table below).
3. **On the TV:** if you watch through a cable box or antenna, the TV has its own caption setting, usually in **Accessibility** or under **Caption** or **Subtitle**.
4. **On the cable box:** many cable remotes have a **CC** button, or the option is in the box's settings menu. Press it once and see whether the captions disappear.

Device	Where the main caption setting lives
Roku	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Captions** > **Captions mode** (on some Rokus, **Settings** > **Captions**). While watching, the **Star** button menu often has a captions choice too.
Fire TV	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Captions**, or the subtitles option in the app while playing.
Google TV	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Captions**, then turn off **Display**.
Apple TV	**Settings** > **Accessibility**, in the subtitles and captions section, or the subtitles option in the playback controls.
Samsung, LG, Vizio	The TV's **Accessibility** menu, under **Caption** or **Subtitle**. Some remotes have a **CC** or **SUBT** button.

GOOD TO KNOW

A sneaky one on Apple TV

Apple's help notes that pressing the center of the clickpad three times, with VoiceOver off, can turn closed captions on or off. If captions seem to appear out of nowhere on an Apple TV, an accidental triple-press may be the reason, and the same triple-press turns them off.

CHAPTER 21

"Everything Is in Another Language"

One day the menus are in Spanish, or the show is dubbed in French, or the whole layout looks different. Don't worry; nothing is lost. Usually a single setting changed, or an app picked a different audio track. Here's how to find your way back, even when you can't read the screen.

If only the show is in another language

That's the **audio track**, not the TV. While the show plays, open the playback options (audio, or audio and subtitles) and choose **English**. If subtitles in another language appeared, turn them off in the same menu. Some apps remember the last language you picked, so check again on the next show.

If the menus are in another language

The device's **language** setting has changed. You can change it back by following the position of things on screen, even if you can't read them. Settings menus keep their gear icon, and the language choice is usually in the system or general section.

1. Open **Settings**. Look for the **gear** icon; it's the same in every language.
2. Look for the section that's usually called **System**, **General** or **Device**. On many devices it's near the bottom of the list.
3. Inside it, look for a choice that shows a list of languages when opened, with each language written in its own words: **English**, **Español**, **Français**. When you see "English" written plainly, select it.
4. Press **Back** a few times to check that the menus are in English again.

Device	Where the language setting usually is
Roku	Usually **Settings** > **System** > **Language**.
Fire TV	Usually **Settings** > **Preferences** > **Language**.
Google TV	Usually **Settings** > **System** > **Language**.
Apple TV	**Settings** > **General** > **Language and Region** on many versions; Apple's guide calls this "Change language or region."
Samsung, LG, Vizio	In the TV's **General** or **System** settings, under **Language** or **Menu Language**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Exact spots vary

Menus move around between software versions, so treat these as where to *start* looking. If you're stuck, take a photo of the screen with your phone and use a translation app's camera feature, or call me and we'll find it together.

If the layout changed, not the language

Streaming devices redesign their home screens from time to time, usually in an overnight update. Your apps and sign-ins are still there, just moved. Look for a row of app icons, or an **Apps** or **Your apps** section. You can usually move your favorite apps back to the front. The guide for your device in this series shows how.

TIP

Grandchildren visited?

A changed language, a different picture mode, a new profile or captions in a new color are often the sign of a helpful visitor exploring the settings. Nothing is broken. Work through this chapter and Chapter 8, and the TV will be back to how you like it.

PART 5

Cable & Satellite Boxes

Error codes, frozen guides and missing channels: how to reset a cable box properly, and when to let your provider take over.

CHAPTER 22

"Cable Box Error"

A cable box is its own little computer, connected to your provider's network. When it shows an error code, a frozen guide, a black screen on every channel, or "channel not available," the fix is usually a proper restart. Around here, many homes have Spectrum, so I'll use Spectrum as the main example, but the same ideas apply to other cable and satellite companies.

Try this first

1. **Write down the error code** exactly, or take a photo of it. Providers publish lists of their codes, and the support agent will ask for it.
2. **Check the TV's input.** If you see the TV's own No Signal message, not a message from the cable box, go back to Chapter 5.
3. **Try another channel or two.** If only one channel is out, that channel may have a problem at the provider's end, or it may not be in your package.
4. **Restart the box by unplugging it.** Spectrum's help suggests unplugging the receiver from the wall outlet for 60 seconds, then plugging it back in.
5. **Wait.** A cable box can take several minutes to fully start and download the program guide. Older Spectrum guidance says to allow up to 20 minutes for some receivers to fully recover. Don't unplug it again in the meantime.

