BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

# Webcams, Microphones & Video-Call Setup

Cameras, headsets, lighting and the right settings — explained in plain English, one step at a time

**A plain-English guide for families and grandparents**

Take your time — you can't break it

*Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech*

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

*For Windows 11, Mac, Zoom, Teams, FaceTime & Google Meet · facts current November 2026*

# What's Inside

This is your guide to looking and sounding good on video calls — with the camera and microphone already built into your computer, or with an add-on webcam, headset or microphone. Read it in any order and at your own pace. Every setting comes with what it actually does *for you*, and slow, step-by-step directions. Apps change their menus now and then, so when a button has moved, look for the same words nearby.

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PART 1

# Getting Started

What makes a video call look and sound good, and the handful of words you'll see on every box and in every settings screen. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

# A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you've ever been on a video call where the grandkids said "Grandpa, we can only see the ceiling," or "You're breaking up," or "We can't hear you" — this guide is for **you**. Almost every one of those problems has a simple fix, and most of the fixes cost nothing at all.

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. Video calls come up all the time: calls with family far away, doctor's visits by video, church groups, and clubs that meet on Zoom. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table — patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything.

## What this guide will do for you

- Help you decide whether you need a new webcam at all — honestly, most people don't.
- Explain what to look for if you do buy one, and what it should cost.
- Show you how to use your iPhone as a webcam on a Mac, and an Android phone as a webcam on Windows.
- Sort out microphones, headsets and speakerphones, including the Bluetooth catch nobody mentions.
- Fix the two things that matter most for looking good: light and camera height.
- Walk you through choosing the right camera and microphone in Windows 11, on a Mac, and inside Zoom, Teams, FaceTime and Google Meet.
- Keep your camera and microphone private, and help you shrug off the scary "I recorded you" emails.

## The big promise: you can't break anything

Every setting in this guide can be changed back. If you pick the wrong microphone, you pick the right one. If an effect looks odd, you turn it off. The worst that usually happens is somebody on the call says "Can you hear me now?" a few times — and that happens to everyone.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### Why this matters

Seeing a face and hearing a voice clearly makes a call feel like a visit. A few minutes of setup — a lamp in the right spot, the right microphone picked — turns a frustrating call into a warm one, every single time after.

GOOD TO KNOW

### This guide sits alongside a few others

How to *use* each calling app — joining, muting, sharing your screen — is covered in the Zoom, FaceTime and Video Calling guides. This guide is about the **equipment and settings**: the camera, the microphone, the speakers, the light, and getting them all to work together.

## 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 start with what actually makes a call look and sound good.

***— Bill***

CHAPTER 2

# What Makes a Good Video Call

A video call has five ingredients. When a call goes wrong, it's almost always one of these. Knowing them helps you find the problem fast — and tells you where to spend money, and where not to.

| Ingredient | What it does | What matters most |
|---|---|---|
| Camera | Sends your picture | Light and height matter more than the camera itself |
| Microphone | Sends your voice | Being close to it, and a quiet room |
| Speakers or headset | Lets you hear them | Loud and clear, without echoing back into the mic |
| Light | Lets the camera see you | Light on your face, not behind you |
| Internet | Carries it all | A steady connection; sit closer to the Wi-Fi if it stutters |

## The order to improve things

If you want a better call, work down this list. The first items are free; the last ones cost money.

1. **Fix the light.** Face a window or put a lamp behind your screen (Chapter 13). Free, and the biggest improvement there is.
2. **Raise the camera to eye level.** A stack of books under the laptop does it (Chapter 14). Free.
3. **Pick the right microphone and speaker** in your computer's settings and in the app (Part 6 and Part 7). Free.
4. **Get closer to the microphone, or use a headset.** A basic USB headset costs about $20–$25 as of November 2026 (Chapter 10).
5. **Only then, consider a new webcam** (Chapters 4 and 5).

TIP

### Sound matters more than picture

People forgive a fuzzy picture. They don't forgive not being able to hear you. If you have money for only one upgrade, a headset or a better microphone usually helps more than a fancy camera.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Instead of guessing — or buying gadgets you don't need — you'll know which ingredient is causing trouble and how to fix it, usually for free.

CHAPTER 3

# The Words You'll See

Webcam boxes and settings screens use a handful of words over and over. Here they are in plain English. You don't have to memorize them — come back here whenever one puzzles you.

| Word | What it means |
|---|---|
| **Webcam** | A camera for your computer. It can be built into a laptop or screen, or a separate one that plugs into a USB port. |
| **1080p / Full HD** | A sharp picture — plenty for video calls. Most good webcams are 1080p. |
| **4K** | An even sharper picture. Calling apps usually send far less detail than that over the internet, so the extra sharpness rarely shows on a call. |
| **720p / HD** | An older, softer picture. Fine, but you'll notice the difference on a big screen. |
| **Privacy shutter** | A little sliding cover over the lens. Slide it closed and the camera sees nothing. |
| **Input / output** | **Input** is what goes in to the computer — your microphone. **Output** is what comes out — your speakers or headset. |
| **USB** | The common rectangular (USB-A) or small oval (USB-C) plug on computers. |
| **Headset** | Headphones with a microphone attached, usually on a little arm. |
| **Speakerphone** | A puck-shaped speaker and microphone in one, made for calls with several people in the room. |
| **Echo / feedback** | When people hear their own voice coming back, or a loud squeal. Usually caused by speakers too loud and too close to a microphone (Chapter 11). |
| **Continuity Camera** | Apple's name for using your iPhone as the webcam for your Mac (Chapter 7). |
| **Studio Effects** | Windows 11's built-in camera and mic effects on PCs with an AI chip (an NPU), such as Copilot+ PCs (Chapter 16). |
| **Permissions** | The switches that decide which apps are allowed to use your camera and microphone (Chapter 23). |

GOOD TO KNOW

### Same idea, different names

Zoom calls your microphone "Microphone," Teams lists it under "Devices," and a Mac calls it "Input," and Windows 11 lists it under **Input** in its Sound settings. They all mean the same thing: which microphone the computer listens to.

PART 2

# Cameras

Whether you need a new webcam at all, what to look for if you do, what it should cost, and how to set one up so it looks right.

CHAPTER 4

# Do You Need an External Webcam?

Webcams are on a lot of holiday gift lists this year, and it's easy to assume a new one will make every call look better. Sometimes it will. Often it won't — and the money would do more good spent on a lamp or a headset. Here's how to tell the difference.

## You probably don't need one if…

- **You have a laptop made in the last few years.** Its built-in camera is usually good enough for family calls and doctor's visits, especially with decent light (Chapter 13).
- **You have an iMac or a recent MacBook.** Apple's newer Macs have good cameras, and some have Apple's **Center Stage** camera that keeps you in the frame as you move (Chapter 18).
- **You have an iPhone and a Mac.** Your iPhone can be the webcam, and its camera is better than most you can buy (Chapter 7).
- **Your picture is dark or grainy.** That's almost always the light, not the camera. A new camera in the same dim room will look dim too.

## You probably do need one if…

- **You use a desktop computer with a separate monitor** that has no camera. Many monitors don't have one.
- **Your laptop is older** and its camera is very blurry even in good light.
- **Your laptop's camera sits at the bottom of the screen**, looking up your nose. A webcam on top of the screen fixes that.
- **You usually close the laptop and use a bigger screen**, so the built-in camera is shut away.
- **The built-in camera has stopped working** and a repair would cost more than a webcam.

## Built-in versus USB: the honest comparison

| | Built-in camera | Plug-in USB webcam |
|---|---|---|
| Cost | Already paid for | About $20 to about $190 (Chapter 5) |
| Picture | Fine to good on newer machines | Usually sharper than older built-ins |
| Position | Fixed in the screen's frame | Can sit on top of any screen, or on a stand |
| Setup | None | Plug in; most work right away |
| Privacy cover | Some laptops have one | Many have a sliding shutter |

TIP

### Try the free fixes first

Before buying anything, spend ten minutes on Chapter 13 (light) and Chapter 14 (camera height). Then look at yourself in the Camera app. If you still don't like what you see, a webcam is a fair buy.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You spend money only when it will actually help — and you don't end up with a box in the closet that looks no better than what you already had.

CHAPTER 5

# Choosing a Webcam

If you've decided a webcam will help, the good news is that you don't need an expensive one. Here's what the numbers on the box mean, which features matter, and what to expect to pay as of November 2026.

## 1080p or 4K?

**1080p** (also called Full HD) is the sweet spot. It's plenty sharp for Zoom, FaceTime, Teams and Google Meet. **4K** is four times as many dots, but the calling apps shrink your picture to send it over the internet, so the person on the other end rarely sees the difference. 4K cameras often have better lenses and handle poor light better, which is the real reason some people buy them — but for family calls, a good 1080p camera is the honest recommendation.

**720p** cameras are the cheapest. They're fine on a small laptop screen, and noticeably softer on a big monitor or TV.

## Features worth having

- **A privacy shutter** — a little slide that covers the lens. Peace of mind for a few dollars.
- **A built-in microphone** — most webcams have one. It's usually better than an old laptop's, but a headset is still clearer (Chapter 10).
- **Automatic light correction** — helps in a dim room. Most current webcams do this.
- **A clip that fits your screen** — most clip onto the top of a laptop or monitor. Many also have a standard tripod screw underneath.
- **The right plug** — check whether your computer has the older rectangular USB-A ports or only the small oval USB-C ports. If they don't match, you'll need a small adapter.

## Features you can skip

- **4K and 60 frames per second** — made for people who stream video games or record videos.
- **Ring lights built into the camera** — handy for some, but a lamp in the right place does the same job (Chapter 13).
- **Motorized "follow me" cameras** — clever, but more to set up and more to go wrong. Many computers can do some framing in software already (Chapters 16 and 18).

## What webcams cost (as of November 2026)

| Type | Example | Typical price |
|---|---|---|
| Basic 720p | Logitech C270 | About $20–$30 |
| Good 1080p | Logitech C920s (with privacy shutter) | About $50–$70 |
| Premium 4K | Logitech Brio 4K or MX Brio | About $190 |

These are typical store prices at large U.S. retailers; sales come and go. Other good brands exist — these are just common, easy-to-find examples, not a recommendation to buy from any particular store.

HEADS UP

### Very cheap no-name webcams

The bargain-bin webcams with no recognizable brand are often blurry, have poor microphones, and may never get driver updates. Spending a little more on a known brand usually pays off.

GOOD TO KNOW

### If it's a gift

Check what kind of computer the person has, and whether the screen it will sit on is a laptop or a monitor. Tuck a note in the box: "Plug it in, then pick it in your calling app's camera list" — Chapter 19 and Chapter 20 show how.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You'll buy the camera that actually suits the way you call, at a fair price, without paying extra for features nobody on the other end will see.

CHAPTER 6

# Setting Up & Mounting a Webcam

Most webcams are "plug and play": you plug them in and the computer recognizes them in a few seconds. No disc, no software required for the basics.

## Plug it in

1. Unfold the webcam's clip and rest it on the top edge of your screen, with the lens facing you. Let the back of the clip hang down behind the screen so it grips.
2. Plug the cable into a USB port on the computer itself — not a keyboard, and ideally not a cheap USB hub, which may not give it enough power.
3. Wait about half a minute. Windows or the Mac sets it up on its own.
4. Open the **Camera** app (Windows) or **Photo Booth** or **FaceTime** (Mac) to see the picture. If you see the built-in camera instead, the app is still using the old one — Chapter 16 (Windows) and Chapter 19 and Chapter 20 (inside each app) show how to switch.
5. Slide the privacy shutter open, if it has one.

> TIP
> **Center it over the screen**
> Put the webcam in the middle of the top edge, not off to one side. When you look at the person's face in the middle of the screen, you'll appear to be looking almost at them.

## Where else it can go

- **On a small tripod** behind the laptop, raised to eye level, if your screen is too thin for the clip.
- **On a monitor arm or shelf** — anywhere stable, at eye height, about an arm's length away.
- **Not** on a wobbly stack of things that gets bumped, or below your face looking up.

## Do I need the maker's software?

Not for normal calls. Makers such as Logitech offer a free app for fine-tuning — zoom, brightness, turning autofocus on or off — and for firmware updates. It's optional. If you do install it, get it only from the maker's own website.

HEADS UP

### Two cameras, one call

Once you have a webcam, your computer has two cameras. Apps don't always pick the new one. If the picture looks like your old one, it probably is — switch it in the app's settings.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Ten minutes of setup, done once, and your new camera is ready for every call — in every app — from then on.

PART 3

# Your Phone as a Webcam

The phone in your pocket probably has a better camera than any webcam you'd buy. Here's how to use an iPhone with a Mac, and an Android phone with a Windows 11 PC — for free.

CHAPTER 7

# iPhone as Your Mac's Webcam (Continuity Camera)

Apple calls this **Continuity Camera**. Your iPhone's rear camera becomes the Mac's webcam — wirelessly, or over a USB cable — in FaceTime, Zoom, Teams, Google Meet and most other apps. It's built in, and it costs nothing beyond a way to hold the phone steady.

## What you need

- An **iPhone XR or later** (any iPhone from 2018 on) with **iOS 16 or later**.
- A **Mac with macOS Ventura or later**. For every option to work, Apple says the Mac needs macOS 14 (Sonoma) or later and the iPhone iOS 17 or later.
- Both signed in to the **same Apple Account**, with two-factor authentication turned on.
- Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on, on both, and the two devices within about 30 feet of each other. Or connect them with a USB cable, and tap **Trust** on the iPhone if it asks.
- The Mac not using AirPlay or Sidecar at the same time.

## Turn it on

1. On the iPhone, open **Settings** > **General** > **AirPlay & Continuity** (on older versions of iOS it's called **AirPlay & Handoff**).
2. Make sure **Continuity Camera** is turned on. It usually is already.
3. Mount the iPhone near the top of your Mac's screen, held steady, **locked** (screen off), with the **rear cameras facing you** and nothing covering them.
4. Open your calling app on the Mac. Some apps, such as FaceTime, may switch to the iPhone on their own. Otherwise choose the iPhone from the app's camera list (Chapter 19 and Chapter 20).
5. To go back to the Mac's own camera, simply pick it again in the app's camera list.

TIP

### A mount makes all the difference

Apple and other makers sell clips that hold an iPhone on top of a laptop or monitor. Any steady mount that holds the phone at eye level, rear camera toward you, will do. Leaning it against a coffee mug works in a pinch, but it tends to slide.

## The extras you get

- **Center Stage** keeps you in the middle of the picture as you move.
- **Portrait** softly blurs the room behind you.
- **Studio Light** brightens your face and dims the background.
- **Desk View** shows the top of your desk from above, as if a second camera were looking down — handy for showing a grandchild a photo album or a doctor a pill bottle. Not every iPhone supports it.
- **Background replacement** (swap the room for a picture) needs an iPhone 12 or later with iOS 18 and macOS Sequoia or later.

Chapter 18 shows where to switch these on and off on the Mac.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Keep the phone charged

Being a webcam uses the iPhone's battery. For a long call, use a mount that lets you keep the charging cable plugged in.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

No webcam to buy. Your call looks sharper than with most built-in Mac cameras, and you already know how to charge and look after the device that's doing it.

CHAPTER 8

# Android Phone as a Webcam on Windows 11

Windows 11 can use an Android phone's camera as a webcam, through the same link that lets the PC show your phone's texts and photos. Microsoft's help pages call it **using your mobile device's camera**; the switch itself is labeled **Use as a connected camera**.

## What you need

- A PC running **Windows 11**, kept up to date.
- An **Android phone or tablet with Android 10 or later**, linked to the PC. The link uses Microsoft's **Link to Windows** app on the phone (it's built into many Samsung phones) and **Phone Link** on the PC.
- The phone and PC both on Wi-Fi.

## Turn it on

1. On the PC, open **Settings** > **Bluetooth & devices** > **Mobile devices**.
2. Select **Manage devices**. If your phone isn't listed yet, follow the steps to add it — Windows shows a QR code to scan with the phone.
3. Turn on the switch for your phone, then turn on **Use as a connected camera**.
4. Open your calling app (Teams, Zoom, Google Meet in a browser and so on) and pick the phone's camera from the app's camera list.
5. If the phone shows a prompt, follow it to allow the camera. The phone's picture then appears in the call.

TIP

### The camera doesn't show up in the app?

Some apps only look for cameras when they first open. Close the app completely and open it again after the phone is connected.

GOOD TO KNOW

### iPhone and Windows

This Windows feature is for Android phones. An iPhone can't be a Windows webcam without extra software from another company. If you have an iPhone and a Windows PC, a plug-in webcam (Chapter 5) is usually the simpler answer.

HEADS UP

### Mind the battery and the heat

Being a webcam works a phone hard. For a long call, plug the phone into its charger, and take it out of a thick case if it gets very warm.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Your phone's better camera, for free, on the computer you already have — and it's a handy backup if the PC's own camera ever stops working right before an appointment.

PART 4

# Microphones & Headsets

Being heard clearly matters more than being seen clearly. The four kinds of microphone, the honest truth about Bluetooth on calls, and how to stop echo for good.

CHAPTER 9

# Choosing a Microphone

There are four common ways to get your voice into a call. Each one suits a different situation. The golden rule for all of them: **the closer the microphone is to your mouth, the clearer you sound**, and the less of the room it picks up.

| Kind | Best for | Watch out for |
|---|---|---|
| Built-in (laptop, webcam) | Quick family calls in a quiet room | Picks up the room, keyboard and fan |
| Headset | Clearest voice; noisy homes; hard of hearing | Bluetooth ones drop sound quality on calls |
| USB desk microphone | Clubs, classes, recording your voice | Needs to be close and pointed at you |
| Speakerphone | Two or more people on one call | Costs more; not ideal for one person |

## Built-in microphones

The microphone in your laptop, webcam or iMac is free and always there. Newer computers clean up background noise quite well. Its weakness is distance: it hears everything in the room as clearly as it hears you. Sit squarely in front of it, a couple of feet away, and avoid typing while you talk.

## Headsets

Headphones with a microphone on a short arm. Because the microphone is right by your mouth and the sound goes straight into your ears, a headset solves most problems at once — echo, background noise, and straining to hear. Chapter 10 covers choosing one. A basic wired USB headset costs about $20–$25 as of November 2026.

## USB desk microphones

A microphone on a little stand that plugs into USB. Popular models such as the Yeti cost roughly $100–$150 as of November 2026. They can sound wonderful — but only when you speak into them from close by. Placed at the far side of the desk, a fancy microphone sounds no better than a laptop's. For most people making family calls, a headset is the better buy.

## Speakerphones

A round "puck" with a speaker and several microphones, made for a small group around one table. Chapter 12 explains when one is worth it.

TIP

### Earbuds you already own

If you already have AirPods, Galaxy Buds or similar earbuds, try them on a call before buying anything. They put the sound in your ears, which stops most echo. Just read Chapter 10 about Bluetooth first.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You'll pick the one microphone that fits the way you call, instead of guessing — and you'll know why moving closer is the cheapest upgrade of all.

CHAPTER 10

# Headsets: USB versus Bluetooth

This is the chapter with the catch nobody puts on the box. Bluetooth headphones and earbuds are wonderful for music. On calls, many of them sound noticeably worse — and there's a good reason.

## Why Bluetooth sounds worse on calls

Classic Bluetooth has two ways of working. One sends rich, full stereo sound, but only one way — from the computer to your ears, with the microphone off. The other, a "hands-free" mode, sends sound both ways so the microphone can work, but it squeezes the sound into a narrow, telephone-like band. When a call starts and the headset's microphone switches on, it drops into that hands-free mode. Your music-quality headphones suddenly sound like an old phone line — and so do you.

Newer headsets and computers that use **Bluetooth LE Audio** do much better. Microsoft has added support on Windows 11 so that, with an LE Audio headset and a PC that supports it, call sound stays far clearer. If your PC supports it, Windows shows a setting called **Format when microphone is active** in the headset's sound settings. Most older headsets and PCs don't have it yet.

## USB headsets: the reliable choice

- **Plug in and go.** No pairing, no batteries, no switching modes.
- **Clear sound both ways**, because the cable carries full-quality sound for both the speakers and the microphone.
- **Inexpensive.** A basic model such as the Logitech H390 is about $20–$25 as of November 2026. It comes in USB-A and USB-C versions — match your computer's ports.
- **The downside:** a cord. You can't walk to the kitchen mid-call.

## Bluetooth headsets: when they make sense

- You need to move around during calls.
- You already own good earbuds and the people you call hear you fine.
- You buy a headset made for calls — one with a boom microphone, or one that comes with its own small USB plug-in receiver (a "dongle"). Those are designed to keep call sound clear.

TIP

### A handy middle ground

If your Bluetooth headset makes you sound muffled, try choosing the **computer's built-in microphone** in your calling app, and keep the headset for listening. Then compare. Use whichever sounds better to the person on the other end.

HEADS UP

### Bluetooth connects to the wrong thing

Bluetooth earbuds sometimes connect to your phone instead of the computer just as a call starts. If the sound suddenly vanishes, check the phone. The Wireless Headphones & Earbuds guide covers pairing and switching between devices.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You'll know why your expensive headphones sound tinny on calls, and what to do about it — instead of assuming something is broken.

CHAPTER 11

# Stopping Echo & Feedback

Echo is when the people on the call hear their own voices coming back a moment later. Feedback is the loud squeal or howl. Both are nearly always caused by the same thing: **sound from a speaker getting back into a microphone**.

## The quick fixes, in order

1. **Use headphones or a headset.** If the sound goes into your ears, it can't get back into the microphone. This fixes most echo instantly.
2. **Turn the speaker volume down** a few notches.
3. **Make sure only one device in the room is in the call.** Two tablets or a laptop and a phone in the same room, both joined to the call, will howl. Mute one and turn its speaker off — or leave the call on one of them.
4. **Use a matching microphone and speaker.** Google's help pages note that mixing one device's microphone with another device's speaker can cause echo. Pick the same headset, webcam or speakerphone for both in your app.
5. **Move away from bare walls and hard surfaces**, or add a rug or curtains. Hard rooms bounce sound.
6. **Mute when you're not talking**, especially in a large group call.

GOOD TO KNOW

### If you hear an echo of yourself

When *you* hear your own voice echoing, the problem is usually at the *other* person's end: their speakers are feeding back into their microphone. Kindly suggest they try headphones or turn their volume down.

## Background noise

- Most calling apps have a noise-reduction setting: Zoom's **noise removal**, Teams' **noise suppression**, Google Meet's **noise cancellation** (Chapter 19 and Chapter 20).
- Mac users can use **Voice Isolation**, and Windows PCs with Studio Effects have **Voice Focus** (Part 6).
- Close the window, turn off the TV, and keep the dog in another room when you can. The software is good; a quiet room is better.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

## What this does for you

Calls stop being an exercise in patience. Everyone hears everyone clearly, and nobody has to ask "Who's echoing?"

CHAPTER 12

# Two People on One Call

Couples often call the grandchildren together, side by side on the sofa. That's lovely — and it's the situation laptop microphones handle worst, because one person is always farther away.

## Simple ways to make it work

- **Sit close together**, both squarely in front of the computer, at the same distance from it.
- **Move the computer back a little** so both faces fit in the picture. Center Stage (Mac) or automatic framing (Windows Studio Effects) can widen the view to include you both.
- **Turn up the volume a bit** — but not so much that you get echo (Chapter 11).
- **Use one device, not two.** Two devices in one room cause feedback.
- **Bigger screen?** Some TVs, and Apple TV with an iPhone, can make FaceTime calls on the TV — the FaceTime guide explains how.

## When a speakerphone is worth it

A speakerphone is a puck-shaped device that sits on the table, with microphones that hear everyone around it and a speaker made for voices. Jabra, Anker, Logitech and others make them, and most plug in by USB; some also use Bluetooth. They cost more than a headset, so check current prices. One is worth considering if two or more of you call together often, or if a family member hard of hearing struggles with laptop speakers.

TIP

### Pick it for both

Once a speakerphone is plugged in, choose it as **both** the microphone and the speaker in your calling app. That's what lets it cancel echo properly.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Both of you are seen and heard on the same call, so nobody has to lean in, shout or pass the laptop back and forth.

PART 5

# Looking Your Best

The two free fixes that make the biggest difference to any camera: light on your face, and the camera at the height of your eyes.

CHAPTER 13

# Lighting That Flatters

Cameras need light the way plants do. Give a cheap camera good light and it looks fine; put an expensive camera in a dim room and it looks grainy and gray. Fixing the light is free, takes five minutes, and helps more than anything you can buy.

## The one rule: light in front of you, not behind

The most common problem is sitting with a bright window *behind* you. The camera sets itself for the bright window, and your face turns into a dark silhouette — like someone in witness protection. Turn around, so the window is *in front of* you, behind the computer, and your face lights up.

## Set up your light in five minutes

1. Sit where you usually call and open the Camera app (Windows) or Photo Booth (Mac) to see yourself.
2. If there's a window behind you, close the blinds or turn your chair and computer to face the window instead.
3. If it's evening or the room is dim, put a table lamp **behind the computer**, a little above eye level, shining toward your face. A lampshade softens it.
4. If one side of your face is in shadow, add a second, dimmer lamp on that side, or move the first lamp so it's straight in front of you.
5. Turn off the bright overhead light right above your head if it makes dark shadows under your eyes.
6. Look at the picture again. Your face should be the brightest thing in it.

TIP

### Daylight changes

A spot that's perfect at ten in the morning can be too dark at four in the afternoon. Before an important call, check the picture at the time of day the call will happen.

## Clip-on and ring lights

If you call often in the evening, a small clip-on light or ring light that sits behind or around the screen gives soft, even light. Look for one with adjustable brightness and a warm setting. They're nice to have, not a must — a lamp in the right place does most of the same job.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Your computer can help

Windows PCs with Studio Effects can brighten your face with **Portrait light** (Chapter 16). Macs have **Studio Light** and, on newer models, **Edge Light**, which lights your face using the edge of the screen itself (Chapter 18). They help, but real light still looks best.

HEADS UP

### Glasses glare

If a lamp or screen reflects in your glasses, raise the lamp a little and move it slightly to one side. Tilting the glasses down a touch can help too. Turning the screen brightness down a notch also reduces the reflection.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Family sees your face, your smile and your expressions clearly — which is the whole point of a video call — and it costs nothing.

CHAPTER 14

# Camera at Eye Level & Good Framing

A laptop on a table puts the camera well below your face. The family ends up looking up your nose, at the ceiling fan. Raising the camera to the height of your eyes is the second free fix, and it makes conversation feel more natural.

## Raise it up

1. Put a sturdy stack of books, a box or a laptop stand under the laptop until the camera is level with your eyes. Make sure it can't slide off.
2. If you type during calls, a separate keyboard and mouse saves stretching up to the raised laptop.
3. For a desktop or monitor, clip the webcam on top of the screen and raise the monitor if needed.
4. For a tablet or phone, use a stand rather than holding it — arms get tired, and the picture shakes.

## Frame yourself like a portrait

- **Distance:** sit about an arm's length from the camera.
- **Head and shoulders:** your head near the top third of the picture, with a little space above it — not cut off, and not floating at the bottom with a big ceiling above.
- **Look at the camera** now and then, especially when you're saying something important. It feels like eye contact to the other person.
- **Check what's behind you.** A tidy shelf or a plain wall is better than a pile of laundry or a bright window.

> TIP
>
> **Put their face near the camera**
>
> Move the call window to the top of your screen, right under the camera. When you look at their face, you'll be looking almost into the lens.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Blur or replace the background

Most apps can blur the room behind you, and many can swap it for a picture. It's handy if the room is busy, but blur can make the edges of your hair and hands look odd. A tidy real room usually looks best.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You look like you're sitting across the table, not peering down into a well. Calls feel more like visits.

PART 6

# Your Computer's Settings

Where Windows 11 and the Mac keep their sound and camera settings, how to pick the right microphone and speaker for the whole computer, and the built-in effects that make you look and sound better.

CHAPTER 15

# Windows 11 Sound Settings

Windows keeps one main choice of microphone ("input") and one main choice of speaker ("output"). Most calling apps start with these, so setting them correctly here fixes problems in every app at once.

## Choose your microphone and test it

1. Select **Start** > **Settings** > **System** > **Sound**.
2. Under **Output**, choose the speakers or headset you want to hear calls through.
3. Scroll to **Input** and choose your microphone — the headset, webcam or built-in one.
4. Select that microphone to open its properties.
5. Under **Input settings**, select **Start test** and speak normally for a few seconds.
6. Select **Stop test**, then **Play** to hear how you sound.
7. If you're too quiet or too loud, move the **Input volume** slider and test again.

## When sound won't work at all

1. In **Settings** > **System** > **Sound**, scroll down to **Advanced**.
2. Under **Troubleshoot common sound problems**, choose **Input devices** (for the microphone) or **Output devices** (for speakers), and follow the steps.
3. Check that the microphone is allowed for apps: see Chapter 23.
4. Unplug a USB headset or webcam, wait ten seconds, and plug it back in — into a different port if you can.
5. Restart the computer. It fixes more sound problems than you'd think.

> TIP
>
> **The quick way**
>
> Select the speaker icon at the bottom right of the screen (next to the clock). The arrow beside the volume slider lets you switch speakers quickly, without opening Settings.

HEADS UP

### Mute buttons in odd places

Many headsets have a mute switch on the cord or on the ear cup, and some laptops have a microphone mute key. If Windows says the microphone works but nobody hears you, check those first.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

One trip to Settings and every app on the computer knows which microphone and speaker to use — no more "Can you hear me?" at the start of each call.

CHAPTER 16

# Windows 11 Camera Settings & Studio Effects

Windows 11 has a page for each camera connected to your PC, where you can see a preview, change brightness and, on some PCs, turn on built-in effects called **Windows Studio Effects**.

## See and adjust your camera

1. Open **Settings** > **Bluetooth & devices** > **Cameras**.
2. Under the list of connected cameras, select the one you want — for example, the front camera or a plug-in webcam.
3. A preview appears. Depending on the camera, you can adjust brightness and contrast here.
4. If the PC supports them, the **Windows Studio Effects** switches appear on this same page.

## Windows Studio Effects

Studio Effects use a special AI chip in the computer called an **NPU** (neural processing unit), so they work without slowing the rest of the computer as much. They work in any app that uses the camera — Zoom, Teams, Google Meet in a browser and so on. The full set needs a **Copilot+ PC**; PCs with a smaller NPU get some of them.

| Effect | What it does |
|---|---|
| **Background effects** | Blurs the room behind you. There may be a standard and a stronger "portrait" blur. |
| **Eye contact** | Gently adjusts your eyes so you seem to look at the camera while you read the screen. |
| **Automatic framing** | Keeps you centered in the picture as you move. |
| **Voice focus** | Cuts background noise so your voice comes through. |
| **Portrait light** | Brightens your face in a dim room. Only on Copilot+ PCs with a Snapdragon chip. |

## Turn them on quickly

1. Press **Windows key + A**, or select the network, sound and battery icons at the bottom right, to open **Quick Settings**.
2. Select **Studio effects**. If you don't see it, select the pencil icon to add it.
3. Turn on the effects you want. They stay on for every app until you turn them off.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Don't see Studio Effects anywhere?

Then your PC doesn't have the NPU chip they need — and that's fine. Most calling apps have their own background blur and noise reduction (Chapter 19 and Chapter 20).

HEADS UP

### Doubled-up effects

If you turn on background blur in Windows *and* in Zoom or Teams, the picture can look odd. Use one or the other. Microsoft also notes that on some PCs the effects use more battery.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Better light, a tidier background and a clearer voice in every calling app, set once, without buying any extra equipment.

CHAPTER 17

# Mac Sound Settings

Like Windows, your Mac keeps one main microphone and one main speaker. Set them here, and FaceTime, Zoom, Teams and your web browser start with them.

## Choose your microphone

1. Choose **Apple menu** > **System Settings**, then click **Sound** in the sidebar. You may need to scroll down.
2. Click **Input**, then select the microphone you want from the list.
3. Speak normally and watch the **Input level** bars move. If they hardly move, drag the **Input volume** slider up; if they're always at the top, drag it down.
4. Click **Output** and select the speakers or headset you want to hear through.

TIP

### Background noise on built-in microphones

On some Macs, an **ambient noise reduction** option appears under Input for the built-in microphone. Apple notes it doesn't appear on Macs with Apple silicon, which handle noise in other ways — including **Voice Isolation** during calls (Chapter 18).

TIP

### Quick switching

Click **Control Center** in the menu bar at the top right, then the arrow next to **Sound**, to switch speakers or headphones without opening System Settings.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Your Mac listens through the microphone you chose and plays through the speaker you chose, in every app, every time.

CHAPTER 18

# Mac Video Effects & Mic Modes

Macs have built-in effects that work in FaceTime and in many other calling apps, such as Zoom and Teams. They show up only while an app is using the camera or microphone.

## Where to find them

1. Start a video call, or open an app that uses the camera, such as Photo Booth.
2. Look at the menu bar at the top right of the screen. While the camera is in use, a video icon appears there; on some versions of macOS the controls are in **Control Center** instead.
3. Click it to see the video effects and the microphone modes, and click any one to turn it on or off.

## What each effect does

| Effect | What it does |
|---|---|
| **Center Stage** | Keeps you, and anyone with you, centered as you move. Needs a Mac with Apple's Center Stage camera (MacBook Air or MacBook Pro with M4 or later, or iMac with M4), a Studio Display, or an iPhone as the webcam (Chapter 7). |
| **Portrait** | Blurs the room behind you, like a portrait photo. |
| **Studio Light** | Brightens your face and dims the background. |
| **Edge Light** | On Macs with Apple silicon running macOS 26.2 or later, lights your face using a glowing frame around the edge of the screen — handy in a dim room. |
| **Background** | Replaces the room with a color or picture, on newer versions of macOS. |
| **Reactions** | Lets hand gestures fill the screen with balloons, hearts and so on. Turn it off if it goes off by accident. |

## Mic modes

- **Standard** — the normal setting.
- **Voice Isolation** — focuses on your voice and cuts background noise. A good choice for most calls.
- **Wide Spectrum** — lets in all the sound in the room, such as music being played for the family.

HEADS UP

### Reactions at the wrong moment

A thumbs-up in the middle of a doctor's visit can set off fireworks on the screen. If you talk with your hands, turn **Reactions** off before serious calls.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Some apps have their own versions

Zoom, Teams and Google Meet have their own blur and noise settings too. Use either the Mac's effect or the app's, not both at once.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Better light, a softer background and a clearer voice with a single click — no extra equipment needed.

PART 7

# Inside the Calling Apps

Every calling app has its own list of cameras and microphones. Here's where to find it in Zoom, Teams, FaceTime and Google Meet, and how to test everything before the call starts.

CHAPTER 19

# Picking Your Camera & Mic in Zoom and Teams

Apps usually follow the computer's choice (Part 6), but each one can also remember its own. If you plugged in a new webcam or headset and the app is still using the old one, this is where you fix it. The Zoom and Microsoft Teams guides cover the rest of each app.

## Zoom (desktop app)

1. Open the Zoom app and select the **gear** icon (Settings) near your profile picture.
2. Select **Audio**. Choose your **Speaker** and **Microphone** from the lists.
3. Select **Test Speaker** to hear a tone, and **Test Mic** to record and play back your voice.
4. Select **Video**. Choose your camera from the **Camera** list and check the preview.

**During a meeting:** select the small arrow next to the **microphone** or **video** button at the bottom of the window. A menu lists every microphone, speaker and camera — click the one you want.

> TIP
> **Zoom's test meeting**
> Go to **zoom.us/test** to join a practice meeting by yourself. Zoom plays a tone and records a few seconds of your voice so you can check everything without bothering anyone. When you join a real meeting, Zoom also offers **Test speaker and microphone**.

## Microsoft Teams (free and work versions)

1. Select **Settings and more** (the three dots next to your profile picture) > **Settings** > **Devices**.
2. Under audio, choose your **Speaker** and **Microphone**. You can also turn on **noise suppression** here.
3. Under video, choose your **Camera** and check the preview.
4. In the work version of Teams, you can also select **Make a test call** to record and hear yourself.

**During a call:** select **More** (the three dots) in the meeting controls, then the device or audio settings, to switch devices without hanging up.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Teams Free on a phone

On a phone or tablet, Teams uses the device's own camera and microphone, and the device settings page is on the computer version only.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You'll never again spend the first five minutes of a meeting being the person nobody can hear.

CHAPTER 20

# Picking Your Camera & Mic in FaceTime and Google Meet

FaceTime and Google Meet make this simple, but the controls are tucked away. The FaceTime and Video Calling guides cover the rest of each app.

## FaceTime on a Mac

1. Open **FaceTime**.
2. Click the **Video** menu at the top of the screen.
3. Choose the camera you want — the built-in camera, a webcam or your iPhone (Chapter 7) — and the microphone you want, from the lists in that menu.
4. To turn on Portrait, Studio Light or Center Stage, use the video effects described in Chapter 18.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **FaceTime on iPhone and iPad**
>
> On an iPhone or iPad there's nothing to pick: FaceTime uses the front camera, and you can switch to the back camera during a call. If you're wearing AirPods or another headset, the call uses them automatically.

## Google Meet (in a web browser)

1. Open the meeting link. Before you join, you'll see a preview of yourself — Google calls this the green room.
2. At the bottom of your preview are the microphone, speaker and camera controls. Select the small arrow next to each to choose a different device.
3. Select the **microphone** control and speak to check it's working.
4. Or select **More options** (three dots) > **Settings**. Under **Audio** choose the **Microphone** and **Speakers** (select **Test** to hear a sound); under **Video** choose the **Camera**.
5. Select **Join now**.

TIP

### If the browser asks

The first time you use Meet, the browser asks to use your camera and microphone. Choose **Allow**. If you said no by mistake, Chapter 22 shows how to fix it.

TIP

### Computer sound not working? Use your phone

Google Meet lets you join the sound of the call by phone if your computer's microphone or speaker won't cooperate — look for the phone option when you join.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Whichever app the family, the doctor or the club uses, you'll know where the camera and microphone choices live.

CHAPTER 21

# Testing Before a Call

A two-minute check before an important call — a doctor's visit, a job interview, a grandchild's birthday — saves a lot of fuss. Do it ten or fifteen minutes before, not at the last second.

## The two-minute check

1. **Plug in** the headset or webcam first, before opening the calling app.
2. **Charge** the laptop, or plug it in. Video calls use a lot of battery.
3. **Light:** face the window or switch on your lamp (Chapter 13).
4. **Camera:** open the Camera app (Windows) or Photo Booth (Mac) and check your face is bright and centered, at eye level (Chapter 14). Slide the privacy shutter open.
5. **Microphone:** use the app's own test — Zoom's test meeting, Teams' test call, Google Meet's green room — or the Windows test in Chapter 15.
6. **Sound:** play a short video to check you can hear clearly at a comfortable volume.
7. **Quiet:** close other apps that use the camera, turn off the TV, and silence your phone.
8. **Have a backup:** keep the meeting's phone number or link handy, in case you need to join by phone instead.

TIP

### A practice call with family

The very best test is a quick call with a relative or friend who's happy to help. Ask them honestly: "Can you see my face clearly? Do I sound clear? Is there an echo?"

GOOD TO KNOW

### For telehealth visits

Many doctors' offices send a link with a "test your device" button. Use it the day before. If the visit uses an app such as MyChart, open it early — the check-in may ask questions before the video starts.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

You walk into every call calm and ready, instead of fumbling while the doctor waits.

PART 8

# Fixes, Privacy & Scams

What to try when the camera or microphone won't work, how to know when they're on, who's allowed to use them — and the scary emails you can safely delete.

CHAPTER 22

# When the Camera or Mic Won't Work

"They can't see me," "They can't hear me," "I can't hear them" — these three account for most video-call trouble. Work down the list for your problem. Most fixes take seconds.

## They can't see me (black screen or no camera)

1. Is the **privacy shutter** closed, or a sticker over the lens? Slide it open.
2. Is the **video button** in the app turned off? It usually shows a camera with a line through it.
3. Is **another app** using the camera? Only one app can use it at a time. Close other calling apps, the Camera app and Photo Booth.
4. Is the app using the **right camera**? Check its camera list (Chapter 19 and Chapter 20).
5. Is the app **allowed** to use the camera? See Chapter 23.
6. Some laptops have a **camera off key** or switch on the keyboard or side. Press it.
7. Unplug the webcam and plug it into a different USB port. Then restart the computer.

## They can't hear me

1. Are you **muted** in the app? Look for a microphone with a line through it.
2. Is there a **mute switch** on your headset or its cord?
3. Is the app using the **right microphone**? Check its list, and the computer's (Chapter 15 or Chapter 17).
4. Is the app **allowed** to use the microphone? See Chapter 23.
5. Did the host mute everyone? In a big meeting, you may need to unmute yourself or ask.
6. If it's a Bluetooth headset, is it connected to the computer — or to your phone? (Chapter 10)

## I can't hear them

1. Turn up the volume — both on the computer and, if there's one, on the headset.
2. Check the app's **speaker** choice. It may be sending sound to a monitor or TV with no speakers.
3. Unplug and replug the headset, or turn Bluetooth off and on.
4. Ask the other person whether *their* microphone is working — it may be their end.

## Browser calls: "blocked" camera or microphone

If you clicked **Block** when a website asked to use your camera, look for a small camera or padlock icon in the address bar at the top of the browser window. Click it, switch the camera and microphone to **Allow**, and reload the page. On a Mac in Safari, choose **Safari** > **Settings** > **Websites** > **Camera** (or **Microphone**).

TIP

### Restart, really

If the camera worked yesterday and doesn't today, a full restart of the computer fixes it more often than anything else on this list.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Instead of giving up on a call, you'll have a calm, simple list to work down while the family waits a minute.

CHAPTER 23

# Camera & Microphone Privacy

It's sensible to want to know when your camera and microphone are on, and to decide which apps can use them. Both Windows and Mac make this easy.

## How to tell when they're on

- **The camera light:** most built-in cameras and webcams have a small light next to the lens that glows while the camera is in use.
- **On a Mac:** a **green dot** near Control Center at the top right of the screen means the camera is on; an **orange dot** means the microphone is on. Open Control Center to see which app is using them.
- **On Windows 11:** a small camera or microphone icon appears at the bottom right of the screen near the clock while an app is using them. Point at it to see which app.
- **A privacy shutter** is the simplest guarantee: when it's closed, the camera sees nothing.

## Choose which apps can use them on Windows 11

1. Open **Settings** > **Privacy & security**.
2. Under **App permissions**, select **Camera**.
3. Make sure **Camera access** and **Let apps access your camera** are on if you want to make calls. Then turn individual apps on or off in the list.
4. Further down, **Let desktop apps access your camera** covers programs like Zoom that you downloaded from the web. Leave it on if you use them.
5. Go back and do the same under **Microphone**.

## Choose which apps can use them on a Mac

1. Choose **Apple menu** > **System Settings**, then click **Privacy & Security** in the sidebar.
2. Click **Camera**. Turn each app on or off. Apps you've installed appear here after they first ask to use the camera.
3. Go back and click **Microphone** to do the same.

GOOD TO KNOW

### Turned it off by mistake?

If Zoom or Teams suddenly can't see or hear you, check these lists — the switch for that app may be off. Turn it on, then quit and reopen the app.

STAY SAFE

### Sensible habits

Close the shutter or the laptop lid when you're not on a call. Keep the computer up to date. Only install calling apps from the official app store or the company's own website. And never let a stranger who phones you "connect to your computer."

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

Peace of mind: you'll always know when the camera is on, and you're in charge of who can use it.

CHAPTER 24

# Scams to Watch For

Webcams and computers attract two kinds of scam in particular. Both work by frightening you into acting fast. Knowing about them ahead of time takes away their power.

## The "I recorded you through your webcam" email

An email claims a hacker took over your computer, switched on your webcam and recorded you doing something embarrassing. It demands payment — usually in Bitcoin — within a day or two, or the "video" goes to all your contacts. To seem real, it may include an old password of yours, or your phone number, taken from an old data leak at some website.

SCAM ALERT

### There is no video

These emails go out to huge numbers of people at once. The scammer hasn't hacked your camera and has no recording. The FTC's advice is simple: **don't pay, and don't reply**. Delete the email. If it shows a password you still use anywhere, change that password now, and turn on two-step verification. You can report it at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov** or to the FBI at **ic3.gov**.

STAY SAFE

### If someone really has images

If someone you've met online actually has private pictures or video and is threatening you or a family member — especially a child or teenager — don't pay and don't keep talking to them. Keep the messages, and report it to the FBI at ic3.gov or 1-800-CALL-FBI. For a child, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) can help.

## Fake tech-support pop-ups and calls

A loud warning suddenly fills the screen: "Your camera has been hacked! Call Microsoft (or Apple) now at this number." Or someone phones to say your computer is "sending out errors." Either way, they want you to call, let them connect to your computer, and pay to "fix" it — often with gift cards, wire transfers or cryptocurrency.

SCAM ALERT

### Real companies don't do this

Microsoft and Apple don't put phone numbers in warning pop-ups and don't call you out of the blue. A pop-up that tells you to call a number is always a scam. Don't call. Close the browser — if it won't close, restart the computer. Never let a caller connect to your computer, and never pay with gift cards. Report it at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

SCAM ALERT

### Fake "webcam driver" downloads

Be wary of websites and pop-ups that say you must download a special driver or "camera fix" before a call. Webcams from known brands work without extra software; any optional app comes from the maker's own website.

FROM BILL

### If you already called or paid

It happens to careful, smart people. Call your bank or card company right away, change your passwords, and if someone connected to your computer, have it checked. I can help with that — call (330) 200-8042.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

### What this does for you

When one of these scary messages arrives, you'll recognize it at once, delete it calmly, and get on with your day.

PART 9

# Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

When a hand is worth it, and the whole guide boiled down to one page.

CHAPTER 25

# 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 worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

## Times it's well worth a call

- **Before an important video appointment** — a doctor's visit, a court date, an interview — if you'd like everything tested and working the day before.
- **Setting up a webcam, headset or speakerphone** and getting every app to use it.
- **Your iPhone as a Mac webcam, or an Android phone on Windows**, when the two devices won't see each other.
- **Echo, feedback or muffled sound** you can't track down.
- **Choosing what to buy**, or whether to buy anything at all — honest advice, no sales pitch.
- **Setting up a simple calling corner** for someone with poor eyesight or hearing, with the light, camera height and volume just right.
- **You think someone may have gotten into your computer**, or you called a number from a pop-up.

## 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 a gadget isn't worth your money, and I don't sell equipment. 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. A remote session can even double as a practice video call.

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 taking the time to make your calls clearer. The people on the other end will notice — and they'll love seeing your face.

***— Bill***

CHAPTER 26

# Your Video-Call Setup Cheat-Sheet

Keep this next to the computer. The whole guide, boiled down.

## The essentials

| Topic | Remember |
|---|---|
| **Better picture, free** | Light in front of you, not behind. Camera at eye level, an arm's length away. |
| **Better sound, cheap** | Get close to the microphone, or use a USB headset (about $20–$25). |
| **Webcam to buy** | A known-brand 1080p with a privacy shutter, about $50–$70. 4K rarely shows on calls. |
| **iPhone as Mac webcam** | Continuity Camera: same Apple Account, phone locked and steady, rear camera facing you. |
| **Android as Windows webcam** | Settings > Bluetooth & devices > Mobile devices > Use as a connected camera. |
| **Windows sound** | Settings > System > Sound > Input > Start test. |
| **Windows camera** | Settings > Bluetooth & devices > Cameras. Studio Effects in Quick Settings (Windows key + A). |
| **Mac sound** | System Settings > Sound > Input and Output. |
| **Mac effects** | Video icon in the menu bar during a call: Center Stage, Portrait, Studio Light. |
| **Zoom test** | zoom.us/test |
| **Echo?** | Headphones on, volume down, one device per room. |
| **Bluetooth sounds tinny?** | Normal on calls. Try a USB headset, or the computer's own mic. |
| **Privacy** | Mac: green dot = camera, orange = mic. Permissions in Privacy & security. |
| **Scary email** | "I recorded you" = scam. Don't pay. Delete. Change that password. |

## Write it down once

| Keep handy | |
|---|---|
| My computer (make & model) | _____ |
| My webcam / headset / speakerphone | _____ |
| Which mic and speaker to pick | _____ |
| Apps I use for calls | _____ |
| Doctor's office video-visit help line | _____ |
| Family member who'll do a practice call | _____ |

## When something's wrong, in order

1. Check mute — in the app and on the headset.
2. Check the privacy shutter and the app's video button.
3. Pick the right camera, microphone and speaker in the app.
4. Close other apps that use the camera.
5. Check the app is allowed to use the camera and microphone.
6. Unplug and replug the webcam or headset, then restart the computer.
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

**SCAM ALERT**

### Never call a number from a pop-up

Real companies don't put phone numbers in warnings. Close it, restart if needed, and call someone you trust.