BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Voice Control: Running Devices by Talking

Voice Control, Voice Access and voice typing on iPhone, Android and Windows — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for seniors and the families who help them

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For iPhone, iPad, Mac, Android & Windows 11 · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to running your phone, tablet and computer by talking — not just asking a question, but tapping, scrolling and writing without touching the screen. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Find your device in Chapter 4, then go straight to its part. Every feature comes with what it actually does *for you*, and slow, step-by-step directions. Menus change with updates, so when a button has moved, look for the same words nearby.

Part 1 — Getting Started

1 A Note from Bill
2 Voice Assistant or Full Voice Control?
3 Siri, Gemini & Alexa+ in Plain Words
4 Which Tool on Which Device

Part 2 — Voice Control on iPhone & iPad

5 Turning On Voice Control
6 Your First Commands
7 Show Names, Show Numbers & Show Grid
8 Sleep, Wake & Turning It Off
9 Writing & Fixing Text by Voice

Part 3 — Making Apple's Voice Tools Your Own

10 Creating Your Own Commands
11 Teaching It New Words
12 Siri: Waking It by Voice & Typing to It
13 Voice Control on a Mac

Part 4 — Voice Access on Android

14 Turning On Voice Access
15 Show Labels, Numbers & Grid on Android
16 Typing & Fixing Text on Android
17 Pausing Voice Access & Where Gemini Fits

Part 5 — Voice Access on Windows 11

18 Turning On Voice Access in Windows 11
19 Clicking Anything: Numbers, Grid & Sleep
20 Writing by Voice on Windows

Part 6 — Making It Work for Your Body

21 Tips for Tremor & Arthritis
22 Tips for Low Vision & Life After a Stroke

Part 7 — Noise, Privacy & Fixing Problems

23 Noise & Microphones
24 Privacy: Who's Listening?
25 When It Mishears or Stops Listening
26 Scams & Safety Around Voice Tools

Part 8 — Getting Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

27 When to Call Bill
28 Your Voice Control Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Getting Started

What full voice control is, how it differs from asking Siri, Gemini or Alexa+ a question, and which tool to use on which device. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If your hands shake, your fingers ache, your eyes tire of tiny buttons, or a stroke has made the phone harder to manage, this guide is for **you**. Your phone, tablet and computer can all be run by talking — not just asked a question, but actually *operated*: open an app, tap a button, scroll a page, write and fix an email, all without touching the screen.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help people here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it sitting beside you: patiently, in plain English, one small step at a time, and without trying to sell you anything. Everything in it is already built into the device you own.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain the difference between a **voice assistant** (Siri, Gemini, Alexa+) and **full voice control**, which runs the whole device.
- Walk you through **Voice Control** on iPhone and iPad, with a short stop on the Mac.
- Walk you through **Voice Access** on Android phones and tablets.
- Walk you through **Voice access** and **voice typing** on Windows 11 computers.
- Show you the three magic phrases — show names, show numbers, show grid — that let you tap anything.
- Help you write and correct messages by voice.
- Share practical tips for tremor, arthritis, low vision and life after a stroke, plus advice on microphones, noise and privacy.

The big promise: you can't break anything

Every feature in this guide can be switched off again in the same place you switched it on. If the device hears the wrong thing, you say "undo" or simply try again. The worst that usually happens is a funny word in a text message, and you can fix that by voice too.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Voice control gives you back the independence that small buttons and touch screens can take away. You can answer a grandchild's message, look up a recipe or call the doctor's office on a day your hands won't cooperate — on your own, in your own time.

GOOD TO KNOW

Be patient with yourself — and with it

Talking to a device takes a little practice, the same way learning a new TV remote does. Most people feel comfortable after a few short sessions. Practice for ten minutes at a time, in a quiet room, and keep Chapter 28 handy.

And I'm only a phone call away

If anything here leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question.

Let's begin with the difference between asking a question and running the whole device.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Voice Assistant or Full Voice Control?

People often say "I talk to my phone" and mean two quite different things. Knowing which one you need saves a lot of frustration.

A voice assistant answers and does single jobs

Siri (Apple), **Gemini** (Google) and **Alexa+** (Amazon) are **voice assistants**. You ask, they answer or do one task: "What's the weather?", "Call my daughter", "Set a timer for 20 minutes", "Remind me to take my pills at 8." They are wonderful for that. But when the job needs a button that the assistant doesn't know about — the **Pay** button in a pharmacy app, a checkbox on a website — they can't help.

Full voice control runs the whole screen

Voice Control (iPhone, iPad, Mac), **Voice Access** (Android) and **Voice access** (Windows 11) are **accessibility features**. They replace your finger, your mouse and your keyboard. Anything you can tap, you can say: "Open Mail", "Tap Reply", "Scroll down", "Go home." When a button has no name, you can ask for numbers or a grid on the screen and say the number instead.

	Voice assistant	Full voice control
Examples	Siri, Gemini, Alexa+	Voice Control, Voice Access, Windows Voice access
Best for	Questions, calls, timers, reminders, music	Using any app or website without touching it
How you start	A wake word or a button	Turn it on once; it keeps listening
Taps any button?	No — only what it's built for	Yes, by name, number or grid
Writes and edits text?	Short messages	Long text, with corrections by voice
Cost	Mostly free; Alexa+ free with Prime	Free, built in

TIP

Most people use both

Use the assistant for quick jobs — "Hey Siri, call Mary" — and full voice control when you need to work through an app step by step. They live side by side on the same phone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you know which tool fits the job, you stop fighting the assistant over things it was never built to do, and you know there's always a way to reach that one stubborn button.