Reset the box from your phone or computer

Most cable companies can send a reset signal to your box over their network. That often fixes problems an unplug can't, like missing channels you pay for. Spectrum's help describes doing this from your online account or the **My Spectrum** app, signed in with your Spectrum username and password:

1. Open the **My Spectrum** app, or sign in at Spectrum's website.
2. Go to **Services**, then **TV**.
3. Choose the box that's having trouble.
4. Select **Restart Equipment** (some older pages call it **Reset Equipment**, under "Experiencing Issues?").
5. Leave the box alone while it restarts, then test it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some boxes can only be reset by hand

Spectrum notes that some equipment can't be reset from your account and has to be unplugged instead. Older Spectrum pages also mention limits on how often a refresh signal can be sent in a day, so don't send reset after reset. One reset, then wait.

Find the meaning of an error code

Spectrum publishes lists of receiver error codes on its support site, by box maker (for example, Arris, Motorola and Pace boxes, or Cisco and Scientific Atlanta boxes). Type the code into Spectrum's support search, or look at the maker's name on the front of your box and find its list. The page usually tells you whether a restart will help or you need to contact Spectrum.

When it's an outage

If every channel is out, or the internet is down too, it may be an outage in your area. The My Spectrum app and Spectrum's website show outage information. After an outage, Spectrum's help suggests restarting your equipment once service returns.

SCAM ALERT

Call the number on your bill, not one from a search

When you need to reach your cable company, use the phone number printed on your bill, on the back of the remote or box, or in the provider's own app. Scammers buy search ads and set up fake "Spectrum support" or "cable help" numbers that ask for payment or remote access to your computer. Your provider won't ask you to pay with gift cards or let a stranger control your computer. More in Chapter 25.

Other providers

Other cable companies, satellite services and fiber TV providers have the same basic tools: unplug and restart, a reset from the provider's app or website, and an error-code list on their support site. Look for words like Restart, Reset, Refresh or Troubleshoot next to your equipment in your provider's app. If you watch live TV through a streaming app instead of a box, the frozen-app ladder in Chapter 10 applies.

What you see	Most likely cause	Try
TV's own No Signal message	Wrong input or box is off	Chapter 5

What you see	Most likely cause	Try
Error code from the box	Box or signal problem	Unplug 60 seconds, then a reset from the app
One channel missing	Channel issue or not in your package	Another channel; check your plan
Guide is blank or frozen	Box still starting or needs a refresh	Wait, then reset from the app
Everything out, internet too	Outage	Check outage info; wait; restart when it's back
Box lights off	No power	Check the cord and outlet

TIP

Swapping the box

If a box keeps failing after resets, your provider can usually replace it, often at a local store or by mail. Ask what it costs before you agree; some providers swap faulty equipment at no charge, others don't. Keep the old box until the new one works, and return it as instructed so you aren't billed for it.

PART 6

Last Resorts, Hardware & Fake Help

The factory reset and what it costs you, honest advice when the TV itself has failed, and the scams that target people with TV trouble.

CHAPTER 23

Factory Reset: The Last Resort

A **factory reset** wipes a TV or streaming device back to how it was the day it left the factory. It can fix stubborn problems that nothing else touches. But it erases your settings, apps and sign-ins, and you'll go through the whole setup again. Treat it as the last rung on the ladder, after restarts, updates and app fixes.

What you lose

- **Your sign-ins.** Roku, Amazon, Google, Apple or Samsung account, and every streaming app.
- **Your apps** and how you arranged them.
- **Your Wi-Fi connection.** You'll need the network name and password.
- **Your settings:** picture, sound, captions, parental controls.
- **Antenna channels**, on a TV with a tuner. You'll need to scan again.

Roku's help is plain about this: a factory reset erases your preferences, unlinks the device from your Roku account, removes all apps and account information, and resets all settings. Google warns that a factory reset erases all your data from the device. Amazon notes it removes downloaded content. Apple says a reset erases all settings and information.

HEADS UP

Have these ready before you reset

Roku's help lists what you'll need, and it applies to every brand: your device account email and password (if the device is linked to a family member's account, you need **their** sign-in), your Wi-Fi name and password, the sign-ins for each streaming app, and any parental control PIN. Roku's advice: if you don't have this information, wait to factory reset until you do. Chapter 3's list is exactly what you need.

Where the factory reset lives

Device	Factory reset from the menu
Roku	**Settings** > **System** > **Advanced system settings** > **Factory reset**. On a Roku TV, choose **Factory reset everything**, then follow the on-screen steps.
Fire TV	**Settings** > **My Fire TV** (or **Device & Software**) > **Reset to Factory Defaults**. Amazon also describes holding **Back** and **Right** for 10 seconds, then confirming on screen.

Device	Factory reset from the menu
Google TV	**Settings** > **System** > **About** > **Factory reset**. A Google TV Streamer also has a button on the back for a hardware reset.
Apple TV	**Settings** > **System** > **Reset**.
Samsung	**Settings** > **General & Privacy** (older: **General**) > **Reset**, then enter the PIN (0000 unless changed).
LG	**All Settings** > **General** > **System** > **Reset to Initial Settings** on recent models. Don't unplug during the reset.
Vizio	**Menu** > **Admin & Privacy** > **Reset to Factory Settings** on newer models; older models use **System** > **Reset & Admin**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Reset buttons on the device

If the remote won't work at all, many devices have a physical reset. Roku's help says streaming players have a **Reset** button (sometimes a pinhole) on the back or bottom, held for about 10 seconds until the light blinks fast. Some Roku TVs use a pinhole held for 12 seconds; others use **Power** and **Find My Remote** held together for 12 seconds. Check your model's help page before you press anything.

After the reset

1. Go through the on-screen setup: language, Wi-Fi, and signing in to the device account.
2. Install updates when offered.
3. Reinstall your apps and sign in to each.
4. Set your picture, captions and sound the way you like them.
5. On a TV with an antenna, run a channel scan.

FROM BILL

Rather not do it alone?

A factory reset and full setup can take an hour or more with all the sign-ins. I'm glad to do it with you, over the phone or in person, and make sure everything is back the way you like it. $49 remote · $99 in your home.

CHAPTER 24

When It's the TV Itself

Most TV trouble is settings, cables and software. But TVs do wear out, and some symptoms point to a real hardware failure. Here's how to recognize them, and how to think honestly about whether a repair makes sense.

Signs it's probably hardware

What you see	What it usually means
Sound but a black screen, and the flashlight test shows a faint picture	The **backlight** has failed (Chapter 6). A repair is possible on many sets, but it means taking the screen apart.
No power light at all, on any outlet, with a known-good cord	The **power supply board** may have failed.
Turns on, clicks, and turns off again, over and over	Often the power supply or main board.
Stuck on the maker's logo even after unplugging and resets	A software or main board problem. Roku TVs offer a **Recovery Mode** to reinstall the software, which Roku calls the most invasive reset method.
Lines, dark patches, cracks or spreading spots on the picture	The **panel** (the screen itself) is damaged. This is usually the most expensive part.
Only one HDMI port fails	A failed port. Often you can simply use another port.

Honest repair economics

Here's the plain truth, without numbers that would be out of date by next month. TV prices have fallen a great deal, and many repairs need a technician's time plus a part. On a smaller or budget TV, a repair can cost close to, or more than, a new set of the same size. On a large, high-end TV that's only a few years old, a repair can make good sense.

- **Check the warranty first.** Look up your purchase date. The maker's warranty, a store protection plan, or your credit card's extended warranty may cover the repair.
- **Get a written estimate** before any work starts, including the diagnosis fee.
- **Compare it with a new TV** of the same size and type. A simple rule of thumb many people use: if the repair costs more than about half the price of a new one, replace instead.
- **Broken screens are rarely worth fixing.** A cracked or damaged panel usually costs as much as the TV.
- **An old TV with failing apps** may only need a new streaming stick, not a new TV.

STAY SAFE

Leave the inside to professionals

Power boards and backlights involve high voltage, and the screen's thin layers are easy to break. Online videos make it look simple, but it isn't safe for most people. If you do replace the TV, recycle the old one properly; many electronics stores and county programs take them, and Roku, for one, lists an e-waste take-back program on its support site.

HEADS UP

Be wary of "we'll fix any TV" ads

Choose a repair shop with a local address, real reviews and a written estimate. Be cautious about anyone who wants payment up front by gift card, wire transfer or cryptocurrency, or who offers to "fix" a TV over the phone by taking control of your computer. That's a scam, not a repair.

FROM BILL

A second opinion

Before you spend money on a repair or a new TV, I can help you work out whether it's really hardware. More than once, a "dead" TV has turned out to be a cable, an input or a setting. $49 remote · $99 in your home.

CHAPTER 25

Fake Help: Activation Scams, Fake Numbers & Pop-ups

When the TV isn't working, it's natural to search online for help. Scammers know this. They set up websites and phone lines that look official and charge you for help that should be free, or worse, take over your computer and bank details. Here's how to recognize them.

The fake "activation fee"

When you set up a Roku, the TV shows a code and asks you to go to a web address to link the device to your account. People who search for that address, instead of typing it, can land on a fake site. It shows an "error" and a phone number, and a person on the phone says there's an activation or registration fee, often a large one.

SCAM ALERT

Roku never charges to activate

Roku's own help says it has never charged money to activate a device, and that there is never a charge to create a Roku account. The only real place to link a Roku is **my.roku.com/link** (also reached as roku.com/link), typed straight into the address bar. Roku also warns that scam sites can appear at the top of search results because scammers pay for ads. If anyone asks you to pay to activate a Roku, hang up.

The same trick is used with other devices and apps. Activation codes for streaming apps, like the ones that say "go to this website and enter the code on your TV," are part of normal setup and are free. Type the address exactly as it appears on the TV screen.

Fake support numbers in search results

Search for "Roku support number" or "Samsung TV help" and the top results may be paid ads from companies that have nothing to do with the brand. Some charge large fees for simple advice. Others ask to connect to your computer, then "find" problems and demand payment.

- **Get support from the maker's own website**, typed in yourself: support.roku.com, amazon.com, support.google.com, support.apple.com, samsung.com, lg.com and so on.
- **Use the number on your bill** for your cable or internet company, or the one in its app.
- **Look at the web address** before you trust a page. A site called something like "roku-activation-help-now" is not Roku.

- **Never let a stranger take control of your computer** to fix your TV. Your TV doesn't need your computer to be fixed.

SCAM ALERT

Red flags on the phone

Real TV and streaming companies won't ask you to pay with gift cards, wire money, or cryptocurrency, won't charge to activate or register a device, and won't ask for your bank password. If someone says your account is "hacked" or your TV has a "virus" and you must pay now, it's a scam. Hang up, and call back on a number you look up yourself.

Pop-ups and warnings on the TV

Real system messages on a TV come from its own menus and look like the rest of the screen. Be suspicious of any message, inside an app or a web browser on the TV, that says to call a phone number, that your TV is infected, or that you must pay for an update or a license. Close the app with your remote, or restart the device. Real updates are free and come from **Settings** (Chapter 17).

SCAM ALERT

Free channels and "loaded" boxes

Be cautious of streaming boxes or apps advertised as giving "every channel free forever." Many carry pirated content, and some ask for payment details or install unwanted software. Stick to apps from your device's official app store.

If you already paid or gave access

1. **Call your bank or card company** using the number on the back of your card. Ask them to stop or dispute the charge.
2. **If someone connected to your computer,** shut it down and have it checked before you use it for banking. Change your important passwords from a different, trusted device.
3. **Report it** to the Federal Trade Commission at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.
4. **Tell someone you trust.** Scammers often call back offering a "refund." That's a second scam. The Spotting & Avoiding Scams guide covers these tricks.

PART 7

When to Call Bill & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest list of when a hand is worth it, what working with me is like, and one page of fixes to keep near the TV.

CHAPTER 26

When to Call Bill

This guide should get you through most TV trouble on your own. But some problems are easier with a second pair of hands, and some aren't worth an evening of frustration. Here's my honest list of when a call makes sense.

Good reasons to call

- You've worked through the ladder for your problem and it's still not fixed.
- You're about to do a **factory reset** and don't have all the sign-ins, or would rather not do the setup alone.
- The TV, cable box, soundbar and streaming device are all tangled together and you're not sure what's plugged into what.
- You suspect **hardware**, and want a second opinion before paying for a repair or a new TV.
- Someone on the phone or a website asked you to pay for activation or support, or connected to your computer, and you're worried.
- You're setting up a TV for a parent or relative and want it simple, labeled, and on one remote.

What working with me is like

I bring 30+ years of professional technology experience, and I explain things in plain English as I go, so you understand what was wrong and how to handle it next time. Many TV problems can be solved by phone or video call: you point your phone at the TV and I guide you through it. For tangled cables, wall-mounted TVs or a full setup, I can come to your home in Portage County, Ohio. There's no judgment and no rush, and no question is too small.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

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

Before you call, it helps to have the message on the screen (or a photo), your TV and device models, and what you've already tried.

CHAPTER 27

Your TV Rescue Cheat-Sheet

Print this page and keep it handy near the TV. It's the whole guide on one sheet: the order to try things, and the restart for each device.

The order to try things

1. Read the screen and write down any message.
2. Check power lights, plugs and power strips.
3. Use the right remote. Fresh batteries if it's dead.
4. Press Input or Source on the TV's remote and step through slowly.
5. Unplug the TV and the device for a full minute. Wait two or three minutes after.
6. Check the internet on your phone. Restart the modem, then the router, if needed.
7. Close, update, clear or reinstall the stuck app.
8. Factory reset only as a last resort, with your sign-ins ready.

Restart by device

Device	How to restart
Roku	**Settings** > **System** > **Power** > **System restart**, or unplug. Frozen-remote shortcut: Home five times, Up, Rewind twice, Fast Forward twice.
Fire TV	Hold **Select** + **Play/Pause** about 5 seconds, or **Settings** > **My Fire TV** (or Device & Software) > **Restart**.
Google TV	**Settings** > **System** > **Restart**, or unplug.
Apple TV	Hold **TV** + **Back** until the light blinks fast, or **Settings** > **System** > **Restart**.
Samsung	Hold the remote's **power** button until the TV turns off and on again.
LG	Unplug for a minute; turn off **Quick Start+** if glitches return.
Vizio	**Menu** > **Admin & Privacy** (or Reset & Admin) > **Soft Power Cycle**, or unplug.
Cable box (Spectrum)	Unplug for 60 seconds, or **Restart Equipment** in the My Spectrum app under Services > TV.

Quick fixes by symptom

Problem	Try
No Signal	Input button; device on; HDMI pushed in; another port or cable.
Sound, no picture	Press Home; check eco and brightness; unplug; flashlight test.
Picture, no sound	Mute and volume on both remotes; soundbar on; headphones off; sound output.
Frozen or spinning app	Back out; force stop; restart; update; clear cache; reinstall.
No internet	Test on your phone; restart modem then router; re-enter Wi-Fi password.
Voice reads menus	Roku: Star four times. Fire TV: hold Back + Menu. Others: Accessibility.
Captions stuck on	Turn off in the app, the device, the TV and the cable box.
Soap opera look	Turn off motion smoothing (Picture Clarity, TruMotion, and so on).
Turns itself on	Check timers and HDMI-CEC (Anynet+, SimpLink, 1-touch play).

SCAM ALERT

Remember

Roku activation is always free, at my.roku.com/link typed in yourself. Get help only from the maker's own website or the number on your bill. Never pay with gift cards, and never let a stranger control your computer to fix your TV.

Keep this handy

What	Yours
TV brand and model	
Streaming device	
HDMI 1 / 2 / 3 / 4	
Wi-Fi name	
Device account email	
TV provider and account number	
Provider phone (from your bill)	
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

CHAPTER 28

A Short Glossary

Plain meanings for the words you'll see on TV screens and in this guide.

Word	What it means
Aspect ratio	The shape of the picture. Wrong settings stretch or squash it.
ARC / eARC	An HDMI port that also sends sound back out to a soundbar or receiver.
Audio description	A narrated soundtrack that describes what's happening on screen.
Backlight	The lights behind an LCD, LED or QLED screen. If they fail, the picture goes dark.
Cache	Temporary files an app keeps to run faster. Safe to clear.
Cold boot	Samsung's name for a full restart.
Factory reset	Erasing a device back to new. Removes apps, sign-ins and settings.
Force stop / force quit	Closing an app completely, not just leaving it.
HDMI	The flat-ended cable that carries picture and sound from a device to the TV.
HDMI-CEC	Lets HDMI devices control each other. Anynet+, SimpLink, 1-touch play.
Input / Source	Which connected device the TV is showing.
Modem	The box that brings the internet into your home.
Motion smoothing	A picture feature that can give films the soap opera look.
Pairing	Linking a wireless remote or headphones to a device.
Power cycle	Turning something off by unplugging it, then back on.
Router	The box that makes your home Wi-Fi.
Screen reader	A voice that reads the menus aloud.

Thank you for reading. I hope your TV is back to its old self. And if it isn't, you know where to find me.

— Bill