BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Your First Computer

Everything a computer can do — and how it helps you — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A gentle beginner's guide for your very first computer

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For any new Windows PC, Mac or Chromebook · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your first-computer manual, written for someone sitting down at a computer for the very first time. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. It covers the three common kinds of computer — Windows, Mac, and Chromebook — and tells you which is which whenever they differ. Every step is slow and anyone can follow it.

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PART 1

Meet Your Computer

What a computer is, the three common kinds, the parts in front of you, turning it on and off, and how to use the mouse and keyboard. The gentlest possible start.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Whoever is sitting down at this computer — this is for **you**. Perhaps it's brand new out of the box, or perhaps it's been waiting on the desk a while, a little intimidating, until you felt ready. Either way, you've come to exactly the right place, and I'm glad you're here.

I'm Bill. Helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I wrote this book the way I'd pull up a chair beside you: slowly, in plain English, with no rushing and no fancy words. The moment I use a term you don't know, I'll stop and explain it — you'll never have to look anything up.

Written for the complete beginner

If you've never really used a computer, this book is written for *you* especially. We start from the very beginning — what the thing even is — and move one small step at a time. There's no test and no race. You cannot fall behind, because there's nowhere you have to be.

The big promise: you can't break it

Here is the most important thing in the whole book. **You cannot break your computer by clicking on it and exploring.** You can't wear it out. You can't delete something important just by looking around. Clicking and poking about to see what happens is exactly how everyone learns — including me. If you ever feel lost, there's always a simple way back, and you'll learn it soon.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why learn this at all?

Because a computer opens doors: writing letters and keeping records with ease, seeing far-away family face to face, keeping your photos safe, shopping and banking from your chair, and finding the answer to almost any question. It's worth the gentle effort — and you're more capable than you think.

Three kinds of computer, one friendly book

There are three common kinds of personal computer, and you likely have one of them: a **Windows** PC, a **Mac**, or a **Chromebook**. They do the same sorts of things in slightly different ways. This book covers all three — and whenever they differ, I'll tell you plainly which is which, so you're never confused about what applies to you.

And you're never stuck alone. If you get truly stuck, call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll work it out together, with no judgment and no hurry. There's no such thing as a silly question.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What a Computer Is

Let's start with the simplest question: what *is* this machine? Knowing what you're sitting in front of takes away much of the mystery.

A tool for many jobs

A **computer** is a machine that does a great many jobs — writing, storing photos, sending messages, showing videos, finding information, and more — all with the same device. Where a typewriter only typed and a telephone only called, a computer does all of that and much besides. Think of it as a very capable, very patient helper that does whatever you ask, one task at a time.

A computer connects to the **internet** — the worldwide network that carries email, the web, and video calls — which is where much of its usefulness comes from. We'll get you online in Part 3.

Which kind do you have?

If it's a…	…here's what that means
Windows PC	Made by many companies (Dell, HP, Lenovo, and others), running Microsoft's "Windows" software. The most common kind. If it's not a Mac or Chromebook, it's almost certainly this.
Mac	Made by Apple, running "macOS." Often an iMac (all-in-one) or a MacBook (laptop). (We have a whole separate manual just for the Mac, too.)
Chromebook	A simpler, inexpensive laptop running Google's "ChromeOS." Does most things through the web. Popular for its low cost and easy upkeep.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why there are different kinds — and why it's fine

Windows, Mac, and Chromebook are a bit like different makes of car: each has its fans, all get you where you're going. Whichever you have is a fine choice. The *ideas* in this book — clicking, typing, the internet, saving files — work the same on all three. Only the small details of *where* a button sits differ, and I'll point those out.

TIP

Not sure which you have? Here's a quick clue

A rough guide: an **Apple logo** (an apple with a bite) means a Mac. The word **"Chromebook"** on it, or a colorful circle logo, means a Chromebook. Anything else is almost certainly a **Windows** PC. If you're still unsure, tell me what's written on it and I'll tell you in a second.

CHAPTER 3

Laptop or Desktop, and the Parts

Computers come in two broad shapes, and the parts differ a little between them. Let's name what's in front of you — you don't need to memorize this, just know where to look it up.

Laptop vs. desktop

- **A laptop** folds shut like a clamshell, with the screen and keyboard built into one piece you can carry. Everything — screen, keyboard, the pointing pad — is in that one unit.
- **A desktop** stays on a desk in pieces: a separate screen (monitor), a keyboard, a mouse, and sometimes a box (the computer itself). An all-in-one, like an iMac, tucks the computer behind the screen.

The parts, named

Part	What it is
The screen (monitor)	Where everything appears. On most computers you don't touch it; you point with the mouse or pad.
The keyboard	The rows of keys for typing.
The mouse or trackpad	What you use to move the pointer and click. A mouse is a separate gadget; a trackpad is the smooth pad below a laptop's keyboard.
The power button	Turns the computer on. On a laptop it's a key (often top-right); on a desktop, on the screen or the box.
Ports (sockets)	Slots along the edges for plugging in a charger, a printer, a memory stick, and so on.
The webcam	A tiny camera above the screen, for video calls.

TIP

A desktop can be comfier; a laptop goes anywhere

Neither shape is "better" — they suit different lives. A desktop with a big screen and full keyboard can be easier on older eyes and hands. A laptop lets you work at the kitchen table or take it along. If you're choosing, think about where you'll use it; if you already have one, it's a fine choice — let's make the most of it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Just a few parts to know

A screen to look at, a keyboard to type on, a mouse or pad to point with, and a button to turn it on — that's the whole machine, really. Once you can name the pieces, the computer stops being a mysterious slab and becomes a set of familiar tools you'll soon use without a thought.

CHAPTER 4

Turning It On & Off

Turning a computer on and off sounds obvious, but there's a right way that keeps it healthy — and knowing it saves worry. Let's cover the gentle basics.

Turning it on

1. Press the **power button** once and let go (top-right of a laptop keyboard, or on the screen/box of a desktop). A light comes on.
2. Wait a minute or two while it wakes up — you'll see some logos and then a **sign-in screen**.
3. Type your password (or use your fingerprint/face, if set up) to get in. We'll talk about accounts and passwords shortly.

Turning it off properly

Don't just hold the power button or pull the plug to turn a computer off — that's like stopping a car by hitting a wall. Instead, use the proper **Shut Down** command, which closes everything safely:

On a…	To shut down
Windows	Click the Start button (Windows logo, bottom-left), then the power icon, then Shut down.
Mac	Click the Apple logo (top-left), then Shut Down.
Chromebook	Click the clock (bottom-right), then the power icon, or hold the power key and choose Shut down.

Sleep: the everyday rest

Much of the time you needn't fully shut down. Closing a laptop's lid, or leaving a desktop a while, puts it to **sleep** — a low-power nap where everything stays as you left it, ready to wake in a second. A full shut-down is for when you're truly done for a day or two, or if things act up.

TIP

A restart fixes a surprising amount

If your computer ever acts sluggish or strange, the gentlest fix is to **restart** it (shut down and turn back on, or choose "Restart"). This clears the cobwebs and solves a great many little problems — and it never deletes your files. When you call me, it's often the first thing I'll suggest.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

On, off, and resting — with confidence

Knowing how to turn your computer on, shut it down properly, and let it sleep means you treat it kindly and it serves you well for years. No more worrying whether you've done it "right" — you have, and the machine is happy for it.

CHAPTER 5

Using the Mouse & Keyboard

The mouse (or trackpad) and the keyboard are how you tell the computer what to do. Once these feel natural in your hands, the whole machine opens up. Let's learn them slowly — you can't do them wrong.

The mouse: pointing and clicking

A **mouse** moves a little arrow — the **pointer** — around the screen. Slide the mouse on the desk and the arrow follows; lift and reposition it when you run out of room. (A laptop's **trackpad** does the same: slide one finger on the pad.)

- **Click** — press the left button down once and release. This chooses things: a button, a link, an option. Point first, then click.
- **Double-click** — two quick clicks in the same spot. Opens files and programs.
- **Right-click** — press the *right* button once. Brings up a little menu of extra options. (On a trackpad, press with two fingers, or the bottom-right corner.)
- **Drag** — press and hold the left button, slide to a new spot, then let go. Moves things.
- **Scroll** — roll the little wheel on the mouse (or slide two fingers on a trackpad) to move up and down a page.

The keyboard: a few keys worth knowing

Key	What it does
Enter / Return	Confirms something, or starts a new line.
Backspace	Rubs out the character just before the cursor.
Spacebar	The long key — makes a space between words.
Shift	Hold for a capital letter or the symbol on top of a key.
Arrow keys	Move the cursor up/down/left/right without the mouse.
Ctrl / Command	Used with other keys for shortcuts (like Ctrl-C to copy).

TIP

Practice makes it second nature — and you can slow it down

Don't just read — *do*. Move the pointer about, click things, try a right-click to see a little menu pop up. It feels clumsy at first for everyone and natural within a week. And if the pointer moves too fast, we can slow it down in the settings — there's no wrong speed, only the one that suits your hand.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The two tools that run everything

The mouse to point and the keyboard to type — master these two and you can operate the whole computer. Everything else builds on them. A little practice now pays off in every single thing you'll ever do on the machine, so take your time and get comfortable.

CHAPTER 6

Signing In & Your Account

When you turn on your computer, it asks you to **sign in** — to prove it's you before it opens your personal space. Understanding this clears up a common source of confusion, and it's tied to keeping your computer (and you) safe.

Your account and password

Your computer has a **user account** — your own private space with your files and settings — protected by a **password** (or a PIN, fingerprint, or face). This password keeps a stranger out if the computer is lost or left unattended, and it's needed for important changes. On Windows, Mac, and Chromebook alike, you sign in each time you start up.

The account behind the account

Each kind of computer is also tied to a larger account that keeps things safe and synced:

Computer	Its main account
Windows	A Microsoft account (an email and password) — ties in your settings, and the Microsoft Store.
Mac	An Apple Account (Apple ID) — ties in your photos, purchases, and other Apple devices.
Chromebook	A Google account (a Gmail address) — the whole Chromebook is built around it.

STAY SAFE

Guard your password — and don't lose it

Your sign-in password is the key to your whole computer. Never give it to anyone who calls, emails, or messages asking for it — no real company ever will. But do keep it somewhere safe that *you* can find, because it's needed for important changes. If you're unsure how to store it safely, that's a perfect thing to call me about — and we have a whole separate manual on passwords, too.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Your own private space on the machine

Your account means the computer remembers *your* files, *your* settings, and the way you like things — and keeps them private behind your password. Sign in, and it's set up just for you. That's the quiet comfort of having your own space on the computer.

CHAPTER 7

Setting Up a Brand-New Computer

If your computer is fresh out of the box, the very first time you turn it on it walks you through a friendly setup, asking a handful of questions. There's nothing to fear — it's just the computer getting to know you — but a little guidance makes it smoother. (If yours is already set up, you can skip this chapter.)

What it will ask you

Take your time with each screen; there's no clock running, and you can go back if you change your mind. Here's roughly what to expect, in order:

Setup screen	What to do
Language & region	Pick English and your country so everything reads correctly.
Wi-Fi	Choose your home network and type its password, so the computer can get online.
Your account	Sign in with (or create) your Microsoft, Apple, or Google account. If unsure, you can often skip and do it later.
A sign-in method	Create the password, PIN, fingerprint, or face sign-in you'll use each day.
A few preferences	Privacy choices, whether to send data to the maker — all optional, all changeable later.

Moving things from an old computer

If you're replacing an older machine, there are ways to copy your files and photos across — from the old computer, from a backup, or from your online account. It's worth doing so nothing's left behind, and it's exactly the kind of thing I'm glad to help with.

TIP

There's no wrong answer in setup

Nearly every choice setup offers can be changed afterward in Settings — the account, the privacy options, the look. So don't agonize. If unsure about something, pick the suggested option (or skip it) and move on; we can always revisit it together once you're up and running.

FROM BILL

Happy to set it up with you

A new computer is exciting, but that first setup — and moving your old files across — is one of those moments where a friendly hand saves a lot of second-guessing. If you've a new computer waiting in its box, give me a call and we'll bring it to life together, the right way, at your pace. **(330) 200-8042**.

PART 2

The Basics Everyone Needs

The main screen, what programs are, opening and closing them, windows, the handful of settings that make the computer comfortable, and making everything easier to see.

CHAPTER 8

The Main Screen & Where Things Live

When you sign in, you land on the computer's main screen — its home base. It looks a little different on each kind of computer, but the ideas are the same. Let's get our bearings.

What you see

- **The background** (the "wallpaper" or "desktop") — the picture that fills the screen, with everything else sitting on top.
- **A bar of icons** — along the bottom (Windows "taskbar," Mac "Dock," Chromebook "shelf") holding your most-used programs, one click away.
- **A start or apps button** — a corner button that opens the full list of your programs (the Windows logo on Windows; a grid or circle on Chromebook; the Dock and Launchpad on Mac).
- **The clock and little status icons** — usually a corner, showing the time, internet, sound, and battery.

Finding your programs

On a…	To find programs
Windows	Click the Start button (Windows logo, bottom-left) to see your programs and a search box.
Mac	Programs sit in the Dock, and all of them in the Applications folder or Launchpad.
Chromebook	Click the Launcher (circle, bottom-left) to see your apps and a search box.

TIP

When lost, head for the corner button

The corner "start"/"apps" button is your reliable home base on every computer. Whenever you can't find a program or feel lost, click it — you'll see your programs and usually a search box where you can just type what you want. It's the equivalent of walking back to your own front door.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Your whole computer, laid out before you

Once the main screen makes sense — the background, the bar of favorites, the start button — the computer stops feeling like a maze. You know where your programs live and how to get back home. That orientation is the foundation everything else rests on.

CHAPTER 9

What's a "Program"?

Everything you *do* on a computer, you do inside a **program** — also called an **app** (short for application). A program is simply a tool for one kind of job. Understanding this one idea makes the whole computer click into place.

One program, one job

There's a program for writing letters, a program for email, a program for visiting websites, a program for looking at photos, and so on. Each appears as a little picture (an **icon**) you click to open. Think of programs as tools in a drawer: a hammer for nails, a tape measure for measuring. You reach for the one the job needs, use it, and set it down.

Some programs you'll meet

Program	What it's for
Web browser	For visiting websites — Edge or Chrome (Windows), Safari (Mac), Chrome (Chromebook).
Email program	For sending and receiving email.
A word processor	For writing letters and documents.
Photos	For viewing and organizing your pictures.
Settings	For adjusting how the computer works.

GOOD TO KNOW

"App," "program," "application" all mean the same thing

You'll hear all three words, and they mean exactly the same: a tool that does one job on your computer. "App" is just the newer, shorter word. So don't let the different terms confuse you — whenever you see any of them, picture a single tool for a single task.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The whole machine, one tool at a time

Grasping that a computer is just a collection of simple, single-purpose tools takes the fear out of it. You don't have to understand the whole machine at once — you just learn the few tools you need, one at a time. Open the writing tool to write; open the web tool to browse. Simple as that.

CHAPTER 10

Opening, Closing & Switching Programs

Let's get comfortable with the everyday dance of opening a program, setting it aside, and closing it. These few moves you'll use constantly, so they're worth a little practice.

Opening a program

- **From the bottom bar:** click its icon once (Windows/Chromebook) or once (Mac Dock).
- **From the start/apps button:** click the corner button, then click the program (or type its name in the search box and click it).
- **From the desktop:** if there's an icon on the background, double-click it.

Closing a program

When you're done with a program, you close it by clicking the small **X** in a top corner of its window (top-*right* on Windows/Chromebook; top-*left* on Mac). This tidies it away. (On a Mac, the red dot closes the window but the program may keep running; to fully quit, choose Quit from its menu — a small quirk, nothing to worry about.)

Switching between open programs

You can have several programs open at once, like papers spread on a desk. To switch between them, click the one you want in the bottom bar, or click any part of its window that you can see. Everything you had open stays put until you close it.

TIP

Closing a program doesn't delete anything

A common worry: "If I close it, will I lose my work?" As long as you've **saved** (more on that later), closing a program keeps everything safe — it just tidies the tool away, ready for next time. The program itself, and your files, are still right there on the computer. Closing is just putting the tool back in the drawer.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Open, use, set aside — with ease

Once opening and closing programs feels natural, the computer becomes genuinely easy to drive. You reach for a tool, use it, and tidy it away — just like at a workbench. These small, confident moves are what turn a beginner into someone comfortably at home with their machine.

CHAPTER 11

Windows: Moving & Sizing Them

When a program opens, it appears in a **window** — a rectangle you can move, resize, and set aside. Learning to handle windows turns a cluttered screen into a tidy workspace. (This is true on all three kinds of computer; the buttons just sit in slightly different spots.)

The window buttons

In a top corner of every window sit a few small buttons (top-*right* on Windows/Chromebook, top-*left* on Mac):

Button	What it does
Minimize (–)	Tucks the window out of sight into the bottom bar, without closing it. Click its icon there to bring it back.
Maximize / full screen (■)	Makes the window fill the whole screen. Click again to shrink it back.
Close (X)	Closes the window (and usually the program).

Moving and resizing

- **To move a window:** point at the strip along its very top, press and hold the mouse button, drag it where you like, and let go.
- **To resize it:** point at an edge or corner until the pointer changes shape, then drag to make it bigger or smaller.
- **To bring a buried window forward:** click any part of it you can see.

TIP

Maximize a window to fill the screen and reduce clutter

If a window feels small or you find several overlapping ones distracting, click the **maximize** button to make the one you're using fill the whole screen. It's often the most comfortable way to work — one thing at a time, nice and big. Click it again when you want to see other windows.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A calm, organized screen

Knowing how to move, size, minimize, and maximize windows means you're never overwhelmed by a cluttered screen. You arrange your work the way that suits you — one big window, or a few side by side — and the computer feels orderly and under control rather than chaotic.

CHAPTER 12

Settings: Where You Adjust Things

Settings is where you change how your computer behaves — the sound, the text size, your Wi-Fi, and much more. Don't let the long list frighten you; you'll only ever use a handful, and you can't hurt anything by looking.

Opening Settings

On a…	To open Settings
Windows	Click Start, then the gear-shaped Settings icon (or type "settings" in the search box).
Mac	Click the Apple logo, then System Settings (a gray gear).
Chromebook	Click the clock (bottom-right), then the gear-shaped Settings icon.

Finding what you need

Rather than scrolling the whole long list, use the **search box** at the top of Settings: type a word like "sound" or "text" or "Wi-Fi," and it jumps you straight to the right spot. This is the easy way, every time.

The three kinds of control

Almost every setting is one of three simple things. Recognize these and every settings screen makes sense:

- **A switch** — slides or clicks left (off) and right (on).
- **A slider** — a dot you drag along a line, for volume or brightness.
- **A list** — click a row to see more choices, then pick one.

TIP

You truly can't break anything in Settings

People tiptoe around Settings as if one wrong click will wreck the computer. It won't. Nearly every setting is a switch or slider you can move right back. If you change something and don't like it, just change it back. Explore calmly — curiosity is how you learn where things live.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Make the computer work the way you want

Settings is where the computer bends to suit *you* — louder sound, bigger text, the right background, your Wi-Fi. A few minutes here and there turns a one-size-fits-all machine into one that fits you comfortably. It's worth getting friendly with.

CHAPTER 13

Making Everything Easier to See

There is no reason to squint or strain at your computer. All three kinds have generous tools to make text bigger, the screen clearer, and everything kinder to your eyes. This may be the most useful chapter in the book — let's make it comfortable.

Making text and everything bigger

On a…	To enlarge things
Windows	Settings → System → Display → Scale (increase it); and Accessibility → Text size.
Mac	System Settings → Displays (choose "Larger Text"); and Accessibility for more.
Chromebook	Settings → Device → Displays, and Accessibility → "Larger text."

More comfort tools

- **A bigger mouse pointer** — in the Accessibility settings, make the arrow larger and easier to spot.
- **Zoom / Magnifier** — magnify part of the screen like a strong reading glass (Windows "Magnifier," Mac "Zoom," Chromebook "Magnifier").
- **Read aloud** — the computer can read text to you (Windows "Narrator," Mac "Spoken Content," Chromebook "Select-to-speak").
- **Higher contrast and bold text** — make everything crisper, in Accessibility.

TIP

Zoom in on a web page in a flash

On any web page that's too small, hold the **Ctrl** key (**Command** on a Mac) and tap the **+** key to make everything bigger; Ctrl and **-** to shrink it back. It's an instant fix for small print, and the page remembers your choice. One of the handiest little tricks there is.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A computer that fits your eyes

Bigger text, a bolder pointer, a magnifier, a voice to read aloud — these aren't "special needs," they're simply comfort. A screen you can read without straining means happier, longer, easier time on the computer. Take a few minutes in Accessibility and set it up to suit *you*; that's exactly what it's there for.

CHAPTER 14

The Keyboard in Depth

We met the keyboard's main keys in Part 1. Let's look a little closer, because a few more keys and tricks make typing far easier — and remember, you can always let the computer type for you by speaking.

More keys worth knowing

Key	What it does
Caps Lock	Locks capital letters on (a light usually shows). Tap again to turn off. A common cause of accidental SHOUTING.
Tab	Jumps the cursor along — moves between boxes on a form, or indents.
Delete	Rubs out the character AFTER the cursor (Backspace rubs out the one before).
Esc (Escape)	Backs out of things, cancels, closes a pop-up.
The number row / keypad	Numbers along the top, and (on bigger keyboards) a block on the right.
Function keys (F1–F12)	A top row for special jobs; you rarely need them as a beginner.

Typing without typing: dictation

If typing is slow going, let the computer take **dictation** — you speak, and your words appear as text. Turn it on and start talking:

- **Windows:** press the **Windows key + H** to start voice typing.
- **Mac:** turn on Dictation in System Settings → Keyboard, then press the key it shows (often the microphone key or a double-tap of a key).
- **Chromebook:** turn on Dictation in Accessibility settings, then click the microphone.
- Say "period," "comma," "new line" for punctuation. It's surprisingly good, and a joy for longer emails.

TIP

Caps Lock is the usual "why is it all capitals?" culprit

If everything you type suddenly comes out IN CAPITALS, you've likely tapped **Caps Lock** by accident — look for a little light on the key or in the corner of the screen, and tap the key once to turn it off. A tiny thing that puzzles nearly every beginner at least once.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Let your words flow, your way

Whether you type with two fingers, ten, or prefer to speak, the computer keeps up. Knowing a few more keys and the dictation trick means typing stops being a hurdle — and a long message becomes as easy as talking to a friend.

CHAPTER 15

Notifications & the Clock Area

In a corner of your screen (bottom-right on Windows/Chromebook, top-right on Mac) sits the clock and a cluster of small icons — your computer's little dashboard. It also pops up **notifications**: brief messages from the computer or its programs. Let's make sense of them.

The little status icons

Near the clock you'll see small symbols telling you how things stand, at a glance:

- **Wi-Fi** (curved lines) — whether you're online, and how strong the signal is.
- **Volume** (a speaker) — click to adjust the sound.
- **Battery** (on laptops) — how much charge is left.
- **The clock and date** — click it for a calendar.

Notifications

A **notification** is a small message that slides in briefly — a new email, a reminder, an update ready. You can click it to see what it's about, or let it slide away. They gather in a panel you can open by clicking the clock or notification area, so you can catch up on any you missed.

TIP

Too many interruptions? Turn on a quiet mode

If notifications feel like too much — pinging while you read or watch — each computer has a "quiet" or "do not disturb" / "focus" mode to hush them for a while. Look in the notification area or Settings. Your computer should serve you, not nag you, and it's easy to tell it to pipe down.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Your computer's status, at a glance

The little corner icons let you check at a glance whether you're online, how loud things are, and how your battery's doing — and notifications keep you gently informed without your having to go looking. Once you know what they mean, they're a quiet, helpful presence rather than a mystery.

PART 3

Getting Connected

Wi-Fi and the internet in plain English, joining your home network, and the account that keeps your computer's things safe and in step.

CHAPTER 16

The Internet & Wi-Fi, Plainly

Much of what makes a computer wonderful — email, the web, video calls — needs the **internet**. For most people at home, the computer reaches the internet through **Wi-Fi**: the internet carried through the air from a box in your home, with no cable to plug in. Let's clear up the terms.

The words, untangled

- **The internet** — the giant worldwide network that carries email, websites, and video calls.
- **Wi-Fi** — the wireless way your computer connects to that internet inside your home.
- **The web** — the part of the internet made of pages you read in a browser.
- **Your internet provider** — the company you pay monthly (Spectrum, AT&T, a local one) that brings the internet into your home.
- **Your router** — the little box, often with blinking lights, that broadcasts your home Wi-Fi.

So: you pay a provider for internet, a router in your home turns it into Wi-Fi, and your computer joins that Wi-Fi to get online. Simple as that.

TIP

If the internet stops, restart the box

Nine times in ten, a dead internet connection is fixed by unplugging your router from the wall, waiting a full minute, and plugging it back in. Give it a couple of minutes to wake up. It's the same "off and on again" trick that fixes so much — always safe to try. If that doesn't do it, give me a call.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The doorway to nearly everything

Getting online is what turns your computer from a fancy typewriter into a window on the whole world — family, the news, the library, the shops, the answer to any question. Once you're connected, the real magic begins.

CHAPTER 17

Joining Your Home Wi-Fi

Connecting your computer to your home Wi-Fi is a one-time job that makes everything afterward work. Let's do it together. You'll need two things: your **Wi-Fi network name** and its **password**, often printed on a sticker on your router.

Connecting, step by step

1. Find the **Wi-Fi icon** — curved lines, in a corner of the screen (bottom-right on Windows and Chromebook; top-right on Mac). Click it.
2. A list of nearby network names appears. Find and click **yours**.
3. Type the Wi-Fi **password** exactly as printed — capital and small letters matter — and click **Connect** or **Join**.
4. A checkmark or filled-in symbol means you're on. Your computer remembers this network and rejoins it on its own from now on.

TIP

Type the password carefully — it's the usual snag

Wi-Fi passwords are often a jumble of letters and numbers, and a single wrong character stops it working. Tick the "show password" box if there is one so you can see what you've typed, and watch for capital "O" versus zero, and small "l" versus the number one. If it won't connect, it's nearly always a typo — try again slowly.

GOOD TO KNOW

Wired is an option too

If your computer sits near the router, you can skip Wi-Fi and plug in a network cable (Ethernet) for a rock-steady connection — handy for a desktop that doesn't move. But Wi-Fi is perfectly good for most people and far tidier. Either way, once connected, everything works the same.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Online, automatically, from now on

Once your computer knows your home Wi-Fi, it connects the moment you turn it on — nothing to do, every time. It's a two-minute setup that quietly powers everything else you'll do on the machine.

CHAPTER 18

Wi-Fi Away From Home

Your computer can also connect to Wi-Fi away from home — at the library, a cafe, a family member's house. It works just the same, with one small note about safety.

Joining a public Wi-Fi

1. Click the **Wi-Fi icon** in the corner.
2. Pick the network name for where you are (the cafe or library will tell you theirs).
3. Some public networks open a sign-in page in your browser — just agree to their terms to get online.

A note on safety

Public Wi-Fi is fine for ordinary browsing, and these days it's safer than it used to be because nearly all websites scramble their connection automatically (the little padlock). Still, a sensible habit: save truly sensitive tasks like online banking for your own home Wi-Fi, or do them on your phone's cellular data, when you can. We cover staying safe more fully in Part 7.

TIP

Your home network remembers you; public ones you rejoin

Your computer saves your home Wi-Fi and rejoins it automatically. Public networks you usually pick each time you visit. If you often go to one spot (a relative's house), the computer will remember that one too after the first time. Nothing to manage — it sorts itself out.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Stay connected wherever you go

A laptop that can hop onto Wi-Fi at the library, a cafe, or family's house means your computer — and everything on it — comes with you. Email on a trip, photos to show the grandchildren, a quick look something up while you're out. Freedom, with a little good sense.

CHAPTER 19

Your Account, a Little Deeper

We met your computer's account in Part 1. Now that you're online, it's worth a closer look, because that account quietly keeps your things safe and makes life easier — and understanding it heads off a lot of confusion.

What the account does for you

- **Keeps your stuff private** behind your password.
- **Backs things up safely online** — so a lost or broken computer needn't mean lost files and photos.
- **Syncs across devices** — if you also have a phone or tablet from the same family (Apple, Google, Microsoft), your things can stay in step.
- **Lets you get programs** safely from the official store.

If you're unsure of your account details

Many people aren't certain of their account's email or password, especially if family set the computer up. That's very common and fixable — the computer works fine day to day regardless, and we can track down or reset the details together whenever you like. It's worth knowing them, though, so let's make a note once we do.

STAY SAFE

This account's password is one of your most important

Because your computer's account guards your files, photos, and backups, its password deserves your best care — a strong one, kept safe, never shared. And be deeply suspicious of any call, text, or email claiming to be "Microsoft," "Apple," or "Google" asking you to "verify" or "confirm" it; they do not do that. When unsure, call me.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

One account, quietly keeping you safe

Your computer's account works away in the background — protecting your privacy, backing up your memories, keeping your devices in step. You rarely think about it, but it's doing a great deal for you. A little attention to keeping it secure pays off enormously if the computer is ever lost or broken.

PART 4

The Internet & Email

Browsing the web, looking anything up, sending and receiving email, and the handful of habits that keep you safe online — the heart of what a computer is for.

CHAPTER 20

Browsing the Web

The **web browser** is the program you use to visit websites — to read the news, look things up, shop, watch videos. Every computer has one built in, and they all work the same way.

Your browser

On a…	The browser
Windows	Microsoft Edge (a blue-green swirl) comes built in. Many people install Chrome too.
Mac	Safari (a blue compass) comes built in.
Chromebook	Chrome (a red, yellow, green and blue circle) — the whole computer is built around it.

Visiting a website

1. Open the browser by clicking its icon.
2. