BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Voice Typing & Dictation

Talking your texts, emails and documents onto the screen — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for every household

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, Android, Samsung Galaxy, Mac & Windows 11 · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to voice typing, which most phones and computers also call dictation: you talk, and your words appear as text in a message, an email or a document. It's already built into the phone or computer you own, and it costs nothing extra. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Jump straight to the part for your device, then come back for the chapters on email, privacy and fixing mistakes.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What voice typing is, how it differs from voice messages and voice assistants, and how to talk so the phone or computer understands you. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If typing on a tiny phone keyboard makes your thumbs ache, if arthritis or a tremor makes every letter a chore, or if you simply think faster than you type, this guide is for **you**. Your phone and your computer can already write down what you say. Most people just never get shown how.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help folks here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, one step at a time. When I use a word like "dictation" or "auto-punctuation," I'll explain it right then.

What this guide will do for you

- Show you the little **microphone button** on your keyboard and what happens when you tap it.
- Walk you through dictating a text message on an iPhone, an iPad, an Android phone and a Samsung Galaxy.
- Teach you how to say periods, commas, question marks and "new line" out loud.
- Show you how to fix the words it gets wrong, without starting over.
- Help you dictate emails and longer letters on a Mac or a Windows 11 computer, in Google Docs and in Word.
- Explain honestly where your words go, what stays private, and what you should never say out loud in public.

The big promise: you can't break it by learning

Voice typing is one of the safest things you can practice. Nothing is sent until *you* tap Send. If the words come out wrong, you can delete them and try again as many times as you like. The phone won't mind, and nobody else will ever see your practice runs. The best way to learn is to open a note to yourself and just start talking.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

For many people, speaking a message is quicker and easier than typing it, especially on a small screen. That can mean longer, warmer notes to the grandkids, emails that actually get answered, and less strain on sore hands and tired eyes.

I'm only a phone call away

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

Let's start with the simplest question: what exactly is voice typing?

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Voice Typing Is (and Isn't)

Voice typing means talking instead of typing. You tap a microphone button, speak, and your words appear as text wherever the blinking cursor is: a text message, an email, a search box, a document. Apple calls it **Dictation**. Google calls it **voice typing**. Samsung calls it **voice input**. Microsoft calls it **voice typing** in Windows and **Dictate** in Word. They all do the same basic job.

Four voice features that get mixed up

	What it does	What the other person gets
Voice typing / Dictation	Turns your speech into written words you can check and fix	Ordinary text
Voice message (audio message)	Records your actual voice, like a short voicemail	A recording they play
Voice assistant (Siri, Google Assistant, Gemini, Alexa)	Answers questions and does tasks you ask for	Depends on the task
Voice control (Voice Control, Voice Access)	Runs the whole phone or computer by voice: tap, scroll, open apps	Nothing by itself; it's for you

This guide is mostly about the first one: voice typing. Chapter 20 explains when a voice message is the better choice, and Chapter 14 and Chapter 19 cover the hands-free voice control tools.

Where you'll find it

- **On a phone or tablet:** a small **microphone** button on the on-screen keyboard, usually near the space bar or at the top of the keyboard.
- **On a Mac:** the Microphone key on newer keyboards, or a shortcut you choose (Chapter 12).
- **On a Windows 11 computer:** press the **Windows logo key** and **H** together (Chapter 13).
- **In Google Docs and Word:** a menu item or a Dictate button inside the program (Chapter 16 and Chapter 17).

GOOD TO KNOW

It's already paid for

Voice typing is built into iPhones, iPads, Android phones, Samsung Galaxy phones, Macs and Windows 11. You don't need to buy an app or a subscription to use it. Be wary of ads for paid "voice to text" apps that promise miracles; try the free built-in one first.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once you know voice typing is just another way of putting words where the cursor is, you can use it anywhere you'd normally type, in any app.

CHAPTER 3

How to Talk So It Understands You

Voice typing has gotten very good, but it still works best when you help it a little. These habits make a bigger difference than any setting.

Seven habits for clean results

1. **Tap the microphone first, then pause half a second** before you start talking, so you don't lose your first word.
2. **Speak at your normal speed**, in whole sentences. Talking very slowly, one word at a time, often makes it worse, not better.
3. **Use your ordinary voice.** There's no need to shout. Hold the phone about where you'd hold it to read the screen.
4. **Think first, then talk.** Decide what you want to say before you tap the button. Long "um" pauses can make it stop listening.
5. **Say the punctuation** when you need it: "period," "comma," "question mark," "new line" (Chapter 6 and Chapter 10). Some devices add it for you.
6. **Spell tricky names afterward** with the keyboard. Unusual names and street names are the most common mistakes.
7. **Always read it before you send it.** This is the habit that matters most.

Getting a quiet moment

- Turn down the TV or radio, or step into another room. Background voices are the hardest thing for voice typing to ignore.
- Kitchen fans, running water and a car's air conditioning blower can all add stray words.
- If you wear earbuds with a microphone, the phone may listen through them instead. That's often better, as long as they're charged and connected.
- Chapter 23 has more help for noisy rooms and other common problems.

TIP

Accents are fine

You don't need to change the way you talk. Voice typing is built to handle many accents and ways of speaking. If it keeps getting a certain word wrong, say the word a little more clearly, or just type that one word.

HEADS UP

Read it before you send it

Voice typing sometimes hears a word that sounds similar to the one you said, such as "weather" for "whether." Most slips are harmless, but a few can be embarrassing. A five-second read-through catches nearly all of them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With these habits, most of your messages come out right the first time, so you spend your time saying what you mean instead of fixing typos.

PART 2

iPhone & iPad Dictation

Turning Dictation on, dictating your first text, saying punctuation and emoji, and fixing what it gets wrong.

CHAPTER 4

Turn On Dictation on iPhone and iPad

On an iPhone or iPad, voice typing is called **Dictation**. It's usually on already. Look at the keyboard the next time you write a message: if you see a small **microphone** button (Apple calls it the **Dictate** button), you're ready to go. If it's missing, here's how to turn it on.

Turning Dictation on

1. Open the **Settings** app (the gray gears).
2. Tap **General**, then tap **Keyboard**.
3. Scroll down and turn on **Enable Dictation**. The switch turns green.
4. If a message appears asking you to confirm, tap **Enable Dictation** again.

Auto-Punctuation: commas and periods for you

In supported languages, including English, Dictation can add commas, periods and question marks on its own as you talk. Apple calls this **Auto-Punctuation**. Most people like it. If it puts commas where you don't want them, you can turn it off.

1. Open **Settings** > **General** > **Keyboard**.
2. Find **Auto-Punctuation** and turn it on or off.

Even with Auto-Punctuation on, you can still say a punctuation mark out loud whenever you want one, such as "exclamation point." Chapter 6 has the full list.

GOOD TO KNOW

You don't need a new phone

Apple keeps adding small improvements to Dictation, and some newer Apple devices with **Apple Intelligence** get extra help with spelling and punctuation (Chapter 12 has the Mac details). Older iPhones still dictate perfectly well; you don't need a new phone to use anything in this guide.

TIP

iPad works the same way

Everything in this part works on an iPad, too. The settings are in the same places, and the microphone button is on the iPad's on-screen keyboard.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One switch in Settings, and every app on your iPhone that has a keyboard can take your voice instead of your thumbs.

CHAPTER 5

Dictating a Text Message on iPhone

Let's send a real message. Pick someone friendly for your first try, or send it to yourself. You can practice in the **Notes** app first if you'd like, where nothing gets sent at all.

Your first dictated text, step by step

1. Open **Messages** and tap the conversation with the person you want to write to.
2. Tap the message box at the bottom, so the keyboard comes up.
3. Tap the **microphone** button on the keyboard. It's usually at the bottom right, next to the space bar.
4. Wait a moment for the sound wave or the microphone symbol to show it's listening, then talk normally: "Hi Susan, are you free for lunch on Thursday?"
5. Watch your words appear in the message box as you talk.
6. When you're finished, tap the **microphone** button again to stop. It also stops by itself after a pause.
7. Read the message. If it's right, tap the blue **Send** arrow. If not, see Chapter 7.

The microphone in Messages vs. the microphone on the keyboard

In Messages there can be *two* different microphone or sound-wave buttons, and they do different things. The one **on the keyboard** is Dictation: it types your words. A separate audio button in the message area records a **voice message** that the other person plays out loud. If you meant to type and the phone started recording your voice instead, cancel it and use the keyboard's microphone. Chapter 20 explains when a voice message is the better choice.

TIP

Use it everywhere

The keyboard microphone works in Mail, Notes, Reminders, the search bar in Safari, Facebook, WhatsApp and almost any app where you can type. Wherever the keyboard appears, Dictation is available.

HEADS UP

Check who it's going to

Before you start talking, glance at the name at the top of the conversation. Dictating a private message into the wrong family group chat is an easy slip to make.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A message that would take two minutes to peck out can be spoken in fifteen seconds, which makes it far easier to keep in touch.

CHAPTER 6

Punctuation, New Lines and Emoji by Voice

When you need a punctuation mark or a new line, you just say it. Dictation types the mark, not the word. These commands work whenever Dictation is listening.

Punctuation you can say

Say	You get
"period"	.
"comma"	,
"question mark"	?
"exclamation point"	!
"colon"	:
"open quote" ... "close quote"	Quotation marks around the words in between
"dash"	A dash

Lines, paragraphs and capitals

Say	What happens
"new line"	Starts a new line, like pressing Return once
"new paragraph"	Leaves a blank line and starts a new paragraph
"caps on" ... "caps off"	Capitalizes the first letter of each word in between
"all caps on" ... "all caps off"	TYPES THE WORDS IN BETWEEN IN CAPITALS
"no caps on" ... "no caps off"	types the words in between in lowercase

Emoji by voice

You can say the name of an emoji followed by the word "emoji," such as "happy emoji" or "heart emoji," and Dictation inserts the little picture. Apple notes that emoji dictation works only in certain languages, and English is one of them. If it types the words instead, that emoji may go by a different name; tap the emoji button on the keyboard and pick it by hand.

TIP

Try a practice sentence

Open **Notes**, tap the microphone and say: "Dear Tom comma new line thank you for the flowers exclamation point." Then look at what appears. One practice run teaches the rhythm better than any list.

HEADS UP

Commands don't always work

Now and then Dictation types the words "new paragraph" instead of acting on them, especially if you say them in the middle of a fast sentence. Pause briefly before and after a command. If it still types the words, delete them and press Return on the keyboard.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Saying "period" and "new line" lets you write a properly laid-out note or letter entirely by voice, with no fiddly punctuation keys.

CHAPTER 7

Fixing Mistakes on iPhone

Every voice typing system gets a word wrong now and then. You don't have to start over. Here are the ways to fix it, from the easiest to the most precise.

Fix it with your voice, while Dictation is still listening

Say	What happens
"undo"	Takes back the last thing Dictation did.
"redo"	Puts it back, if you change your mind.
"delete" plus a phrase	Removes that phrase, for example "delete Thursday."
"select" plus a phrase	Highlights that phrase, so the next thing you say replaces it.

Apple lists these editing commands for U.S. English on iPhone 12 and later (not the iPhone SE). On other models, fix the word with your finger instead.

Fix it with your finger

1. Tap the microphone to stop Dictation if it's still listening.
2. Tap right on the word that's wrong. A word Dictation wasn't sure about may be **underlined in blue**; tapping it can show other suggestions to choose from.
3. If no suggestion is right, double-tap the word to select it, then type or dictate the correct word.
4. To move the cursor precisely, touch and hold the **space bar** until the keyboard goes blank, then slide your finger to where you want it.
5. Tap the **Delete** key (the arrow with an X) to remove letters one at a time.

When it's simpler to start again

If a message is badly garbled, it's often faster to clear it and try again. Touch and hold in the message box, tap **Select All**, then tap the **Delete** key. Take a breath, move somewhere quieter, and dictate it again. Nothing has been sent.

TIP

Shake to undo

If you delete something by accident while typing, you can usually shake the iPhone gently and choose **Undo**. Three fingers swiping left on the screen does the same thing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing how to fix one word means a single slip never costs you the whole message, and you'll feel confident dictating longer notes.

PART 3

Android & Samsung Galaxy

Voice typing with Gboard, Samsung's own voice input, saying punctuation, and what to do when the microphone button goes missing.

CHAPTER 8

Voice Typing with Gboard on Android

Most Android phones, including Google Pixel, Motorola and many others, use Google's keyboard, called **Gboard**. Voice typing is built in. You'll see a small **microphone** at the top right of the keyboard, or on a key near the space bar.

Make sure voice typing is turned on

1. Open any app where you can type, such as **Messages**, and tap in the text box so the keyboard comes up.
2. Tap the **Settings** gear at the top of the keyboard. (If you don't see it, tap the four-square menu button first.)
3. Tap **Voice typing**.
4. Turn on **Use voice typing**.

Dictating a message

1. Tap in the message box so the keyboard appears.
2. Tap the **microphone** on the keyboard. You'll see a prompt such as **Speak now**.
3. Talk normally. Your words appear in the box.
4. Stop talking and pause, or tap the microphone again, to stop.
5. Read what it wrote, fix anything that's wrong (Chapter 10), then tap **Send**.

Pixel phones: advanced voice typing

On a Google **Pixel 6** or newer (including the Fold and Tablet), Gboard offers **advanced voice typing** (Google's help page for it used to say "type with Google Assistant"). It adds punctuation for you and lets you fix a misheard word by speaking. Google lists it in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish, and your Gboard language and phone language need to match. To turn it on or off, tap the keyboard's **Settings** gear, then **Voice typing**, and use the advanced voice typing switch. The same screen lets you turn off automatic punctuation if you'd rather say it yourself.

TIP

Switch languages

If you speak more than one language and have added it to Gboard, touch and hold the **space bar** to switch the keyboard's language, and voice typing listens for that language.

GOOD TO KNOW

Menus vary a little by phone

Android phones from different makers arrange their settings a little differently, and Gboard updates often. If a menu name doesn't match exactly, look for the closest word, such as "Voice" or "Voice typing."

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

With voice typing turned on in Gboard, every app that brings up the keyboard, from texting to Facebook to Google search, can take your voice.

CHAPTER 9

Samsung Galaxy Voice Input

Samsung Galaxy phones and tablets come with their own **Samsung Keyboard**. It offers two voice choices: **Samsung voice input** and **Google Voice Typing**. Either one works well. Samsung voice input is only available when you're using the Samsung Keyboard.

Dictating on a Galaxy

1. Tap in the message box so the Samsung Keyboard appears.
2. Tap the **microphone** icon on the keyboard's toolbar, the row of small icons just above the letters.
3. Talk normally. Tap the microphone again, or pause, to stop.
4. Read it, fix anything, and tap **Send**.

Choosing which voice input to use

1. Open **Settings**.
2. Tap **General management**, then **Samsung Keyboard settings**.
3. Tap **Voice input**.
4. Choose **Samsung voice input** or **Google Voice Typing**.

Voice typing without a signal

Samsung voice input can work offline once you download a language for it. In the **Voice input** settings, look for the **Offline voice input** section, then turn on or install the language you want. This is handy in places with weak cell service, and it means your speech is turned into text on the phone itself.

> TIP
>
> **Not sure which keyboard you have?**
>
> Look at the keyboard. If it has a Samsung-style toolbar with an emoji face, a microphone and a gear, it's the Samsung Keyboard. If it says **G** or has Google's colorful look, it's Gboard, and Chapter 8 applies.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Two good options on one phone means if one voice input struggles with your voice, you can try the other in a minute without installing anything.

CHAPTER 10

Punctuation and Fixes on Android

On most Android phones, standard voice typing writes down exactly what you say, word for word. That means commas and periods usually only appear when you say them. Here's how to get a tidy message.

Punctuation you can say

Say	You get
"period"	.
"comma"	,
"question mark"	?
"exclamation point"	!

On many phones you can also say "new line" to start a new line. If your phone types the words instead, just tap the keyboard's Return or Enter key. Pixel phones with advanced voice typing add most punctuation for you (Chapter 8).

Fixing a wrong word

1. Stop voice typing.
2. Tap the word that's wrong. Gboard may show other suggestions in the strip above the keyboard; tap the right one.
3. Or double-tap the word to select it, and type or dictate the correct word.
4. To move the cursor, slide your finger left or right along the **space bar** on Gboard.
5. Tap the **Backspace** key (the arrow with an X) to remove letters.

Fixing a word by voice on Gboard

Gboard has a neat trick: tap the misheard word so it's selected, then fix it by speaking the word you meant, typing it, or tapping one of the suggested words. If speaking doesn't replace it on your phone, tap the **microphone** first while the word is still selected.

TIP

Capitals and names

Voice typing usually capitalizes the start of a sentence and common names. For an unusual name, it's quickest to type that one word by hand after you finish talking.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few spoken punctuation words and a quick tap to fix a word turn a jumble of speech into a message that reads as if you'd typed it carefully.

CHAPTER 11

When the Microphone Button Is Missing

One of the most common calls about voice typing is "my microphone button disappeared." It's almost always a setting, not a broken phone. Work down this list.

On an iPhone or iPad

1. Go to **Settings** > **General** > **Keyboard** and make sure **Enable Dictation** is on (Chapter 4).
2. Check that you're using Apple's own keyboard. If you installed another keyboard app, tap the **globe** or **emoji** key to switch back.
3. Restart the iPhone.

If a family member set up **Screen Time** limits on your phone, ask them to look through those limits too, in case Siri and Dictation were switched off there.

On an Android phone with Gboard

1. Tap the keyboard's **Settings** gear > **Voice typing** and make sure **Use voice typing** is on (Chapter 8).
2. Check that Gboard is allowed to use the microphone. On most phones that's **Settings** > **Apps** > **Gboard** > **Permissions** > **Microphone**. Choose to allow it while using the app.
3. Check that the phone's overall microphone access isn't switched off in the privacy or security settings.
4. Restart the phone.

On a Samsung Galaxy

1. Open **Settings** > **General management** > **Samsung Keyboard settings** > **Voice input**, and make sure a voice input is selected (Chapter 9).
2. Look along the keyboard's toolbar. The microphone may have been moved; tap the three-dot button on the toolbar to see more icons.
3. Check the microphone permission for the keyboard, as above.
4. Restart the phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

After a big update

Phone updates sometimes rearrange keyboards or reset a setting. If the microphone vanished right after an update, the steps above usually bring it back.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most "it's gone" problems are fixed in two minutes with the right switch, without a trip to the store.

PART 4

Mac & Windows Computers

Dictation on a Mac, voice typing in Windows 11 with the Windows logo key and H, and Voice Access for running a PC hands-free.

CHAPTER 12

Dictation on a Mac

Macs have the same Dictation feature as the iPhone. Once it's on, you can dictate into Mail, Messages, Pages, Notes, a web page or almost anywhere you can type.

Turn Dictation on

1. Click the **Apple menu** (the apple at the top left of the screen) and choose **System Settings**.
2. Click **Keyboard** in the sidebar. You may need to scroll down to find it.
3. On the right, find **Dictation** and turn it on. If a message appears, click **Enable**.
4. While you're there, look at the **Shortcut** menu. It shows how you'll start Dictation, such as pressing the **Control** key twice or the **Fn** (Globe) key twice. Pick whichever feels easiest.
5. If there's a **Microphone source** setting, it shows which microphone the Mac is listening with. **Automatic** is usually fine.

Dictating a document or email

1. Click where you want the words to go, so the cursor is blinking there.
2. Press the **Microphone** key (on newer Mac keyboards, in the top row) and let go, or use your Dictation shortcut. A small microphone appears near the cursor.
3. Talk normally. You can say "period," "comma," "new line" and "new paragraph" just like on the iPhone (Chapter 6).
4. To stop, press the Microphone key again, your shortcut, or the **Esc** key. Dictation also stops by itself after about 30 seconds of silence.

HEADS UP

Press and release, don't hold

On a Mac keyboard with a Microphone key, a quick press starts Dictation. Pressing and *holding* the key starts **Siri** instead, if Siri is turned on. If Siri keeps popping up, you're holding it too long.

Auto-punctuation and languages

In supported languages the Mac adds commas, periods and question marks for you. To turn that off, go to **System Settings** > **Keyboard**, then under **Dictation** turn off **Auto-punctuation**. To dictate in another language, click **Edit** next to **Languages** in the same place and choose the language. Apple notes that Auto-punctuation isn't available in every language.

GOOD TO KNOW

Newer Macs get extra help

Apple says that on Macs with an **M3** chip or later and at least 12GB of memory, running macOS 27 with Apple Intelligence, an on-device model helps Dictation with spelling and punctuation in English. Older Macs dictate perfectly well without it.

GOOD TO KNOW

If Voice Control is on

If you've turned on **Voice Control** (the Mac's hands-free feature), regular Dictation isn't available; you dictate through Voice Control instead. Turn Voice Control off if you only want ordinary Dictation.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Dictation lets you write a long email or a letter at the speed you talk, then tidy it with the keyboard and mouse, which is much easier on the hands and wrists.

CHAPTER 13

Windows 11 Voice Typing

Windows 11 has voice typing built in, and it works almost anywhere you can type: email, Word, a web browser, a search box. The one thing to remember is a two-key shortcut.

Start voice typing

1. Click in the place where you want the words, so the cursor is blinking there.
2. Hold down the **Windows logo key** (the key with the four-square Windows symbol) and press **H**. A small voice typing box appears with a microphone.
3. If the microphone isn't already listening, click it.
4. Talk normally. Your words appear where the cursor is.
5. Click the microphone again to stop, or stop talking for a moment.

What it needs

- A working **microphone**. Most laptops have one built in. Many desktop computers don't; a headset or a small USB microphone solves that.
- An **internet connection**. Windows voice typing uses Microsoft's online speech service, so it doesn't work offline.
- The cursor in a text box. If nothing happens when you press the shortcut, click in the box first.

Two handy settings

The voice typing box has a small **settings** gear. Inside you'll usually find two switches worth knowing: **Automatic punctuation**, which adds commas and periods for you, and the **Voice typing launcher**, which shows a microphone button whenever you click in a text box, so you don't need to remember the shortcut. You can still say "period," "comma" or "question mark" whenever you want one.

> TIP
>
> **Touch-screen laptops**
>
> If your Windows computer has a touch screen, the on-screen touch keyboard has a **microphone** key too. Tap it to start voice typing.

GOOD TO KNOW

It used to be called dictation

Older Windows 10 guides call this feature "dictation." It's the same idea and the same shortcut.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One shortcut, the Windows key and H, turns any email or document on your PC into something you can simply talk into.

CHAPTER 14

Voice Access: Running a PC Hands-Free

Voice access goes beyond typing. It lets you open apps, click buttons, scroll pages and dictate text, all by voice. It's designed for people who find a mouse and keyboard difficult or painful, and it's built into Windows 11, version 22H2 and later. It replaced the older Windows Speech Recognition.

Setting it up the first time

1. Click **Start** and type **voice access** into the search box, then open it. (It's also in **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Speech**.)
2. The first time, Windows downloads a speech model. This needs an internet connection; afterward, voice access works offline.
3. Choose your microphone when asked.
4. Run the short guide it offers. It teaches the basic commands by having you try them.
5. If you'd like it ready every day, turn on the option to start voice access automatically when you sign in, in **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Speech**.

A few commands to start with

Say	What happens
"Voice access wake up"	Starts it listening again after it's been put to sleep
"Open voice access guide"	Brings back the step-by-step lessons
"Open" plus an app name	Opens that app, such as "Open Mail"
"Click" plus a button name	Clicks that button, such as "Click Send"

GOOD TO KNOW

Languages

Microsoft lists voice access in English, Spanish, French and German as of November 2026, with more languages added over time. Check Microsoft's voice access page if you need another language.

TIP

Typing only? Use Windows key and H

If you just want to talk instead of type, plain voice typing (Chapter 13) is simpler. Voice access is for running the whole computer by voice.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

For someone with arthritis, a tremor or limited use of their hands, voice access can make the whole computer usable again, not just the typing.

PART 5

Emails, Letters & Documents

Dictating an email, voice typing in Google Docs, the Dictate button in Microsoft Word, and writing longer pieces by voice.

CHAPTER 15

Dictating an Email

Email is where voice typing really shines. You can say a whole paragraph in the time it takes to type a sentence. The trick is to type the short, exact parts and talk the long parts.

A simple routine that works on any device

1. Start a new email in your usual app: Mail, Gmail, Outlook or another.
2. **Type** the email address in the **To** line, or choose the person from your contacts. Spoken email addresses are easy to get wrong.
3. Tap or click in the **Subject** line and dictate a few words, such as "Thanksgiving plans."
4. Tap or click in the main body of the email and start Dictation (the microphone on a phone, your shortcut on a Mac, the Windows logo key and H on a PC).
5. Say your greeting, then "comma, new paragraph." Talk through what you want to say, one thought at a time, saying "new paragraph" between topics.
6. Stop Dictation. Read the whole email from top to bottom and fix any wrong words.
7. Check the **To** line one more time, then send.

An example you can try

Say: "Hi Jim comma new paragraph I wanted to let you know the furnace man is coming Tuesday morning period Could you stop by around ten question mark new paragraph Thanks comma new line Mary." Then compare what appears with what you meant. Most people are surprised how close it comes.

TIP

Dictate a draft, send later

If you're not sure about a long email, dictate it, then leave it in your **Drafts** folder. Read it again after lunch with fresh eyes before you send it.

HEADS UP

Reply All

When you dictate a reply, check whether you pressed **Reply** or **Reply All**. A spoken reply meant for one person can easily go to the whole group.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Longer, friendlier emails without the strain of typing, and far fewer "I'll write back properly later" messages that never get written.

CHAPTER 16

Voice Typing in Google Docs

Google Docs is Google's free word processor. It has its own voice typing tool on a computer, and it understands a good set of spoken commands. It works in the **Google Chrome** web browser.

Start voice typing in a document

1. Open **Google Chrome** and go to **docs.google.com**. Sign in with your Google Account and open or start a document.
2. Click the **Tools** menu and choose **Voice typing**. A box with a microphone appears.
3. The first time, Chrome asks to use your microphone. Click **Allow**.
4. Click the microphone in the box when you're ready, and talk.
5. Click the microphone again, or say "stop listening," when you're finished. Say "resume" to start again.
6. Say "voice commands list" any time to see everything it understands.

Commands Google Docs understands

Say	What happens
"period", "comma"	Adds the mark
"question mark", "exclamation point"	Adds the mark
"new line"	Starts a new line
"new paragraph"	Starts a new paragraph
"stop listening" / "resume"	Pauses and restarts voice typing
"voice commands list"	Shows the full list of commands

GOOD TO KNOW

English for the fancy commands

Google Docs also understands editing and formatting commands, such as "bold" or selecting text by voice, but these work only when your account and document are in English. Plain dictation works in many more languages.

TIP

On a phone, use the keyboard microphone

In the Google Docs app on a phone or tablet, the Tools menu voice typing isn't there; use the microphone on your phone's keyboard instead (Part 2 and Part 3).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A free, full-size document you can talk into, saved automatically to your Google Account, so a letter or a family history is never lost.

CHAPTER 17

The Dictate Button in Microsoft Word

If you use **Microsoft Word** through a Microsoft 365 account, there's a **Dictate** button right on the Home tab. It types what you say into your document and understands spoken punctuation.

Dictating in Word

1. Open Word and sign in with your Microsoft account, then open a new or existing document.
2. Click where you want the words to start.
3. On the **Home** tab, click **Dictate** (a microphone, usually near the right end of the ribbon).
4. Wait for the listening symbol to appear, then talk.
5. Say the name of a punctuation mark, such as "comma" or "period," to add it.
6. Click **Dictate** again to stop.

GOOD TO KNOW

Which versions have it

Microsoft says Dictate is for **Microsoft 365 subscribers**, in the Word program and in Word for the web (in Edge, Chrome or Firefox). If your copy of Word doesn't show a Dictate button, Windows voice typing (Chapter 13) or Mac Dictation (Chapter 12) works in any version of Word, at no extra cost.

TIP

Outlook too

Microsoft's Outlook email program offers dictation for Microsoft 365 subscribers as well. Look for a **Dictate** microphone button when you write a new email.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

If you already write letters in Word, you don't need anything new: one button, and you're talking instead of typing.

CHAPTER 18

Writing Longer Things by Voice

Voice typing isn't only for quick texts. Many people use it for letters, thank-you notes, church newsletters, club minutes, recipes and family stories. Long pieces go best with a simple plan.

Talk first, tidy later

1. Jot three or four key points on paper, so you know where you're going.
2. Dictate one point at a time, then pause and stop the microphone.
3. Don't stop to fix every little mistake while you're talking. Keep going until the draft is done.
4. Then go back with the keyboard and mouse, or your finger, and clean it up.
5. Read the finished piece out loud to yourself. Your ear catches what your eyes skip.

Good long projects for voice typing

- **Family stories and memories** for the grandchildren. Talking feels more natural than writing, and the words sound like you.
- **Letters** to old friends, and thank-you notes after the holidays.
- **Lists**: shopping, packing, medications to ask the doctor about.
- **Notes after an appointment**, while you still remember what was said.

TIP

Save as you go

Google Docs saves automatically. In Word, Pages or Notes, check that your document is saved, especially after a long dictation session.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The stories you've always meant to write down can finally get written, at the speed you tell them.

PART 6

Privacy, Safety & Accessibility

Hands-free help when your hands hurt, when to send a voice message instead, where your spoken words go, and what never to say out loud.

CHAPTER 19

Hands-Free Help When Your Hands Hurt

Voice typing puts words on the screen, but you still tap to open the app, tap the message box and tap Send. For someone with arthritis, a tremor, a stroke or an injury, even those taps can be hard. Every major phone and computer also has a **voice control** feature that runs the whole device by voice. Here's a short tour; Bill's separate guide on voice control covers them in depth.

Which hands-free tool you have

Device	The hands-free feature	Where to find it
iPhone and iPad	**Voice Control**	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control**
Mac	**Voice Control**	**System Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Control**
Android and Samsung Galaxy	**Voice Access**	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Voice Access**
Windows 11	**Voice access**	**Settings** > **Accessibility** > **Speech** (Chapter 14)

What changes when you turn one on

- You can say things like "Open Messages" or "Tap Send" instead of touching the screen.
- You still dictate text, but you do it *through* the voice control feature. On an iPhone or a Mac, when Voice Control is on, regular Dictation steps aside and Voice Control types your words instead.
- The first time you turn Voice Control on an iPhone or Mac, it downloads a file. After that it works without the internet.
- On Android, Voice Access adds a shortcut, such as a small floating button, to start and stop it. If you've set up "Hey Google," you can also say "Hey Google, start Voice Access."

TIP

Start with plain voice typing

Voice control takes a little practice, because it's listening for commands all the time. If your main goal is writing messages, get comfortable with voice typing first (Parts 2 through 5), then add voice control if the tapping is still too much.

GOOD TO KNOW

A helper can set it up

Turning on voice control for the first time involves a few menus and a short tutorial. It's a good job for a family member sitting beside you, or for a visit from Bill.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Together, voice typing and voice control can let someone who can barely tap a screen still send texts, write emails and stay in touch on their own.

CHAPTER 20

Voice Typing or a Voice Message?

Most messaging apps let you send a **voice message**, a short recording of your actual voice, as well as dictated text. Neither is better; they're good for different moments.

Which one to choose

	Voice typing (dictated text)	Voice message (recording)
They get	Written words they read	Your voice, which they play
Good for	Quick facts, times, addresses, lists, anything they need to look back at	Warm greetings, birthday wishes, a story, a laugh; when tone matters
Mistakes	You can read and fix it before sending	What you say is what they hear; you can re-record
For them	Easy to read in a quiet meeting or doctor's office	Needs a moment to listen; harder in public
Hearing loss	Better if they have trouble hearing	Better if they have trouble reading small text

Telling the two buttons apart

- The **microphone on the keyboard** is voice typing on every phone. It types.
- A separate microphone or sound-wave button in the message area of Messages, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or Google Messages usually **records** a voice message.
- If a timer or a red recording bar appears, you're recording a voice message, not typing. Cancel it if that isn't what you wanted.

TIP

Both in one

For a grandchild's birthday, try both: a dictated text with the plans and times, then a short voice message singing or saying happy birthday.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Choosing the right one means your news is easy to find later, and your warm wishes sound like you.

CHAPTER 21

Where Your Spoken Words Go

When you dictate, a computer somewhere has to turn your voice into text. Sometimes that happens right on your phone or computer; sometimes your voice is sent over the internet to the company's computers, called **servers**. Here's an honest look at each, without the scare stories.

Apple: iPhone, iPad and Mac

- On many newer devices, ordinary Dictation is processed on the device itself. Some requests, such as dictating into a search box, can be sent to Apple's servers.
- Apple says that what you dictate isn't stored on its servers unless you choose to **Improve Siri and Dictation**, which shares recordings to help Apple improve the service. You can say no, or change your mind later in the privacy and Siri settings.
- You can delete your Siri and Dictation history from Apple's servers. On an iPhone, look in the Siri settings (named **Apple Intelligence & Siri** or **Siri** depending on your version) for **Siri & Dictation History**, then tap **Delete Siri & Dictation History**. Do it on each device separately.

Windows 11

Microsoft says Windows voice typing uses **online speech recognition**, which means your voice is sent to Microsoft to be turned into text. That's why it needs the internet (Chapter 13). The switch lives in **Start** > **Settings** > **Privacy & security** > **Speech**. If you turn it off, voice typing may stop working; Windows' voice access (Chapter 14), which uses a speech model on the computer, is the alternative.

Android, Samsung and Google Docs

- Google's and Samsung's voice typing may send your voice to their servers, or may work on the phone itself, depending on the phone, the keyboard and whether you've downloaded a language for offline use.
- Samsung voice input can work offline once you install the offline language (Chapter 9), which keeps the speech-to-text work on the phone.
- Google Docs voice typing runs in the Chrome browser over the internet, and your document is saved to your Google Account.

GOOD TO KNOW

The plain truth

Big companies process millions of voice requests and say they protect them. You don't need to be afraid of voice typing. But it makes sense to treat dictation like a phone call in a public place: fine for everyday things, not the place for your most private secrets. Chapter 22 has the specifics.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing where your words go lets you use voice typing confidently for everyday messages, and choose the keyboard for the few things that deserve extra privacy.

CHAPTER 22

Dictating Safely: What Not to Say Out Loud

Voice typing is safe for nearly everything you write. A few things, though, are better typed quietly, and a few "voice to text" offers online are worth avoiding entirely.

Type these, don't say them

- **Passwords and PINs.** Anyone nearby can hear them, and many password boxes turn the microphone off anyway.
- **Credit card, bank account and Social Security numbers.** Never dictate them in public, and think twice before putting them in a text or email at all.
- **Medical details** in a waiting room or on the bus. Wait until you're home.
- **Anything about someone else** you wouldn't want overheard, especially in a family group chat.

Be polite in shared spaces

- Dictating in a quiet library, a church or a restaurant can bother others. Step aside, or type.
- On a speakerphone call, remember the other person may hear you dictating a note.
- If you share a computer, close your email or document when you're finished.
- When a message includes numbers, such as an address, a time or a dollar amount, check each one before you tap Send.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "voice to text" apps and tech support

The voice typing built into your phone and computer costs nothing. Be wary of ads, pop-ups or callers offering a "better" dictation app that needs your card number, a monthly subscription or remote access to your computer. Never let a stranger who called you, or a pop-up that told you to call, connect to your computer. And no real company asks you to pay with **gift cards**. Hang up and call someone you trust.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few simple habits keep your private details private, so you can enjoy voice typing without worrying about who's listening.

PART 7

Fixing Problems & Getting Help

What to do when voice typing mishears you or stops working, dictating in another language, when to call Bill, and your one-page cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 23

When Voice Typing Gets It Wrong

Nearly every voice typing problem comes down to one of a handful of causes. Find your symptom below and try the fixes in order. You can't hurt anything by trying them.

It types the wrong words

1. Move away from the TV, radio, fan or running water, or turn them down.
2. Hold the phone a little closer, about where you'd hold it to read, and speak toward the bottom edge, where the microphone usually is.
3. Wipe the microphone holes gently with a dry, soft brush or cloth. A thick case can also cover them.
4. Speak in whole sentences at your normal speed (Chapter 3).
5. Check the language. If it suddenly types gibberish or another language, it may be listening for the wrong one (Chapter 24).

It stops listening too soon

- Long pauses end dictation on most devices. On an iPhone or a Mac, Apple says Dictation stops after about 30 seconds of silence. Plan your sentence, then talk.
- If it stops after every few words, check your internet connection; some voice typing needs it (Chapter 21).
- Tap the microphone again and carry on. Your earlier words stay where they are.

Nothing happens when I tap the microphone

1. Make sure the cursor is in a text box. Voice typing needs a place to put the words.
2. Check that voice typing is turned on (Chapter 4 for iPhone, Chapter 8 for Gboard, Chapter 9 for Samsung, Chapter 12 for Mac).
3. Check that the keyboard app has permission to use the microphone (Chapter 11).
4. On a Windows PC, check that a microphone is connected and that you're online (Chapter 13).
5. Restart the phone or computer. It fixes more problems than you'd expect.
6. Install any waiting software updates for the phone or computer.

It uses my earbuds or hearing aids instead

When Bluetooth earbuds, a headset or some hearing aids are connected, the phone may listen through their microphone instead of its own. That's often fine. If it isn't hearing you, take the earbuds out or turn Bluetooth off for a moment, and try again.

TIP

Test in Notes first

When you're troubleshooting, practice in the Notes app (or any note-taking app). Nothing gets sent, so you can test again and again without worrying.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most voice typing trouble is fixed in a few minutes at home, with no new equipment and no trip to the store.

CHAPTER 24

Dictating in More Than One Language

If you write to family in Spanish, Italian, Polish or any other language, voice typing can listen in that language too. On most devices, the dictation language follows the keyboard language.

iPhone and iPad

1. Open **Settings** > **General** > **Keyboard** > **Keyboards**.
2. Tap **Add New Keyboard** and choose the language.
3. When you write a message, tap the **globe** key to switch to that keyboard, then tap the microphone and speak in that language.
4. To go back to English, tap the globe key again.

Android with Gboard

Add the language in Gboard's **Settings** > **Languages**, then touch and hold the **space bar** (or tap the globe key) to switch before you tap the microphone (Chapter 8).

Mac

Open **System Settings** > **Keyboard**, and under **Dictation** click **Edit** next to **Languages** to add one (Chapter 12).

HEADS UP

Wrong language by accident

If voice typing suddenly turns your English into nonsense, check which keyboard is showing. A brush of the globe key can switch languages without your noticing. Tap it again to switch back.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Grandparents who speak another language at home can write to family in that language just as easily as in English.

CHAPTER 25

When to Call Bill

Most people can learn voice typing on their own with this guide and a little practice. Still, a hand is worth it sometimes. Here's my honest list.

Times a hand is worth it

- Your microphone button is missing and the steps in Chapter 11 didn't bring it back.
- You'd like voice typing set up on **every** device you own, phone, tablet and computer, all the same way.
- Arthritis, a tremor, low vision or a stroke makes tapping hard, and you'd like hands-free voice control set up and practiced with you (Chapter 19).
- Your desktop computer has no microphone and you're not sure what to buy or how to connect it.
- You want to write family stories or a long letter by voice and would like a calm walkthrough of Word or Google Docs.
- Someone called or a pop-up told you to install a "voice" app or let them into your computer (Chapter 22).

What working with me is like

I work at your pace — no rushing, no talking down, no jargon. I'll sit with you while you dictate your first few messages, and I'll leave you with notes in your own words. Home visits are here in Portage County, Ohio; remote help reaches you wherever you are. I've been doing this work for more than 30 years.

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 free to read and share with family and neighbors.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may be greeted by Sophie

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might first meet **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. The actual help always comes from me.

Thank you for giving voice typing a try. Once it clicks, I think you'll wonder how you ever managed with those tiny keys.

— Bill

CHAPTER 26

Your Voice Typing Cheat-Sheet

Keep a copy of this near your computer or in your reading-glasses case. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Remember	
iPhone / iPad	Microphone on the keyboard. Turn on: **Settings** > **General** > **Keyboard** > **Enable Dictation**.
Android (Gboard)	Microphone on the keyboard. Turn on: keyboard gear > **Voice typing**.
Samsung Galaxy	Microphone on the keyboard toolbar. Choose: **Settings** > **General management** > **Samsung Keyboard settings** > **Voice input**.
Mac	Press and release the Microphone key, or your shortcut. Turn on: **System Settings** > **Keyboard** > **Dictation**.
Windows 11	Windows logo key + **H**. Needs a microphone and the internet.
Google Docs	In Chrome: **Tools** > **Voice typing**.
Word	**Home** > **Dictate** (Microsoft 365).
Say it	"period" "comma" "question mark" "new line" "new paragraph"
Golden rule	Read it before you send it.
Never dictate	Passwords, PINs, card or Social Security numbers.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
My phone (make and model)	_____
My keyboard (Apple, Gboard, Samsung)	_____
My computer (Mac or Windows)	_____
My Mac Dictation shortcut	_____
Languages I dictate in	_____
Words it often gets wrong	_____
Microphone or headset I use	_____
Who helps me with tech	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. No microphone button: check the voice typing switch for your device (Chapter 11).
2. It types the wrong words: turn down the noise, hold the phone closer, speak in whole sentences (Chapter 23).
3. It types another language: tap the globe key or check the keyboard language (Chapter 24).
4. It stops too soon: pause less, check the internet, tap the microphone again (Chapter 23).
5. It records a voice message instead: use the microphone on the keyboard, not the one in the message area (Chapter 20).
6. Windows key + H does nothing: click in a text box, check the microphone and the internet (Chapter 13).
7. Still stuck: call Bill at **(330) 200-8042**.