CHAPTER 3

Siri, Gemini & Alexa+ in Plain Words

Here is where each voice assistant stands as of November 2026. Each has its own complete guide in this series; this chapter is just enough to see how they fit beside full voice control.

Siri on iPhone, iPad and Mac

Siri is built in. On newer iPhones Apple released a new, more conversational Siri in September 2026, called **Siri AI**. It is labeled **beta**, you choose to turn it on (**Settings** > **Siri** > **Try Siri AI (Beta)**), and the older assistant remains available as **Siri Classic**. Siri AI needs an iPhone 15 Pro, iPhone 16 or later, or another Apple Intelligence model. Chapter 12 covers waking Siri by voice and typing to Siri.

Gemini on Android

On Android phones and tablets, Google's **Gemini** is taking over from the older Google Assistant. The basic Gemini app, including spoken conversation with **Gemini Live**, is free. Gemini also plays a small but handy role in full voice control: you can say **"Hey Google, start Voice Access"** to switch on listening (Chapter 14).

Alexa+ on Echo speakers and Fire TV

Amazon's **Alexa+** is the newer, more conversational Alexa. It's included with Amazon Prime; without Prime it's **$19.99 a month** as of November 2026. A free, limited text chat is also available at Alexa.com and in the Alexa app. Alexa+ is great for the home — lights, music, reminders, calling family — but it doesn't run your phone's screen.

GOOD TO KNOW

A speaker can't tap your phone

Smart speakers are voice assistants only. If your goal is to use your phone or computer without touching it, the free built-in tools in Parts 2 to 5 of this guide are what you want.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You'll know what each assistant is good at, what it costs, and when to reach for full voice control instead.

CHAPTER 4

Which Tool on Which Device

Find your device in the table, then jump to its part of the guide. Every one of these is free and already on your device.

Your device	Full voice control	Just typing by voice	Where in this guide
iPhone or iPad	Voice Control	Dictation (microphone key)	Part 2 and Part 3
Mac	Voice Control	Dictation	Chapter 13
Android phone or tablet	Voice Access	Microphone key on the keyboard	Part 4
Windows 11 computer	Voice access	Voice typing (Windows key + H)	Part 5

The words you'll hear

Word	What it means
Command	Something you say for the device to *do*, such as "Go home" or "Tap Send."
Dictation	Speaking words for the device to *type*, such as the text of an email.
Overlay	Names, numbers or a grid drawn on top of the screen so you can say what to tap.
Show names / Show labels	Puts the name of each button on screen. Apple says names; Android says labels.
Show numbers	Puts a number on every button you can tap.
Show grid	Covers the screen with numbered squares, for spots that have no button.
Wake word	A word that wakes an assistant, such as "Siri" or "Hey Google."
Sleep / wake	Pausing voice control so it stops listening, then waking it again.
On-device	The listening is done inside your phone or computer, not sent away to a company's computers.

TIP

Write down your device

Jot the name of your phone or computer on the cheat-sheet in Chapter 28. When you call for help, it's the first thing anyone will ask.

PART 2

Voice Control on iPhone & iPad

Turning on Apple's Voice Control, your first commands, the three overlays that let you tap anything, putting it to sleep, and writing and fixing text by voice.

CHAPTER 5

Turning On Voice Control

Voice Control is built into every recent iPhone and iPad. Setting it up takes about five minutes, and you only do it once. The steps are the same on an iPad.

Before you start

- Connect to your home **Wi-Fi**. Voice Control downloads a one-time file from Apple.
- Pick a quiet spot, and plug the phone in if the battery is low.
- If a family member is helping, let them do the first tapping — you'll do the talking.

Set it up

1. Open **Settings**.
2. Tap **Accessibility**.
3. Tap **Voice Control**.
4. Tap **Set Up Voice Control**, then tap **Continue** to start the download.
5. When the download finishes, a small Voice Control icon appears at the top of the screen. That means it's on and listening.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

After that one download, Voice Control works without an internet connection. It keeps working on a drive in the country or when the Wi-Fi is down.

A faster way to switch it on and off

Many people add Voice Control to the **Accessibility Shortcut**, so a triple-click of the side button (or the Home button on older models) turns it on or off. You'll find it at **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Accessibility Shortcut**; tap **Voice Control** to add it. You can also ask Siri: "Turn on Voice Control."

TIP

Let a helper set it up

If your hands make the first setup hard, it's perfectly fine for a family member or friend to tap through these five steps. Once it's on, you take over by voice.

HEADS UP

When Voice Control is on, the keyboard microphone changes

With Voice Control on, Voice Control does all the dictating; the normal Dictation microphone isn't used. That's expected. Chapter 9 explains how to dictate and edit with Voice Control.

CHAPTER 6

Your First Commands

With Voice Control on, just speak normally — no wake word needed. Say what you'd do with your finger. Here are the commands most people use every day.

To do this	Say
Go to the Home Screen	"Go home"
Open an app	"Open Messages", "Open Photos"
Tap a button you can see	"Tap Reply", "Tap Done"
Go back	"Go back"
Move up or down a page	"Scroll down", "Scroll up"
Turn the volume up	"Turn up the volume"
Take a screenshot	"Take screenshot"
See what you can say	"Show commands"

Practice run: send a text

1. Say "Go home."
2. Say "Open Messages."
3. Say "Tap" and the name of the person you want to text.
4. Say "Tap iMessage" (or "Tap Text Message") to put the cursor in the message box.
5. Speak your message as you'd say it, for example: "I'll be there at two period."
6. Say "Tap Send."

The whole list is on your phone

Apple keeps the full list of commands at **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control** > **Commands**, sorted into groups. Saying "Show commands" brings up a short list right on the screen.

TIP

Speak at a normal pace

You don't need to talk slowly or loudly. A natural, steady voice — as if talking to someone across the kitchen table — works best. Pause briefly after each command.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Half a dozen phrases — go home, open, tap, scroll, go back — cover most of what you do on a phone in a day.

CHAPTER 7

Show Names, Show Numbers & Show Grid

These three phrases are the heart of Voice Control. They let you tap *anything* on the screen, even a button with no words on it.

1. "Show names"

Not sure what a button is called? Say **"Show names."** Little labels appear over each button. Then say "Tap" and the name you see. The names clear after one command; say **"Show names continuously"** to keep them up, and **"Hide names"** to remove them.

2. "Show numbers"

Some buttons have no name, or the name is long. Say **"Show numbers."** Every item you can tap gets a number. Then say **"Tap 7"** — or another action, such as "Long press 7", "Double tap 7" or "Swipe up at 7." "Hide numbers" removes them.

3. "Show grid"

For spots with no button at all — a place on a map, a corner of a photo — say **"Show grid."** Numbered squares cover the screen. Say "Tap" and a square's number. To aim more precisely, say just the number: a smaller grid appears inside that square. "Hide grid" removes it.

Try it now

1. Open the **Settings** app by saying "Open Settings."
2. Say "Show numbers."
3. Find the number on **Accessibility** and say "Tap" and that number.
4. Say "Go back."
5. Say "Show grid," then "Hide grid."

TIP

Keep numbers on all the time

Many people find numbers easier than names. You can choose to keep them showing at **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control** > **Overlay**. The **Numbered Grid** choice is there too.

GOOD TO KNOW

If a phrase doesn't work

Apple adds new ways of speaking to Voice Control with each update, so your phone may understand more than this guide lists. But names, numbers and the grid work on every iPhone and iPad — when in doubt, fall back on them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No button is out of reach. If your finger can't hit a tiny target, a number can.

CHAPTER 8

Sleep, Wake & Turning It Off

Voice Control listens all the time while it's on. That's useful, but you won't want it typing your side of a phone call or a conversation with your neighbor. Here's how to pause it.

Pausing it by looking away (Face ID iPhones)

On an iPhone with Face ID, the **Attention Aware** option makes Voice Control wake up when you look at your iPhone and go to sleep when you look away. Look for it in **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control**.

Pausing it by voice

Apple's guides have listed the phrases **"Go to sleep"** and **"Wake up"**. Sleep doesn't turn Voice Control off; it rests the microphone until you say "Wake up." Apple's newest guide focuses on Attention Aware instead, so if "Go to sleep" doesn't work on your phone, say "Show commands" and look in the list for the sleep and wake phrases your version uses.

Turning it all the way off

1. Triple-click the side button if you added Voice Control to the Accessibility Shortcut (Chapter 5), **or**
2. Say "Hey Siri, turn off Voice Control," **or**
3. Go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control** and switch it off.

HEADS UP

Voice Control and phone calls

If you leave Voice Control awake during a call, it may try to act on words you say to the other person. Put it to sleep, or turn it off, before a long call.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You decide when the phone is listening. Sleep it for a conversation, wake it when you need it.

CHAPTER 9

Writing & Fixing Text by Voice

Writing by voice is where many people find the most freedom: a long email to the family, a note to the doctor, a grocery list — no keyboard needed.

Dictating with Voice Control on

1. Tap into a message or note by voice, for example "Tap Message."
2. Speak your words. Say punctuation out loud: "comma", "period", "question mark", "new line."
3. Read it back on the screen before you send.

Voice Control has a normal **Dictation** mode, a **Spelling** mode for spelling a name letter by letter, and a **Command** mode in which it only follows commands and types nothing. Command mode is handy when you're moving around and don't want stray words typed.

Fixing mistakes

To do this	Say something like
Replace a word	"Change Tuesday to Wednesday"
Fix spelling	"Change tea to T-E-E"
Add words	"Insert please before call"
Select a phrase	"Select the last sentence" or "Select call me"
Delete words	"Delete see you soon"
Start over	"Delete all"
Take back the last change	"Undo" (and "Redo")

GOOD TO KNOW

The same tricks work without Voice Control

Even with Voice Control off, the ordinary microphone key on the keyboard understands editing phrases such as "Change ... to ...", "Select ..." and "Delete ...". Apple lists these for U.S. English on iPhone 12 and later (not iPhone SE).

TIP

Names and unusual words

If Voice Control keeps misspelling a grandchild's name or your street, add it to your vocabulary (Chapter 11). It learns the word and gets it right from then on.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Long messages take minutes instead of a painful half hour of tapping — and you can fix them without ever touching the screen.

PART 3

Making Apple's Voice Tools Your Own

Your own commands, teaching new words, waking and typing to Siri, help for speech that's hard to understand, and Voice Control on a Mac.

CHAPTER 10

Creating Your Own Commands

A custom command is a phrase you make up that does a job you do often. Say "my address" and your whole address is typed. Say "call the pharmacy" and a shortcut runs. It saves a lot of talking.

Make a command that types something

1. Go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control**.
2. Tap **Customize Commands**.
3. Tap **Create New Command**, then type the phrase you'll say, such as "my address."
4. Tap **Action** and choose **Insert Text**. Type the text to insert — your full address.
5. Go back and tap **Application**. Choose to make the command work in any app, or only in the apps you pick.
6. Save it, then try it: open a note and say "my address."

Other kinds of actions

Action	What it's good for
Insert Text	Types words you use often: your address, email, a sign-off such as "Love, Grandma."
Run Custom Gesture	Records a swipe or tap pattern you draw once, then repeats it when you say the phrase.
Run Shortcut	Runs a shortcut from Apple's Shortcuts app, such as texting your family "I'm home safe."
Playback Recorded Commands	Plays back a short series of Voice Control commands in a row.

TIP

Pick phrases you wouldn't say by accident

"Insert my address" is safer than "address," which might come up in conversation. Two or three words work best.

STAY SAFE

Keep private numbers out of commands

Don't make a custom command that types a password, a bank card number or your Social Security number. Anyone near the phone who hears the phrase could say it too.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The things you type most often shrink to a two-word phrase — fewer mistakes, less tiredness.

CHAPTER 11

Teaching It New Words

Voice Control knows a great many words, but family names, street names, medications and church names can trip it up. The **Vocabulary** setting lets you teach it.

Add a word

1. Go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control**.
2. Tap **Vocabulary**.
3. Tap the add button and type the word or phrase exactly as it should be spelled — for example, "Kaylee" or "Mogadore."
4. If you're offered the choice, teach it the pronunciation by saying it.
5. Save, then try dictating a sentence with the new word.

Apple also lets you import a list of words at once, which is handy for a helper setting up many names. Not every Voice Control language supports custom vocabulary.

Good words to add

- Names of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, especially unusual spellings.
- Your street, town and nearby towns.
- Medications you text or email about.
- Doctors, churches, clubs and businesses you mention often.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The names that matter most to you come out right the first time, so messages to family don't need fixing.

CHAPTER 12

Siri: Waking It by Voice & Typing to It

Siri isn't full voice control, but it pairs beautifully with it. Two settings matter most: whether Siri listens for its name, and whether you can type to it instead of talking.

"Siri" or "Hey Siri"

1. Go to **Settings** > **Siri**.
2. Tap **Requests**. (On some versions you may see **Talk & Type to Siri** or **Listen for Siri** instead.)
3. Choose **"Siri" or "Hey Siri"** to wake it with either phrase, or **"Hey Siri"** only. Choose **Off** if you don't want it listening.
4. Follow the setup to let Siri learn your voice.

If Siri often fails to recognize you, turn the setting off, turn it back on, and repeat the voice setup.

Type to Siri

Some days talking is harder than typing — a sore throat, a quiet waiting room, or speech that's slower after a stroke. On iPhones with Apple Intelligence, you can always type to Siri. On other iPhones, go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Siri** and turn on **Type to Siri**.

If your speech is hard to understand

Apple has a setting for people whose speech is affected by a condition such as ALS, cerebral palsy or stroke. Go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Siri** and turn on **Listen for Atypical Speech**. It works when your iPhone's primary language is English (U.S.).

> **TIP**
>
> **A one-word shortcut of your own**
>
> Newer iPhones also have **Vocal Shortcuts**, which let the phone do an action when you say a word or phrase you choose. You'll find it in the **Accessibility** section of Settings. If you'd like help picking a phrase and an action, it's a good thing to set up with a family member.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Siri answers to you, on your terms — by voice when that's easy, by typing when it isn't.

CHAPTER 13

Voice Control on a Mac

Macs have the same Voice Control, with the same show names, show numbers and show grid commands. If you have learned it on the iPhone, you already know most of it.

Turn it on

1. Click the Apple menu, then **System Settings**.
2. Click **Accessibility** in the sidebar. (You may need to scroll down.)
3. Click **Voice Control** and switch it on.
4. The first time, your Mac needs the internet to download files for your language. After that, Voice Control works offline.

Find the controls

On macOS Sonoma and later, a **Voice Control** menu appears in the menu bar at the top of the screen. From it you can stop or start listening, change the language and microphone, and open Voice Control settings. Older Macs show a small microphone window on screen instead.

Choose the microphone

In Voice Control settings you can pick a particular microphone — a headset, for example — or leave it on **Automatic** so the Mac uses the one you're most likely speaking into. Chapter 23 has advice on microphones.

TIP

Mouse clicks by voice

On a Mac, the same "Show numbers" and "Show grid" tricks replace the mouse. Say "Click" and a number, just as you'd say "Tap" on the iPhone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If a mouse has become hard to steer, your Mac can be run entirely by voice, with the same words you use on your phone.

PART 4

Voice Access on Android

Google's free Voice Access for Android phones and tablets: turning it on, the labels, numbers and grid that let you tap anything, typing by voice, and how Gemini fits in.

CHAPTER 14

Turning On Voice Access

Voice Access is Google's full voice control for Android. It works on Samsung, Pixel, Motorola and most other Android phones and tablets. Menus differ a little from one maker to the next, but the words you say are the same everywhere.

Make sure you have it

On many phones Voice Access is already installed. If you can't find it in the steps below, open the **Play Store**, search for **Voice Access**, and install the free app from Google.

Set it up

1. Open **Settings**.
2. Tap **Accessibility**. (On Samsung phones, you may need to tap **Installed apps** or **Installed services** next.)
3. Tap **Voice Access**.
4. Turn on **Voice Access shortcut**. A small floating Voice Access button appears on the screen.
5. Allow the permissions it asks for, such as the microphone, and follow the short tutorial if one appears.
6. Tap the floating button, or say a command, to start listening. A Voice Access icon shows at the top of the screen while it listens.

HEADS UP

Keep the shortcut

On current versions of Voice Access, the shortcut is how you use it. Google notes that if you remove the shortcut, Voice Access is turned off. If it seems to have vanished, check that the shortcut is still on.

Choose a shortcut that suits your hands

The floating button is the standard choice, but you can pick another way to start and stop Voice Access: the accessibility button on the navigation bar, the **volume keys**, or an accessibility gesture. Look for the shortcut options on the same **Voice Access** settings screen.

Start it with your voice

If "Hey Google" listening is turned on, you can say **"Hey Google, start Voice Access"** — no button at all. Google's help says this also works from the lock screen when Voice Access is set up. Since late 2025, Google has described this as working through Gemini, its newer assistant: Gemini confirms that it has started Voice Access and the icon appears at the top of the screen.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once it's set up, you can go from a phone lying on the table to a phone you're running by voice without touching it at all.

CHAPTER 15

Show Labels, Numbers & Grid on Android

Android's Voice Access uses the same idea as Apple's: when you can't name a button, put labels, numbers or a grid on the screen and say what you see. Apple says "names"; Google says "labels."

Everyday commands

To do this	Say
Go to the Home screen	"Go home"
Open an app	"Open Gmail", "Open Camera"
Tap a button you can see	"Tap Compose", "Tap Send"
Go back	"Go back"
Move down or up a page	"Scroll down", "Scroll up"
Stop listening for now	"Stop listening"

"Show labels"

Say **"Show labels"** to see suggested names for the items on screen, then say "Tap" and the label. Labels clear by themselves when what's on the screen changes.

"Show numbers"

Say **"Show numbers"** and every item you can use gets a number. Say "Tap 4" (or just the number). Numbers stay up until you say **"Hide numbers."** In Voice Access settings you can choose whether numbers appear on every item or only on items that have no label.

"Show grid"

For a spot with no button at all, say **"Show grid."** Say a square's number to tap there. Say **"More squares"** for a finer grid or **"Fewer squares"** for bigger ones. You can also set how many squares the grid has in settings.

TIP

Turn on icon recognition

Some buttons are just a picture — a trash can, a pencil. Voice Access settings include an option to recognize icons so those buttons get a label too.

GOOD TO KNOW

The full list lives in settings

Voice Access understands far more than this table. Open Voice Access settings and look for the list of all commands, sorted by kind.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If an app has a button your finger can't hit, a number or a grid square will reach it.

CHAPTER 16

Typing & Fixing Text on Android

There are two ways to write by voice on Android. Use whichever suits the moment.

1. With Voice Access on

1. Say "Tap" and the name of the text box — for example, "Tap Message." Or use "Show numbers."
2. Say what you want typed. Say punctuation out loud: "comma", "period", "question mark."
3. Look at the screen and fix anything that came out wrong (see below).
4. Say "Tap Send."

2. With the microphone on the keyboard

If you don't need the whole phone run by voice, you can simply tap the **microphone** on the keyboard (Gboard on most phones, Samsung Keyboard on Samsung) and speak. Tap it again, or pause, to stop. This is the gentlest way to start.

Fixing mistakes by voice

Voice Access can select, delete and replace words by voice. Commands such as **"Delete"** followed by the word, **"Undo"**, and **"Replace"** one word with another cover most fixes. The exact wording varies a little between versions; the full command list in Voice Access settings shows the editing phrases your phone understands.

GOOD TO KNOW

Gemini is starting to help with writing

Google has begun adding Gemini-powered voice editing on some newer phones, where you can ask in plain words to "make it shorter" or fix a sentence. It's arriving phone by phone, so don't worry if yours doesn't have it yet.

TIP

Names and places

If a name keeps coming out wrong, add it to your keyboard's personal dictionary, or put it in the contact card for that person. The phone gets familiar words right more often.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A text to the grandkids or a note to the pharmacy, written in the time it takes to say it.

CHAPTER 17

Pausing Voice Access & Where Gemini Fits

Like Apple's Voice Control, Voice Access listens while it's on. Pause it whenever you're talking to someone else, on the phone, or watching TV.

Pause it

- Say **"Stop listening."**
- Tap the floating Voice Access button (or use the shortcut you chose in Chapter 14).
- Pull down from the top of the screen and tap **Tap to pause** on the Voice Access notification.

Start it again

- Say **"Hey Google, start Voice Access"** if "Hey Google" listening is on.
- Tap the floating button or your shortcut.
- Pull down from the top and tap **Touch to start** on the Voice Access notification.

GOOD TO KNOW

It saves your battery on its own

Google says Voice Access turns the microphone off when the screen turns off. Wake the screen and start it again when you need it.

Gemini and Voice Access side by side

Gemini is the assistant: ask it questions, have it set a reminder or call your son, or have a spoken conversation with Gemini Live. **Voice Access** is the hands: it taps, scrolls and types in any app. Gemini's job in this guide is mainly to switch Voice Access on with "Hey Google, start Voice Access." The rest of Gemini has its own complete guide in this series.

HEADS UP

Don't rely on Gemini for every button

Google is adding more "do it for me" abilities to Gemini on some phones, but they don't reach every app or every button. For dependable, step-by-step control of any screen, Voice Access is the tool.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You choose when the phone is listening, and you know which tool to reach for: Gemini for quick jobs, Voice Access for everything else.

PART 5

Voice Access on Windows 11

Running a Windows 11 computer by voice: turning on voice access, clicking anything with numbers and the grid, putting it to sleep, and writing by voice with voice typing.

CHAPTER 18

Turning On Voice Access in Windows 11

Windows 11 has its own full voice control, called **voice access**. It replaced the old **Windows Speech Recognition**, which Microsoft retired from Windows 11 in September 2024. If someone set up Speech Recognition for you years ago, voice access is what to use now.

What you need

- **Windows 11**, version 22H2 or later. Any computer that's kept up to date is fine.
- A **microphone** — most laptops have one built in; desktops often need a headset or a webcam with a microphone (Chapter 23).
- An **internet connection** for the first setup.
- Voice access speaks **English, Spanish, French and German** as of November 2026.

Turn it on

1. Click **Start**, then **Settings**.
2. Click **Accessibility**, then **Speech**.
3. Turn on the **Voice access** switch.
4. The first time, Windows asks to download a speech file. Allow it and wait for it to finish.
5. A voice access bar appears across the top of the screen, with a microphone button. Click the microphone, or follow the short guided tour Windows offers.

A faster way: click **Start**, type **voice access**, and open it from the results.

TIP

Take the tour

The first time it starts, voice access offers an interactive guide that has you practice the basic commands. It's worth the ten minutes.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If a mouse has become hard to steer or a keyboard hard to press, the whole computer — email, the web, video calls with family — can be run by talking.

CHAPTER 19

Clicking Anything: Numbers, Grid & Sleep

Voice access uses the same tricks as the phones: say what you'd click, or put numbers or a grid on the screen.

Everyday commands

To do this	Say
Open an app	"Open Edge", "Open Mail"
Click a button or link	"Click" and its name, e.g. "Click Reply"
Scroll a page	"Scroll down", "Scroll up"
Number every item	"Show numbers", then "Click 5"
Cover the screen with a grid	"Show grid", then a number from 1 to 9
Pause listening	"Voice access sleep" or "Mute"
See what you can say	"What can I say"

Numbers

Say **"Show numbers."** Each item you can click gets a numbered label. Say the number to click it. This is the easiest way to reach small buttons and links.

The grid

Say **"Show grid."** The screen is split into nine numbered squares. Say a number from 1 to 9 and the mouse pointer jumps to the center of that square, and a smaller grid appears inside it. Keep narrowing until you're right on target, then say "Click." If you use two monitors, the grid can cover both; say the screen's letter to switch.

Sleep and wake

Voice access has three states: **listening**, **sleep** and **off**. In sleep, it ignores everything you say except the command to wake it up. Say **"Voice access sleep"** (or "Mute") before a phone call, and **"Voice access wake up"** to start again. You can also click the microphone button on the voice access bar.

GOOD TO KNOW

Copilot+ PCs understand looser phrasing

On some newer Copilot+ PCs, Microsoft says voice access understands different ways of asking for the same thing — "Switch to Microsoft Edge" as well as "Open Edge." On other computers, stick to the commands in the list.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Every button on the screen is reachable, even the tiny ones, and you decide when the computer is listening.

CHAPTER 20

Writing by Voice on Windows

Windows gives you two ways to write by voice: voice access, which you just met, and **voice typing**, a quick microphone you can call up in any text box.

Voice typing: Windows key + H

1. Click into a text box — an email, a document, a search box. Voice typing only starts when the cursor is in a place where you can type.
2. Press the **Windows logo key** and **H** together. A small voice typing toolbar with a microphone appears.
3. Speak. Say punctuation out loud: "comma", "period", "question mark."
4. Stop by clicking the microphone on the toolbar, or simply stop talking for a moment.

On a touch-screen computer, you can also tap the microphone on the touch keyboard. Voice typing needs an internet connection and a working microphone.

> GOOD TO KNOW
> **Pick one at a time**
> If voice access is already running and you press Windows key + H, Windows reminds you that voice access can do the typing too. Use voice access when you also need to click; use voice typing for a quick message.

Dictating and fixing with voice access

With voice access listening, click into a text box by voice and simply speak. To fix something:

To do this	Say
Fix the last thing you said	"Correct that"
Fix a particular word	"Correct" and the word
Choose a suggestion	"Click" and its number in the correction window

A small correction window opens with numbered suggestions. If none is right, you can spell the word instead.

Your own commands: voice shortcuts

Voice access lets you make **voice shortcuts** — your own phrases that do one job, such as opening a favorite website, or several steps in a row, such as pressing keys and clicking. Search Microsoft Support for "voice access shortcuts" for the current steps, or ask a helper to set one up with you.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Long emails and letters without a keyboard, and the mistakes fixed without hunting for the backspace key.

PART 6

Making It Work for Your Body

Practical, plain advice for shaky hands, sore joints, tired eyes and speech that has changed after a stroke.

CHAPTER 21

Tips for Tremor & Arthritis

Voice control was made for days when your hands won't do what you ask. A few habits make it work even better.

Let your voice do the aiming

- Use **numbers** instead of trying to tap small buttons. "Show numbers" then "Tap 6" never misses.
- Use the **grid** for anything without a button: a spot on a map, the corner of a photo.
- Scroll by voice — "Scroll down" — instead of swiping, which is hard with a tremor.
- Keep the phone or tablet in a **stand** or propped up, so you don't have to hold it while you talk.

Make starting easy

- On iPhone, add Voice Control to the **Accessibility Shortcut** (Chapter 5) so a triple-click turns it on. On Face ID iPhones, **Attention Aware** wakes it when you look at the screen (Chapter 8).
- On Android, pick the shortcut that's easiest for your fingers — the **volume keys** are larger than a floating button for many people (Chapter 14) — or just say "Hey Google, start Voice Access."
- On Windows, voice access can be kept running whenever you use the computer.

Save your energy

- Make **custom commands** for things you type often — your address, email, a sign-off (Chapter 10).
- Add family names and medications to the **vocabulary** so you don't spend energy fixing them (Chapter 11).
- Work in short sessions. Ten minutes of practice a day is better than an hour once a week.

> **TIP**
>
> **Mix voice and touch**
>
> You don't have to choose. Many people tap the big things and use their voice for the small ones, or the other way around on a bad day. All of these tools work alongside your fingers.

GOOD TO KNOW

Touch settings can help too

Phones and computers also have settings that ignore accidental repeat taps or make you hold a touch a little longer before it counts. They're in the same **Accessibility** settings, and they pair well with voice control. Our keyboards, mice and trackpads guide covers the computer side.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Less pain, fewer mistakes, and more of the day left for the things you enjoy.

CHAPTER 22

Tips for Low Vision & Life After a Stroke

Voice control helps with more than hands. Here's how to make it work if your eyes are tired or a stroke has changed how you move or speak.

If your eyesight is low

- Names and numbers on the screen can be small. Combine voice control with your device's **zoom** or **larger text** settings. On iPhone, Zoom is in **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Zoom**.
- Say the names of buttons you already know — "Tap Reply", "Open Mail" — so you don't have to read a label first.
- If you can't see the screen well enough to use voice control, a **screen reader** reads everything aloud: VoiceOver on Apple devices, TalkBack on Android, and Narrator on Windows (Windows key + Ctrl + Enter). Our low-vision technology guide covers them.

After a stroke

A stroke can weaken one hand, slow speech, or both. Voice control is often a good fit, but go gently.

- **Speech that's slower or less clear:** on iPhone, turn on **Listen for Atypical Speech** so Siri adjusts to you (Chapter 12). Voice Control's **vocabulary** helps with the words it misses.
- **When talking is tiring:** type to Siri instead (Chapter 12), or use one-hand touch for a while and voice later.
- **One good hand:** use voice for the hard parts — scrolling, small buttons, long messages — and your good hand for the rest.
- **Short, familiar phrases** are easier to say clearly than long ones. Custom commands (Chapter 10) turn a long job into two words.

TIP

Bring it to therapy

If you work with a speech or occupational therapist, show them the voice control on your phone. They can suggest phrases and settings that fit your recovery, and practicing commands can double as speech practice.

STAY SAFE

Keep a no-voice way to call for help

Voice control can stop listening, mishear, or be switched off by accident. Make sure you also have a way to call for help that doesn't depend on it — a medical alert button, a speed-dial a family member has set up, or Emergency SOS on the phone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your phone and computer adapt to you, rather than the other way around — at whatever stage of recovery you're at.

PART 7

Noise, Privacy & Fixing Problems

Getting the microphone right, knowing who's listening, what to do when it mishears or stops, and the scams to watch for.

CHAPTER 23

Noise & Microphones

Most voice-control trouble is really microphone trouble. The device has to hear *you*, clearly, over everything else in the room.

Quiet the room

- Turn off or turn down the TV and radio while you work by voice.
- Move away from fans, dishwashers and open windows.
- Rooms with carpet and curtains are easier than echoey kitchens and bathrooms.

Get closer

- Keep the phone or tablet within an arm's length and facing you.
- On a laptop, sit in front of the screen; the microphone is usually near the camera at the top.
- Don't cover the microphone with a hand, a case or a sleeve.

When to add a microphone

A **headset** with a microphone that sits near your mouth helps more than anything else in a noisy home, or if your voice is soft. Wired USB headsets are simple on a computer. Wireless earbuds work with phones and tablets. Some desktop computers have no microphone at all: Apple notes that a Mac mini, Mac Studio or Mac Pro needs an external microphone or a display with one built in.

On a Mac you can choose the microphone in Voice Control settings, or leave it on **Automatic** (Chapter 13). On Windows, the microphone is chosen in **Settings** > **System** > **Sound**.

TIP

Speak like you're talking to a person

A steady, everyday voice works best. Shouting or speaking one... word... at... a... time usually makes recognition worse, not better.

HEADS UP

Two listeners at once

If a smart speaker is in the room, it may wake up when you say a command, or a TV voice may set off your phone. Mute the speaker's microphone, or work in another room.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few small changes in the room turn "it never understands me" into "it gets it right the first time."

CHAPTER 24

Privacy: Who's Listening?

It's natural to wonder whether a device that's always listening is sending everything you say somewhere. Here's the honest picture.

Full voice control

- **Apple Voice Control** needs the internet only for its first download. After that it works with no connection, which means the listening is done on your iPhone, iPad or Mac.
- **Windows voice access** also needs the internet only for setup.
- **Android Voice Access** uses the microphone while it's listening and turns it off when the screen turns off.

Voice typing and assistants

Voice typing on Windows needs the internet, and assistants such as Siri, Gemini and Alexa+ send some requests to the company's computers to answer them. Each company has privacy settings where you can see and delete your history:

Assistant	Where to look
Alexa+	Alexa app > **More** > **Alexa Privacy** > **Review Voice History**.
Siri	**Settings** > **Siri** — look for history and privacy options.
Gemini	In the Gemini app, open your profile picture and look for **Gemini Apps Activity**.
Windows	**Settings** > **Privacy & security** > **Speech**.

TIP

Sleep it for private moments

When you're discussing health, money or family matters, put voice control to sleep (Chapters 8, 17 and 19). Then nothing you say is acted on.

STAY SAFE

Never say passwords out loud

Don't dictate passwords, bank card numbers or your Social Security number where others can hear, and don't store them in custom commands. Type them, or use a password manager.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can use voice control with confidence, knowing what's heard, where it goes, and how to pause it.

CHAPTER 25

When It Mishears or Stops Listening

Every voice tool gets things wrong sometimes. Work down these lists in order; most problems are fixed by the first few steps.

It isn't hearing me at all

1. Is it asleep or paused? Look for the microphone icon. Say the wake phrase or tap the icon.
2. Did it get turned off? Check the setting in Chapter 5 (iPhone), Chapter 14 (Android) or Chapter 18 (Windows). On Android, check the Voice Access shortcut is still on.
3. Is another app using the microphone — a phone call, a video call, a recording?
4. Is a headset connected that you're not wearing? The device may be listening to it.
5. Restart the phone or computer and try again.

It hears me but gets it wrong

1. Quiet the room and move closer (Chapter 23).
2. Use names, numbers or the grid instead of describing what you want.
3. Add tricky words to the vocabulary (Chapter 11).
4. On iPhone, if Siri misunderstands you, try Listen for Atypical Speech (Chapter 12).
5. Check the language setting matches the language you speak.

It typed things I didn't mean

Voice control may have heard a conversation or the TV. Say "Undo" right away, then put it to sleep before you talk to anyone. On iPhone, Command mode (Chapter 9) stops it typing anything at all.

HEADS UP

After an update

Big software updates sometimes move a setting or reset a shortcut. If voice control stopped working after an update, look in the Accessibility settings first — it's usually still there, just switched off.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most hiccups take a minute to fix, so a bad moment doesn't become a bad day.

CHAPTER 26

Scams & Safety Around Voice Tools

Scammers like anything new and helpful. Here's what to watch for.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "setup support" calls and pop-ups

A pop-up or caller offers to "activate" voice control or fix your microphone for a fee, or asks to take control of your computer. Voice Control, Voice Access and voice access are free and built in. Apple, Google and Microsoft won't call you about them. Hang up or close the pop-up.

SCAM ALERT

Paid "voice control" apps

Be wary of apps that charge to do what your device already does free. Use the built-in tools in this guide first.

SCAM ALERT

Calls that try to record your voice

Some scam calls try to get you to say "yes" or to talk at length, and short recordings can be used to imitate a voice. If an unknown caller asks "Can you hear me?", hang up. Agree on a family code word for real emergencies.

STAY SAFE

Lock your phone

With voice control on, anyone nearby could tell your phone what to do. Keep a passcode or fingerprint lock on, and put voice control to sleep when you leave the phone on a table in public.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You get all the freedom of voice control without opening a door for anyone else.

PART 8

Getting Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary of the phrases that matter most.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and frustration. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Getting started is the hard part** — your hands make the first setup taps difficult, and you'd like someone to switch everything on and then hand it over to your voice.
- **Setting it all up in one visit**: voice control, the quickest shortcut for your hands, custom commands for your address and sign-off, and family names in the vocabulary — then practicing with you.
- **Choosing a microphone or headset** that works with your phone or computer, without buying the wrong thing.
- **It worked before and now it doesn't** — after an update, a new phone, or a new computer.
- **Life has changed suddenly** — after a stroke, a fall or surgery — and you want your devices ready before you come home.
- **A family member lives far away** and would like someone local to set it up properly.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, explain what I'm doing in plain words, and never talk down to anyone. I'll tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money; every tool in this guide is already built in. I've been doing this kind of work for more than 30 years, and I serve Portage County, Ohio, in person, and folks farther away by remote help.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is yours to keep for free; if you'd like a hand, I'm only a phone call away.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might be greeted by **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. A real person — me — does the actual help.

Thank you for giving this a try. Be patient with yourself; every week it gets a little easier.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

Your Voice Control Cheat-Sheet

Keep this beside your phone or computer. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
iPhone & iPad	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control**. Triple-click shortcut: Accessibility Shortcut.
Mac	Apple menu > **System Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control**.
Android	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Access** > turn on the shortcut. Or "Hey Google, start Voice Access."
Windows 11	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Speech** > **Voice access**. Voice typing: Windows key + H.
Tap anything	"Show names" (Apple) or "Show labels" (Android), "Show numbers", "Show grid."
Pause it	Apple: look away (Attention Aware) or sleep. Android: "Stop listening." Windows: "Voice access sleep."
Fix text	Apple: "Change ... to ...", "Undo." Windows: "Correct that."
What can I say?	Apple: "Show commands." Windows: "What can I say." Android: the list in Voice Access settings.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
My phone or tablet (make & model)	_____
My computer	_____
How I start voice control	_____
How I pause it	_____
My custom commands	_____
Words I added to the vocabulary	_____
My microphone or headset	_____
Who helps me with it	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Is it asleep or paused? Wake it.
2. Is it still switched on in Accessibility settings?
3. Is the room quiet and the microphone uncovered?
4. Is a headset connected that you're not wearing?
5. Use numbers or the grid instead of names.
6. Restart the device and try again.
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

STAY SAFE

In an emergency

Don't depend on voice control alone. Keep a medical alert button or another way to call 911 within reach.