BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

# Universal & Simplified TV Remotes

One remote for the TV, soundbar and streaming — plus big-button remotes, phone apps and lost-remote fixes

**A plain-English guide for every living room**

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, cable & universal remotes · facts current November 2026*

# What's Inside

This is your plain-English guide to getting down to one remote, making a remote simpler, using your phone as a backup, and fixing or finding a remote that's gone astray. 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 your coffee table is covered in remotes, what each one really does, and how to pick the simplest path to one remote you can trust.

CHAPTER 1

# A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you have a basket on the coffee table holding three or four remotes, and only one person in the house knows which button does what, you are in very good company. Too many remotes is a classic living-room frustration. It isn't you. Each box simply shipped with its own clicker.

I'm Bill. I've spent 30+ years helping people make sense of their technology, and I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting next to you on the couch: slowly, in plain English, one step at a time. When I use a new word, I'll explain it right there. You don't need to know anything about how TVs work.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this guide does for you

By the end, you'll know how to get down to one remote (or close to it), how to make that remote simpler for someone who finds buttons confusing, how to use your phone as a backup remote, how to find a lost remote, and how to fix one that has stopped working. You'll also know the scams that target people searching for remote help, so you can steer clear of them.

## Good news first: you probably already own the answer

Most people assume the fix is buying a fancy new remote. Often it isn't. Your streaming remote (Roku, Fire TV, Google TV or Apple TV) can usually turn the TV on and off and change the volume, once you switch on one hidden setting. That alone retires one remote for many families. Part 2 walks through it for each brand.

## You can't break anything

Programming a remote feels risky, but it isn't. A wrong code just means a button doesn't work yet. Every setting in this guide can be changed back, and none of it touches your channels or accounts.

## And I'm only a phone call away

If you get stuck, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. I help folks here in Portage County, Ohio, in person and remotely, and remote trouble is something I can often sort out quickly. Help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. Now, let's clear off that coffee table.

*— Bill*

CHAPTER 2

# Why There Are So Many Remotes

Before we start combining remotes, it helps to know what each one is talking to and how. Five minutes here will save you a lot of head-scratching later.

## Who's who on the coffee table

| Remote | What it's for |
|---|---|
| **The TV remote** | Came with the TV. Turns the TV on and off, changes volume and switches the **input** (which plug on the back of the TV you're watching). |
| **The streaming remote** | Came with a Roku, Fire TV Stick, Google TV Streamer or Apple TV. Moves around the apps like Netflix and YouTube. Many can also run TV power and volume. |
| **The cable or satellite remote** | Came from your TV company, such as Spectrum or DIRECTV. Changes channels and opens the guide and recordings. Most can be programmed to run the TV too. |
| **The soundbar remote** | Came with the soundbar. Usually just volume, mute and sound modes. |

## Two ways a remote talks: light and radio

Most older and simpler remotes use **infrared**, or **IR**. That's an invisible beam of light from the little bulb at the front of the remote. IR has to "see" the device, so you point it, and a cushion, a cabinet door or even a sunny window can get in the way.

Newer streaming remotes often use **Bluetooth** or Wi-Fi, which are radio signals. They work through cabinet doors and don't need to be pointed. Here's the twist: many streaming remotes use *both*. They use radio to talk to the streaming stick, and an IR bulb to send power and volume to the TV. That's why your streaming remote may work fine for Netflix but needs to be pointed at the TV for volume.

## The third way: HDMI-CEC

The most useful trick of all is **HDMI-CEC**, which lets devices joined by HDMI cables pass simple commands like "turn on" and "volume up" down the cable. Chapter 4 covers it.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Take a quick inventory

Gather every remote in the room. Next to each one, put a sticky note saying what device it runs. Flip each over and note the brand and model number on the back or inside the battery door. You'll want those model numbers later, when you look up setup steps or buy a replacement.

CHAPTER 3

# Choosing Your Path to One Remote

There's no single right answer. The best choice depends on what you watch and who's holding the remote. Here are the four paths, from simplest to most involved.

| Path | Best for | Cost | Chapter |
|---|---|---|---|
| Use your streaming remote for the TV too | Homes that mostly stream | Usually nothing | 4 to 8 |
| Program the cable remote to run the TV | Homes that mostly watch cable or satellite | Usually nothing | 9 |
| A classic universal remote | TV, cable box and a soundbar or DVD player | Low; check store prices | 10 to 12 |
| A hub-style smart remote | Many devices, gear hidden in a cabinet | Roughly $140 to $380 | 14 |

## Ask these three questions

1. **What gets watched most?** If it's mostly Netflix, YouTube and other apps, start with your streaming remote. If it's mostly cable channels, start with the cable remote.
2. **Who uses it?** If the main viewer gets confused by lots of buttons, look at Part 4 on big-button and simplified remotes before buying anything.
3. **How many boxes are there?** Count the devices that need a remote. Two or three is easy. Five or more, especially in a closed cabinet, is where hub-style remotes earn their price.

TIP

### Try the free fix first

Before you spend money, spend fifteen minutes on Chapter 4 (HDMI-CEC) and the chapter for your streaming device. For a lot of homes, that's the whole job.

FROM BILL

### When the answer is a mix

It's perfectly fine to end up with one main remote plus the cable remote tucked in a drawer for the odd recording. The goal is that the person watching TV every day only needs to reach for one.

PART 2

# Let the Remotes You Have Do More

Turn on one hidden setting and your streaming remote or cable remote can run the TV too. Step-by-step for Roku, Fire TV, Google TV, Apple TV and cable boxes.

CHAPTER 4

# HDMI-CEC: The Hidden Switch That Ties It Together

HDMI-CEC (CEC stands for Consumer Electronics Control) is built into most TVs, soundbars and streaming devices sold in the last decade or so. It's often switched off, or hidden under a brand name that doesn't mention CEC at all. Turning it on is the single biggest step toward one remote.

## What it does for you

- Press Home on your streaming remote and the TV turns on and switches to the streaming input.
- Turn the TV off and the soundbar turns off with it.
- Volume buttons on the TV remote or streaming remote change the soundbar's volume.
- Less hunting for the **Input** button, which is a big help for anyone who gets "lost" on the wrong input.

## Every brand calls it something different

TV makers like to give CEC their own name. Roku's own help pages point out that each brand uses its own name, such as LG SIMPLINK and Samsung Anynet+. Here are the common ones:

| TV brand | Look for this name |
|---|---|
| **Samsung** | Anynet+ (HDMI-CEC) |
| **LG** | SIMPLINK (HDMI-CEC) |
| **Sony** | BRAVIA Sync, or Control for HDMI |
| **Panasonic** | VIERA Link (older models: HDAVI Control) |
| **Philips** | EasyLink |
| **Sharp** | Aquos Link |
| **Toshiba** | CE-Link or Regza Link |
| **TCL** | T-Link, or simply CEC |
| **Roku TVs** | Control other devices (CEC) |
| **Vizio, Hisense and many others** | Usually just "CEC" or "HDMI-CEC" |

## Where to find it

Menus change from year to year, so treat these as starting points. Look in the TV's settings for a section with a name like **General**, **Connection**, **External Devices**, **Inputs** or **System**.

- **Samsung:** on recent models, **Settings** > **All Settings**, then look under **Connection** or **General & Privacy** for **External Device Manager** > **Anynet+ (HDMI-CEC)**. Samsung has moved this between menus over the years.
- **LG:** on most current models, **Settings** > **All Settings** > **General** > **Devices** > **HDMI Settings**, then turn on **SIMPLINK (HDMI-CEC)**. Older LG TVs put it under **Connection**.
- **Roku TV: Settings** > **System** > **Control other devices (CEC)**. Turn on **One-Touch Play**.
- **Other brands:** search the TV's settings for "CEC," or look up "HDMI-CEC" in the TV's manual.

1. Turn on the CEC setting on the TV.
2. If you have a soundbar, look for a similar setting in its menu or app (often called **HDMI control** or **CEC**) and turn that on too.
3. Make sure the soundbar is plugged into the TV's HDMI port marked **ARC** or **eARC**. That's the port that carries sound and CEC volume commands.
4. Turn everything off, wait a minute, and turn it all back on so the devices can find each other.

HEADS UP

### CEC can occasionally be too helpful

Once CEC is on, a device can sometimes turn the TV on or switch inputs when you didn't expect it, for example when a game console updates overnight. If that happens, look for a setting on the TV or the device that controls automatic power or input switching, rather than turning CEC off completely.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Not every TV plays along fully

CEC is a standard, but makers don't all support every command. Some TVs accept power from CEC but not volume, or the other way round. If one piece doesn't work, the streaming remote's own TV-control setup (next chapters) can usually fill the gap using infrared.

CHAPTER 5

# Roku Remotes: Running the TV Too

If you have a Roku streaming stick or box plugged into a TV, the right Roku remote can turn that TV on and off and change its volume. (If your TV *is* a Roku TV, the Roku remote already runs everything.)

## Does my Roku remote have TV buttons?

Look on the side or top of the remote for volume buttons and a power button. Roku says the models that can control a TV include the Roku Voice Remote, Roku Voice Remote Pro and Roku Voice Remote Pro (2nd edition). The most basic Roku remotes without volume buttons can't do it, and Roku sells upgraded remotes on its accessories store.

## Set it up

When you first set up a Roku, it asks whether you want the remote to control your TV. If you skipped that, you can do it any time:

1. Turn the TV volume up to a normal listening level, and make sure it isn't muted.
2. Press **Home** on the Roku remote.
3. Go to **Settings** > **Remotes & devices** > **Remotes**.
4. Choose your voice remote, then select **Set up remote for TV control**.
5. Point the remote straight at the TV. The TV will play some music while the Roku tries different settings. Answer the on-screen question about whether you can hear it.
6. Follow the prompts until it finishes. Then test the power and volume buttons.

TIP

### Got a soundbar or receiver in the middle?

Roku suggests that if your Roku is plugged into a soundbar or receiver instead of directly into the TV, you temporarily plug it straight into the TV during this setup. That helps the Roku detect your TV brand correctly. Move it back afterward.

## If it only half works

- **No music during setup:** the TV volume is too low or muted. Turn it up and try again.
- **Volume works but power doesn't (or the reverse):** Roku notes some TV models only allow volume control, not power. Run the setup again, and if asked, pick your TV brand by hand.

- **Soundbar volume:** Roku remotes can't send IR commands to a soundbar directly. If everything is connected by HDMI and HDMI-CEC is on (Chapter 4), the Roku can still control the sound.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### Hands-free on the Voice Remote Pro

With a Roku Voice Remote Pro (1st or 2nd edition), you can say "Hey Roku, turn on the TV," "Hey Roku, turn up the volume" or "Hey Roku, set volume to 11" without touching the remote at all. CEC needs to be on for the TV commands to work. More on voice in Chapter 19.

CHAPTER 6

# Fire TV Remotes: Equipment Control

Amazon calls this feature **Equipment Control**. It lets an Alexa Voice Remote that has power and volume buttons run your TV, and also a soundbar or receiver. It works through HDMI-CEC plus infrared, so turn on CEC on your TV first (Chapter 4). Amazon says the feature won't work if CEC is unavailable or turned off on the TV.

## Set it up

Most Fire TV devices offer this during first setup. To do it later:

1. From the Fire TV home screen, open **Settings** (the gear icon).
2. Select **Equipment Control**.
3. Select **Manage Equipment**, then **Add Equipment**.
4. Choose what you're adding, such as your TV or a soundbar, then pick the brand from the list.
5. Follow the on-screen test: point the remote at the TV, press the buttons it asks for, and answer whether the TV responded. If it didn't, the Fire TV will try another setting.

TIP

### Volume going to the wrong place?

If you have a soundbar connected by HDMI ARC, you may need to tell the Fire TV that the soundbar, not the TV, should get the volume commands. Look in **Equipment Control** for the volume or soundbar option and pick the soundbar.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Menu names can differ slightly

Amazon updates Fire TV menus from time to time, and Fire TV smart TVs (TVs with Fire TV built in) don't need this at all, since their remote already runs the TV. If your menus look a little different, look for anything that says **Equipment Control** or **Manage Equipment**.

CHAPTER 7

# Google TV Streamer Remotes

The remote that comes with the Google TV Streamer (and the older Chromecast with Google TV) has volume, power and input buttons that can be set up to control your TV, soundbar or receiver. Google calls this setting up the **remote buttons**.

## Set up the volume, power and input buttons

1. Turn on the TV and the Google TV Streamer.
2. At the top right of the TV screen, select your profile picture, then **All settings**.
3. Select **Remotes & Accessories** > **Set up remote buttons**.
4. If you haven't added a device yet, select **Add a device**, then the device type and brand.
5. **Volume:** select **Volume**, then the device that should play the sound. When the music starts, point the remote at that device and press volume up and down. Answer **Yes** or **No, try again**.
6. **Power:** select **Power**, then the device. Turn it off with the remote's power button, wait 8 seconds, turn it back on, and answer whether it worked.
7. **Input:** select **Input**, press the remote's input button to step through the TV's inputs, then switch back to the one your Google TV Streamer is on.

HEADS UP

### Point it at the right box

Google's instructions are clear on this: for volume, power and input, you have to point the remote at the device you want to control. Google also notes the remote can't control every model. If one button won't set up, the TV's own remote (or HDMI-CEC) may still be needed for that one job.

GOOD TO KNOW

### If you see "Control volume and power with your Google TV Streamer remote"

That on-screen message means the remote hasn't been set up for your TV yet. Follow the steps above.

CHAPTER 8

# Apple TV: The Siri Remote and Your TV

Apple's remote for the Apple TV 4K is called the **Siri Remote** (older ones are called the Apple TV Remote). It can turn your TV and receiver on and off and control the volume of your TV, soundbar or receiver. These steps are from Apple's guide for tvOS 26.

## Turn the TV on and off with the Apple TV remote

1. On the Apple TV, open **Settings**.
2. Go to **Remotes and Devices** and move down to the **Home Theater Control** section.
3. If you have a receiver, select **Control TVs and Receivers**. If you don't, select **Turn On Your TV with Your Remote**.

From then on, turning the Apple TV on or off also turns the TV (and receiver) on or off.

## Control the volume

1. Open **Settings** > **Remotes and Devices**, and in **Home Theater Control**, select **Volume Control**.
2. Choose **Auto**. Apple says this is the best choice in most cases.
3. If Auto doesn't work, try **HDMI** (for TVs and receivers that support volume over CEC), **TV via IR** or **Receiver via IR** (for equipment with an ordinary infrared remote).
4. If none of those work, choose **Learn New Device** and follow the on-screen steps to teach the Apple TV remote your TV or soundbar's volume buttons.

GOOD TO KNOW

**One volume at a time**

The Apple TV remote controls volume for either the TV or the receiver, not both at once. Pick the one your sound actually comes out of.

HEADS UP

**Using your iPhone as the remote?**

Apple notes that an iPhone or iPad can't send infrared signals, so if your volume is set to an IR option, the iPhone remote won't change the TV volume. HDMI-CEC volume can work from the phone. Chapter 18 covers phone remotes.

CHAPTER 9

# Cable and Satellite Remotes

If the main thing you watch is cable or satellite, the remote from your TV company is often the best "one remote." Almost all of them can be programmed to turn the TV on and off and run its volume, alongside changing channels on the box.

## How it usually works

Cable remotes come in many models, even from the same company, so the exact button presses differ. The general pattern is the same as a universal remote (Part 3):

- **Automatic setup:** many newer remotes have a guided setup where you hold certain buttons, point at the TV, and the remote tries codes until the TV turns off.
- **Brand code:** you look up a short code for your TV brand and type it in.
- **On-screen setup:** some cable boxes have a remote setup menu that walks you through it on the TV screen.

## Spectrum remotes

Spectrum is the main cable company in much of Portage County, and it has several remote models in use. Spectrum's support website has a **Program Your Remote** section where you pick your remote model and your TV brand to get the right steps and codes. Start there rather than with a random website: the steps for one Spectrum remote don't always work on another.

1. Find the model of your Spectrum remote. It's usually printed on the back or inside the battery door.
2. On a computer or phone, type **spectrum.net** yourself into the address bar (don't click an ad), and search the support pages for "program your remote."
3. Choose your remote model and TV brand, and follow the steps shown for that exact remote.
4. Test power, volume and mute. If one doesn't work, try the next code on the list.

SCAM ALERT

### Watch out for fake "Spectrum" calls

The FTC has warned about scammers pretending to be Spectrum and other TV companies, offering a lower bill if you "prepay" with gift cards. Spectrum won't ask you to pay with gift cards. If anyone does, it's a scam. Hang up and call the number on your bill. More in Chapter 25.

## Other providers

DIRECTV, DISH, Xfinity, Breezeline and others all offer remote programming help on their official websites and in their apps. Use the official site you type in yourself, or the phone number printed on your bill. If the remote came from your provider and has stopped working, ask the provider about a replacement, and what it costs, before buying one elsewhere.

TIP

### Write the code down

Once you find the code that works, write it on a piece of masking tape inside the battery door. If the remote ever loses its memory, you'll have it in thirty seconds.

PART 3

# Universal Remotes

From the inexpensive drugstore remote to hub-style smart remotes: how they work, how to program them, and what happened to Logitech Harmony.

CHAPTER 10

# Classic Universal Remotes

A **universal remote** is a remote that can learn to speak to many brands of TVs, cable boxes, soundbars and DVD players. It has a big list of codes built in. You tell it which code your TV uses, and from then on it behaves like the TV's own remote.

## The familiar names

You'll find universal remotes in drugstores, hardware stores, big-box stores and online. Common brands include **GE** (made under license by Jasco), **One For All**, **RCA** and **Philips**. Simple models are among the least expensive remotes you can buy. They all work in much the same way, so once you've programmed one, you can program any of them.

| Part | What it does |
|---|---|
| **Device buttons** | Buttons marked TV, CBL (cable), DVD, AUX or similar. You press one to choose which device the remote is talking to right now. |
| **Setup button** | The button you hold down to start programming. Often marked SETUP, sometimes shared with another job. |
| **Indicator light** | A small light (sometimes the power button itself) that blinks to show the remote is listening or has accepted a code. |
| **Code list** | A printed booklet or a page on the maker's website listing codes by brand. |

## What to check before you buy

- **How many devices it runs.** A "4-device" remote can handle, for example, the TV, cable box, soundbar and DVD player.
- **Whether it works with your streaming device.** Many basic universal remotes use infrared only. Roku sticks, Fire TV Sticks and other streaming devices that rely on Bluetooth or Wi-Fi remotes often won't respond to them. Read the box carefully.
- **Button size and backlighting,** if anyone in the house has trouble seeing small labels.
- **The return policy,** in case your TV turns out not to be on the code list.

HEADS UP

### A universal remote isn't always simpler

A universal remote replaces several remotes, but it adds a step: you have to press the right device button (TV or CBL) before the other buttons do what you expect. For someone who finds remotes confusing, that can make things harder, not easier. Part 4 covers better choices for that situation.

CHAPTER 11

# Programming: Direct Code Entry or Code Search

There are two main ways to program a universal remote. Both are explained in the instruction sheet that comes with the remote. I'll use a GE 4-device remote as the example, because its manual explains both clearly. Other brands use different button presses for the same idea, so always follow your own remote's instructions.

## Method 1: Direct code entry (try this first)

GE's manual calls this the recommended method, because it's the simplest and quickest in most cases. You look up your TV brand's code and type it in.

1. Find the code list that came with the remote. In the section for your device type (TV, for example), find your TV's brand and circle every code listed for it.
2. Press and hold **SETUP** until the red light turns on, then let go. The light stays on.
3. Press and release the device button you want to use, such as **TV**. The light blinks once and stays on.
4. Type the first 4-digit code you circled. The light turns off after the fourth digit.
5. Point the remote at the TV and try power, volume and channel. If they work, you're done.
6. If they don't, go back to step 2 and try the next code you circled.

## Method 2: Code search (when your brand isn't listed)

If no code works, or your brand isn't in the list, the remote can search through every code it knows. On the GE remote, it sends codes in batches of ten while you watch for the TV to turn off.

1. Turn the TV on by hand.
2. Press and hold **SETUP** until the red light turns on, then let go.
3. Press and release the device button, such as **TV**.
4. Point the remote at the TV and press **POWER**. The remote sends ten codes, blinking for each. If the TV doesn't turn off, press **POWER** again for the next ten.
5. When the TV turns off, turn it back on by hand.
6. Now press **VOL +** once, wait about 3 seconds, and watch the TV. Each press re-tries one code from the last batch. When the TV turns off, press the same device button (TV) to save that code.

7. Turn the TV back on with the remote and test the other buttons.

GOOD TO KNOW

**"It works, but not all the buttons do"**

GE's manual points out that the first code that works may only run a few functions. Another code for the same brand may run more. If the menu or input button doesn't work, try the next code on your list.

TIP

**Find a code online, from the maker**

Most makers have a code lookup on their own website. One For All, for example, has a "Find your setup code" tool on oneforall.com. Use the website printed in your remote's instructions, and type it in yourself. Searching "remote codes" brings up plenty of ad-filled sites, some with wrong codes, and a few with fake support numbers (Chapter 25).

### Another option: "learning" remotes

Some universal remotes, including several One For All models, have a **learning** feature. You point the old remote at the new one, press a button on each, and the new remote copies that command. It's handy for an odd button that no code covers. Your remote's manual will say whether it can learn.

CHAPTER 12

# Finishing Touches: Volume, Inputs and Saving Your Work

Once each device is programmed, a few extra settings make a universal remote much nicer to live with.

## One volume for everything

Without this, the volume buttons change whichever device you last selected. If you're watching cable in CBL mode, volume might try to change the cable box (which often does nothing). Most universal remotes have a setting that sends volume to one device all the time. GE calls it the **Master Volume Feature**; other brands call it "volume lock" or "volume punch-through."

1. On the GE remote: press and hold **SETUP** until the red light turns on, then let go.
2. Press the device button whose volume you always want, such as **TV** (or **AUX** if that's your soundbar).
3. Press **MUTE**, then **VOL +**. The red light blinks twice and turns off.

## Record your codes

GE remotes can tell you the code they're using: hold **SETUP** until the light comes on, press the device button, press **ENTER**, then press **1** and count the blinks for the first digit, **2** for the second, and so on. Write the result down.

| Device button | Device | Code that works | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| TV | | | |
| CBL | | | |
| DVD | | | |
| AUX | | | |

TIP

### Changing batteries without losing codes

Many universal remotes keep their codes briefly with the batteries out (up to 10 minutes on the GE model). Have the new batteries ready and swap them promptly.

CHAPTER 13

# Logitech Harmony: What Happened, and What to Do

For years, Logitech's Harmony remotes were the go-to choice for households with lots of equipment. If you own one, or someone suggests buying one, here's where things stand.

## The short version

- Logitech announced in April 2021 that it would stop making Harmony remotes. Any you find for sale now are leftover, used or refurbished stock.
- Logitech shut down the old **Harmony Remote Software** on May 28, 2025. That affected older models such as the Harmony 510 through 900 series, the 1000 and 1100, and Harmony for Xbox 360. Those remotes keep working with their current settings, but you can no longer change them, update them, or add a new device.
- Newer models are still supported, according to Logitech's Harmony support site as of November 2026. Remotes like the Harmony Elite, Companion, Hub, Smart Control, Touch, Ultimate family, 650, 665 and 950 are set up with the **MyHarmony** desktop software or, for hub-based models, the **Harmony** phone app. Logitech's real Harmony help is at **support.myharmony.com**.

## If you already own a working Harmony

1. Keep using it. If it works today, there's no reason to throw it out.
2. Write down what each Activity does ("Watch TV," "Watch Roku" and so on) and which inputs it uses, in case you ever need to set up a replacement.
3. If you have a newer hub-based model, keep the Harmony app on your phone up to date. Logitech's support site notes that MyHarmony desktop software no longer runs on newer Macs (macOS 10.15 and later), so hub-based remotes are set up from the phone app instead.
4. If your remote is one of the older models whose software was shut down, avoid resetting it. A reset would erase settings you can no longer put back.

HEADS UP

### Think twice before buying one now

A Harmony that depends on Logitech's servers and apps could lose support someday, and I haven't found an end date Logitech has published for the newer models. Buying a used one in 2026 is a gamble. If you need that kind of remote today, look at current alternatives (next chapter).

CHAPTER 14

# Hub-Style Smart Remotes Today

A **hub-style remote** comes with a small box, the hub, that sits near your equipment. The handheld remote talks to the hub, and the hub sends the commands out by infrared, Bluetooth or Wi-Fi. Because the hub does the sending, you don't have to point the remote, and equipment inside a closed cabinet can still be controlled.

## What they do well

- **Activities.** One button, such as "Watch TV," turns on the TV, the cable box and the soundbar and picks the right input.
- **Mixed equipment.** Infrared TVs, Bluetooth streaming sticks and Wi-Fi devices on one remote.
- **Hidden gear.** Boxes behind cabinet doors still respond.

## Current examples

SofaBaton is one company making this kind of remote in 2026. Its website lists three models. I'm listing them so you know what's out there, not as a recommendation; check compatibility with your own equipment on the maker's site before buying.

| Model | What it is | List price (Nov 2026) |
|---|---|---|
| SofaBaton X2 | Hub-based touchscreen remote with charging dock, for complex setups | $379.99 |
| SofaBaton X1S | Hub-based remote for multi-device living rooms | $199.99 |
| SofaBaton U3 | Simpler remote for everyday living-room setups | $139.99 |

SofaBaton's site was running sale prices below these in mid-November 2026, so prices move around. One For All also sells "Smart Control" models (such as the Smart Control 8 and Smart Control Pro family) that combine several remotes and are set up with a free phone app.

HEADS UP

### Honest drawbacks

These remotes take real setup time, usually with a phone app, and someone has to understand the setup to fix it when a TV or box changes. Many need recharging. For a single TV with a streaming stick, they're usually more than you need. For a home theater with five boxes, they can be a real relief.

PART 4

# Simple Remotes for Seniors and Caregivers

Big-button remotes, ways to make an ordinary remote less confusing, and setting up a TV for someone living with memory loss.

CHAPTER 15

# Big-Button Remotes

A big-button or "simple" remote does the opposite of a universal remote. Instead of more buttons, it has fewer: power, volume, channel and maybe a few favorite-channel buttons, in large, high-contrast keys. For many older viewers, and for people with low vision, arthritis or memory loss, that's exactly what's needed.

## What to look for

- **Few, large buttons** with clear labels and good contrast.
- **Favorite-channel buttons** you can program, so the viewer doesn't need to type channel numbers.
- **Works with both the TV and the cable or satellite box,** if you have one.
- **A way to hide the setup buttons,** so settings can't be changed by accident.
- **What it does not control.** Most simple remotes use infrared only.

## An example: the Flipper remote

One widely sold example is the **Flipper** big-button universal remote. According to the maker's website, its face shows just six functions: power, channel up and down, volume up and down, and mute. The face slides down to reveal number keys and programmable function keys for a caregiver to set up, including favorite channels. It's designed to run a TV together with a cable, satellite or antenna box, and it uses two AAA batteries (not included).

HEADS UP

**Important: it doesn't run streaming devices**

Flipper's own website says it doesn't support streaming devices such as Roku, Google TV, Apple TV or Amazon Fire TV. On a smart TV it handles only the basic functions. That's true of most big-button remotes. They suit homes where the viewer mainly watches cable, satellite or antenna channels.

## If the viewer mainly streams

Simple streaming is harder, because apps need arrow buttons and an OK button to move around. A few approaches that help:

- Use the streaming remote with HDMI-CEC turned on (Chapter 4), so one remote does everything, then simplify it (next chapter).

- Put the one or two apps they use first on the home screen.
- Use voice: on many streaming remotes, holding the microphone button and saying "Open Netflix" or "Play The Andy Griffith Show" is easier than navigating menus (Chapter 19).

**TIP**

### Buy where you can return it

Big-button remotes vary a lot in how well they work with a particular TV and box. Buy from a store or the maker's own site with a clear return policy, and test it within the return window.

CHAPTER 16

# Simplifying the Remote You Already Have

You don't always need a new remote. A few minutes with tape and a marker can turn a confusing remote into a friendly one.

## Hide what isn't needed

- **Cover rarely used buttons** with a strip of painter's tape or electrical tape. Input, Settings and Menu are the usual troublemakers, since one accidental press can leave the TV on a blank screen.
- **Cut a cardboard or plastic overlay** with holes only over the buttons that matter.
- **Leave the important buttons uncovered:** power, volume, channel up and down, and maybe OK and the arrows on a streaming remote.

## Make the important buttons stand out

- Put a dot of bright nail polish or a colored sticker on the power button.
- Use one color for volume and another for channel.
- Add a large, simple label on the back: "Red = ON/OFF. Green = LOUDER/SOFTER. Blue = CHANNEL."
- Raised "bump dot" stickers, sold for appliances, help people who go by feel.

## Stop the TV from getting "lost"

A very common remote mix-up is a TV showing "No Signal." Usually, someone pressed Input by accident, and the TV is now showing an empty plug. Turning on HDMI-CEC (Chapter 4) helps a lot, because the streaming device or cable box switches the TV back to itself when you press its Home or power button. Covering the Input button helps too.

> **TIP**
>
> **Make a one-card cheat sheet**
>
> Write three to five steps in big letters on an index card, such as "1. Press RED to turn on. 2. Wait. 3. Press GREEN for louder." Tape it to the table beside the chair. Keep it short. If it needs more than five steps, the setup needs simplifying.

CHAPTER 17

# Setting Up a TV for Someone with Memory Loss

For a person living with dementia or other memory loss, the TV can be a real comfort, and a confusing remote can turn that comfort into frustration. These are practical setup ideas. Every person is different, so watch what works and adjust. Their doctor or care team may also have suggestions.

## Set it up so it just works

1. **Pick one device for watching.** If they watch cable, make the cable box the only thing they need. If they watch one or two streaming apps, make that the plan.
2. **Turn on HDMI-CEC** so pressing power on the main remote brings up the right picture every time.
3. **Choose a simple remote** (Chapter 15) or simplify the existing one (Chapter 16). Program favorite channels if the remote allows.
4. **Remove the other remotes** from the room. Put them in a drawer elsewhere, labeled for family and caregivers.
5. **Keep a phone remote as your backup** (Chapter 18), so family can fix things without hunting for the hidden remote.

## Small things that help

- Turn off features that change the screen unexpectedly, such as auto-playing previews or the TV's "ambient" or art modes, where you can find them in the settings.
- Turn on captions if hearing is an issue; many people find them reassuring.
- Set a comfortable volume, and if the remote allows a volume limit, consider using it.
- Leave the TV on a calm, familiar channel when you step out, rather than an app home screen full of choices.

FROM BILL

### Families often do this together

Setting up a TV for a parent is something I'm glad to help with. A visit lets me see the actual TV, boxes and chair, set it all up, and leave a printed card behind. Call (330) 200-8042. Help is $49 remote · $99 in your home.

PART 5

# Your Phone and Your Voice as Remotes

Free official apps that turn your phone into a backup remote, and how to change channels and volume just by asking.

CHAPTER 18

# Your Phone as a Remote

Every major streaming device and smart TV maker offers a free phone app that works as a remote. It's the best backup there is: when the real remote is lost, dead or under the dog, the phone in your pocket can take over. Most also have a keyboard, which makes typing passwords and searches much easier than pecking at letters with arrow buttons.

## The official apps

| Device | App to use |
|---|---|
| **Roku** | The free **Roku** remote app for iPhone and Android. Tap **Remote** in the navigation bar to get the remote screen. |
| **Google TV Streamer and Google TV** | On Android: the **Google TV** app, tap **Connect TV**. On iPhone or Android: the **Google Home** app, tap the device (on iPhone, tap **Open remote**). |
| **Amazon Fire TV** | The free **Amazon Fire TV** app for iPhone and Android. |
| **Apple TV** | Built into the iPhone. The **Apple TV Remote** lives in **Control Center**; no download needed. |
| **Samsung TVs** | The **SmartThings** app. Needs a free Samsung account and the TV added as a device. |
| **LG TVs** | The **LG ThinQ** app. LG advises downloading only the one listing LG Electronics as the developer. |

SCAM ALERT

### Only download the real app

App stores are full of look-alike "TV remote" apps, some covered in ads, some charging subscriptions. In the App Store or Google Play, check that the developer is the actual company (Roku, Google, Amazon, Samsung, LG). The official apps listed above are free.

## Getting connected

Nearly every phone remote works over your home Wi-Fi. That means two things:

- The phone and the TV or streaming device must be on the **same Wi-Fi network**.
- The first time, you usually confirm a code or tap OK on the TV screen to pair them.

### Roku app

1. Install the Roku app from the App Store or Google Play and open it.
2. Make sure your phone is on the same Wi-Fi as the Roku.

3. Tap **Devices** and pick your Roku, then tap **Remote** to use it.

### Google TV Streamer

1. On an Android phone, open the **Google TV** app and tap **Connect TV** near the bottom right.
2. Choose your device, type the code shown on the TV, and tap **Pair**.
3. On an iPhone, open the **Google Home** app, tap your Google TV device, then tap **Open remote**.

### Apple TV Remote on iPhone

1. Open **Control Center**. On iPhone X and later, swipe down from the top-right corner. On iPhone SE or iPhone 8 and earlier, swipe up from the bottom edge.
2. Tap the **Apple TV Remote** button and choose your Apple TV. The first time, you may be asked to enter a code shown on the TV.

### Samsung SmartThings

1. Make sure the TV has been added in the SmartThings app (you'll need a free Samsung account).
2. Open **SmartThings**, tap **Menu**, then **All devices**, and choose your TV.
3. An on-screen remote appears with volume, channel, mute, Home, Back and Guide.

### LG ThinQ

1. Install **LG ThinQ** and add your TV by following the app's setup.
2. Tap the TV's card in the app, then tap **Remote Control**.

TIP

**Set it up now, before you need it**

A phone remote is easiest to set up while the real remote still works, because pairing can ask you to press OK on the TV. Do it today, and you'll have a backup ready the day the remote disappears.

GOOD TO KNOW

**What the phone can't do**

Phone remotes talk over Wi-Fi, not infrared, so they usually can't run an older TV, cable box or soundbar that only listens to IR. And if the TV is completely off, some apps can't wake it. They're a backup, not a full replacement for every remote.

CHAPTER 19

# Voice Control

For many people, especially those with shaky hands, arthritis or poor eyesight, talking to the remote is easier than pressing buttons. Most streaming remotes now have a microphone button, and some speakers and remotes can listen hands-free.

## Press and talk

On Roku voice remotes, Fire TV Alexa Voice Remotes, the Google TV Streamer remote and the Apple Siri Remote, there's a button with a microphone (or Siri) symbol. Hold it down, speak, then let go. Things to try:

- "Open YouTube." "Launch Netflix."
- "Find westerns." "Show me cooking shows."
- "Play The Price Is Right."
- "Pause." "Go back 30 seconds." "Turn on captions."

Exactly which commands work depends on the device and the app, so if one doesn't, try saying it a slightly different way.

## Hands-free

- **Roku Voice Remote Pro:** say "Hey Roku" followed by a request, such as "Hey Roku, turn up the volume." Roku says to speak naturally; no need to shout or slow down.
- **Samsung TVs:** Samsung's support pages describe Bixby and Alexa built into many Samsung TVs.

GOOD TO KNOW

### A word on privacy

Hands-free features listen for their wake word all the time. If that bothers you, each device has a way to turn hands-free listening off and keep the press-to-talk button. Look in the device's settings for voice or microphone options.

TIP

### Speak to it like a person

Hold the button, wait a moment, say the request plainly, then let go. Short, clear requests work best. If it gets something wrong, just try again; nothing bad happens.

PART 6

# Lost, Broken and Replacement Remotes

How to find a lost remote, fix one that won't work, re-pair it, keep the batteries happy, buy the right replacement, and avoid remote-related scams.

CHAPTER 20

# Finding a Lost Remote

Before you take the couch apart, check whether your remote can call out to you. Some can.

## Roku: lost remote finder

Roku voice remotes with a built-in speaker can play a sound so you can find them. Roku names the Roku Enhanced Voice Remote and Roku Voice Remote Pro (2nd edition) as examples. To check yours, look for small speaker holes on the back.

- **From the Roku app:** tap **Devices**, connect to your Roku, tap the three dots next to it, and choose **Ping Remote**.
- **By voice (Voice Remote Pro):** say "Hey Roku, where's my remote?"
- **On the player:** some Roku players, such as the Roku Ultra, have a lost remote finder button on the box itself.
- **On a Roku TV:** use the TV's own control button to open the **Inputs** menu and choose **Find Remote**. Roku Pro Series TVs have a **Find My Remote** button on the right side.

The remote plays a sound for up to 60 seconds; press any button to stop it. Roku notes it won't work if the batteries are dead, the rechargeable battery is too low, or the remote is out of range.

## Apple TV: Find My and your iPhone

- **Siri Remote (4th generation)** paired with an Apple TV 4K (2nd generation) or later: open the **Find My** app on your iPhone, tap **Devices**, tap **Siri Remote (4th generation)**, and tap **Play** to make it sound.
- **Siri Remote or Apple TV Remote (2nd generation) and later:** with iOS 17 or later on the iPhone and tvOS 17 or later on the Apple TV, open **Control Center**, tap the **Apple TV Remote**, tap the device list, then tap **Find** next to the lost remote. A circle on screen grows and the text changes from "far" to "near" to "here" as you get closer.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Which Siri Remote do I have?

Only the newest Siri Remote (4th generation) shows up in the Find My app. Older Siri Remotes use the Control Center "Find" method instead, which only works within Bluetooth range, so walk around the room while you look. Apple's support site has an "identify your Apple TV remote" page if you're unsure.

## Fire TV, Google TV and others

If your remote can't make a sound, use the phone app (Chapter 18) to keep watching while you look. Then check the usual hiding places: between and under cushions, in the recliner mechanism, in blankets, in the kitchen, in the bathroom, and in the pocket of whoever watched last.

**TIP**

### A tracker tag is an option

Some families stick a small Bluetooth tracker tag, the kind used for keys, to the back of a remote that goes missing a lot. It adds a little cost and one more battery to watch, but it can end the couch search.

CHAPTER 21

# Remote Not Working? Start Here

Most "broken" remotes aren't broken. Go through these steps in order; most problems are solved in the first three.

1. **Fresh batteries.** Put in brand-new batteries, all of the same type, the right way round. Even batteries that "still work" in something else may be too weak.
2. **Restart the device.** Unplug the TV or streaming device from the wall for 30 seconds, plug it back in, and wait for it to start.
3. **Check the line of sight.** For infrared remotes, move anything blocking the front of the TV or box, and close blinds if bright sun shines on the TV.
4. **Check you're on the right mode.** On universal and cable remotes, press the device button (TV, CBL) for the thing you're trying to control.
5. **Test the remote with a phone camera** (below).
6. **Re-pair the remote** if it's a Bluetooth streaming remote (Chapter 22).
7. **Try the phone app.** If the app works and the remote doesn't, the remote is the problem.

## The phone camera test for infrared remotes

Infrared light is invisible to your eyes, but many phone cameras can see it. This tells you whether the remote is sending anything at all.

1. Open your phone's camera app.
2. Point the front tip of the remote at the camera lens.
3. Press and hold a button such as volume up while watching the phone screen.
4. If you see a flickering light at the tip of the remote on screen, the remote is sending a signal.
5. If you see nothing, try the phone's front (selfie) camera; some cameras filter out infrared.

GOOD TO KNOW

### What the test can and can't tell you

A flicker means the remote's infrared is working, so look at the TV or the programming instead. No flicker on either camera, with fresh batteries, usually means the remote has failed. The test doesn't work for buttons that use Bluetooth or Wi-Fi, which many streaming remotes use for everything except TV power and volume.

## Other common clues

| What you notice | What it usually means |
|---|---|
| **Only some buttons work** | Usually a programming issue. Try the next code (Chapter 11) or redo the TV control setup for your streaming remote (Part 2). |
| **Works up close, not from the chair** | Weak batteries, or something partly blocking the TV's sensor. |
| **Light blinks but nothing happens** | Streaming remote may have lost its pairing. Re-pair it. |
| **Sticky or dead buttons** | Spills and crumbs. Remove batteries and gently clean around the buttons with a barely damp cloth. Never soak a remote. |
| **TV says "No Signal"** | The TV is on the wrong input. Press Input on the TV remote, or turn on HDMI-CEC (Chapter 4). |

CHAPTER 22

# Re-Pairing a Streaming Remote

Bluetooth and Wi-Fi remotes are "paired" to one device, a bit like a handshake. If the handshake is lost, the remote lights up but the box ignores it. Re-pairing fixes that. Here's how for each brand.

## Roku

- **Remotes with a pairing button** (on the back or under the battery cover): with the Roku on, hold the pairing button for about five seconds, until the status light flashes. Follow any on-screen steps.
- **Rechargeable Voice Remote Pro:** if the light doesn't flash, charge it first.
- **Simple IR remotes** don't pair at all; check batteries and line of sight instead.

## Amazon Fire TV

1. With the Fire TV on, press and hold the **Home** button on the remote for about 10 seconds.
2. If you still have a working remote or the Fire TV app, you can also go to **Settings** > **Controllers & Bluetooth Devices** > **Amazon Fire TV Remotes** > **Add New Remote**, then hold **Home** on the new remote.
3. Amazon notes a Fire TV can have up to seven remotes and controllers paired. If you've hit that limit, remove one first.

## Google TV Streamer

If the TV shows "Start pairing," Google says to press and hold the **Back** and **Home** buttons on the remote until the light on the remote starts to pulse. In most cases, the remote pairs automatically.

## Apple TV 4K

1. Turn on the Apple TV.
2. Hold the remote 3 to 4 inches from the front of the Apple TV, pointed at it.
3. Press and hold **Back** (or **Menu** on older remotes) and **Volume Up** for 2 seconds. A message on screen confirms it's paired.

If it still doesn't respond, Apple's guide says to reset the remote by holding **Volume Down** and the **TV** button for at least 5 seconds, then pair it again as above. Apple also notes an Apple TV 4K can have only one Apple TV remote paired at a time.

CHAPTER 23

# Battery and Charging Tips

Weak batteries cause more remote trouble than anything else. A few habits keep things running.

- **Replace all the batteries at once.** The GE remote manual, like most, says not to mix old and new batteries, or different kinds (alkaline, standard and rechargeable).
- **Use the kind the remote asks for.** Many remotes say alkaline is recommended.
- **Keep a labeled pack of spares** in the same drawer, in the sizes your remotes use (usually AA or AAA).
- **Take batteries out** of a remote you won't use for months, so they can't leak.
- **Clean leaks gently.** If you see white crust, take the batteries out, wipe the contacts with a dry cloth or cotton swab, and wash your hands. If the contacts are badly corroded, a replacement remote may be the easier fix.
- **Rechargeable remotes** (like the Roku Voice Remote Pro and Apple's Siri Remote): charge them with the cable that came with them, and set a regular day, such as the first of the month, to top them up.
- **Dispose of batteries properly.** Many hardware and electronics stores take used batteries for recycling.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Why the remote dies in the couch

A remote wedged between cushions can have a button pressed for hours, draining the batteries. Some universal remotes, including the GE model, shut off automatically if a button is held for more than 8 seconds, just for this reason.

CHAPTER 24

# Buying a Replacement Remote

When a remote is truly gone or broken, you have three good choices. Here they are in order of how well they usually work.

| Choice | Why |
|---|---|
| **1. The official replacement** | From the maker of the device: Roku's accessories store, Amazon (for Fire TV remotes), the Google Store, Apple, or your TV maker's parts store. It's guaranteed to work and pair properly. |
| **2. Your provider** | For a cable or satellite box remote, contact your provider through the number on your bill or its official website. |
| **3. A reputable brand-specific replacement** | For example, One For All sells replacement remotes made for Roku TV, TCL, Hisense, Sony and LG TVs. These usually need little or no setup. |

HEADS UP

**Be careful with very cheap look-alikes**

Online marketplaces are full of remotes that look like the original but are made by unknown sellers. Some work fine; many work only partly, miss the voice button, or stop after a few weeks. If a listing doesn't clearly say who made it, or the price seems too good, buy the official one instead. Check the seller and read the return policy before you pay.

## Matching the right model

1. Find the model number on the old remote (back or battery door) or on the TV or streaming device itself.
2. Check the maker's website for which remotes work with your device. Roku, for example, has a remote comparison chart.
3. For Apple TV 4K, Apple says a Siri Remote (1st generation or later), Apple TV Remote or Apple Remote can be used as a replacement, and you can buy one from Apple or another retailer.
4. After it arrives, pair it (Chapter 22) and set up TV control (Part 2).

TIP

**Use the phone app until it arrives**

You don't have to go without TV while you wait. The free official app (Chapter 18) will tide you over.

CHAPTER 25

# Remote-Related Scams to Avoid

Remotes seem like an odd target for scammers, but the people searching for remote help are exactly who scammers want: someone a little frustrated, in a hurry, and willing to call a number. Here's what to watch for.

## Fake support numbers in search results

The FTC warns that some scammers create fake customer service listings for popular companies and pay to put them at the top of search results. Roku says the same about fake Roku sites, which can show up at the top of searches like "roku activation" because scammers pay for ads. You search "Roku remote help" or "universal remote code," call the number shown, and a friendly "technician" asks for money, gift cards, or remote access to your computer.

- Get support numbers from the product box, the manual, your bill, or the company's website that you type in yourself.
- Roku says real Roku sites always end in **roku.com**, and that Roku doesn't charge for activation or support.
- No real remote maker needs to take control of your computer to fix a remote.

SCAM ALERT

**"Your remote needs a replacement fee"**

If a caller, pop-up or website says you must pay a fee to activate, unlock or replace a remote, or to "fix" a code that failed, stop. Real companies don't call you out of the blue about your remote, and Roku says it has never charged money to activate a device. Hang up, close the page, and contact the company using a number you found yourself.

## Calls pretending to be your TV company

The FTC has warned about calls, recorded messages and texts from people pretending to be Spectrum and other providers. They offer to lower your bill if you "prepay" part of it, usually with gift cards. The FTC's advice: never give account or payment information to someone who contacts you out of the blue, don't trust caller ID (it can be faked), and never pay with a gift card. Gift cards are for gifts.

## Fake remote apps

Some "universal TV remote" apps in app stores are loaded with ads or push expensive subscriptions. Use the free official app from your device's maker (Chapter 18).

STAY SAFE

### If you already paid or let someone in

Call your bank or card company to stop or dispute the charge. If someone connected to your computer, turn it off and get it checked before using it for banking. Change any passwords you shared. Report the scam to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. And call me at (330) 200-8042 if you'd like a hand cleaning up.

PART 7

# Help and Quick Reference

When a visit is worth it, a cheat sheet to keep by the TV, and plain-English meanings for the words in this guide.

CHAPTER 26

# When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But some remote jobs go much faster with someone who has done them many times, and there's no prize for struggling alone.

## Good reasons to call

- You've tried the TV control setup for your streaming remote and it still won't run the TV or soundbar.
- You have several boxes, a receiver, or equipment in a cabinet, and you want one remote that runs it all.
- You're setting up a TV for a parent or someone with memory loss, and you want it simple and reliable.
- You own a Harmony remote and want to know whether to keep it or replace it, and what with.
- A remote, app or website asked you for money, a code or access to your computer, and you'd like a second opinion before you do anything.
- You'd like a phone remote set up as a backup and a printed cheat card left by the chair.

## What working with me is like

I'm Bill, and I help people here in Portage County, Ohio, with exactly this kind of everyday technology, drawing on 30+ years of professional experience. I can often help remotely, over the phone or a video call, or I can come to your home and sit down in front of your actual TV. I'll explain what I'm doing as I go, so you're not left wondering, and I'll write down anything you'll need later.

FROM BILL

### How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book online at **billshometech.com/book**. If my assistant **Sophie** answers the main line, she can take your details and get you on my schedule. Help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. This guide is free to read and share.

***— Bill***

CHAPTER 27

# Your Remote Cheat Sheet

Print this page and keep it by the TV. It's the whole guide boiled down to the things you'll reach for most.

## Make one remote run the TV

| Device | Where to go |
|---|---|
| **First, any TV** | Turn on HDMI-CEC in the TV settings (Anynet+, SIMPLINK, BRAVIA Sync and so on). |
| **Roku** | **Settings** > **Remotes & devices** > **Remotes** > your remote > **Set up remote for TV control** |
| **Fire TV** | **Settings** > **Equipment Control** > **Manage Equipment** > **Add Equipment** |
| **Google TV Streamer** | **All settings** > **Remotes & Accessories** > **Set up remote buttons** |
| **Apple TV** | **Settings** > **Remotes and Devices** > **Home Theater Control** > **Volume Control** > **Auto** |
| **Cable remote** | Your provider's official website or the number on your bill |

## Remote stopped working?

1. Fresh batteries, all the same kind.
2. Unplug the TV or streaming device for 30 seconds.
3. Clear the line of sight; close the blinds if sun hits the TV.
4. Phone camera test: press a button and look for a flicker on screen.
5. Re-pair it (Roku: pairing button; Fire TV: hold Home 10 seconds; Google: hold Back + Home; Apple: Back + Volume Up for 2 seconds).
6. Use the phone app while you sort it out.

## Lost it?

- Roku with speaker holes: Roku app > **Devices** > three dots > **Ping Remote**.
- Siri Remote (4th generation): **Find My** app > **Devices** > **Play**.
- Older Siri Remote: iPhone **Control Center** > **Apple TV Remote** > device list > **Find**.
- Everything else: use the phone app and check the cushions.

## Scam rules

- Get support numbers from the box, the manual, your bill, or a website you typed in yourself.
- No one legitimate charges a fee to "activate" or "unlock" a remote.
- Gift cards are for gifts. Anyone asking to be paid in gift cards is a scammer.
- Never let a stranger connect to your computer to fix a TV problem.

## Keep this handy

| Keep handy | Fill in |
|---|---|
| **TV brand and model** | _____ |
| **Streaming device and remote model** | _____ |
| **Cable or satellite remote model** | _____ |
| **Universal remote codes (TV / CBL / AUX)** | _____ |
| **Provider support number (from my bill)** | _____ |
| **Battery sizes my remotes use** | _____ |
| **Bill's Home Tech** | (330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book |

CHAPTER 28

# Glossary

Plain-English meanings for the words you'll see on remotes, boxes and settings screens.

| Word | What it means |
|---|---|
| **ARC / eARC** | A special HDMI port on the TV that sends sound out to a soundbar or receiver and carries CEC volume commands. |
| **Activity** | On a hub-style remote, one button that turns on several devices and sets them up for one job, such as "Watch TV." |
| **Bluetooth** | A short-range radio signal. Bluetooth remotes don't need to be pointed. |
| **Code** | A number that tells a universal remote which brand of device it's talking to. |
| **Code search** | A way of programming where the remote tries its codes one after another until the device responds. |
| **Direct code entry** | Typing in a code from the code list for your brand. |
| **HDMI-CEC** | A feature that lets HDMI-connected devices control each other, such as turning the TV on when you press Home on a streaming remote. |
| **Hub** | A small box that receives commands from a smart remote and sends them on to your equipment. |
| **Infrared (IR)** | An invisible beam of light used by most traditional remotes. It needs a clear line of sight. |
| **Input** | Which plug on the TV you're watching (HDMI 1, HDMI 2, antenna and so on). |
| **Learning remote** | A remote that can copy a command from another remote by pointing them at each other. |
| **Pairing** | The one-time handshake that links a Bluetooth or Wi-Fi remote to its device. |
| **Universal remote** | A remote that can be set up to control many brands and kinds of devices. |

FROM BILL

### That's the whole thing

You now know more about remotes than most people ever will. Take it one step at a time, start with the free fixes, and don't hesitate to call if you'd like a hand. You can't break it, and you're not on your own. — Bill, (330) 200-8042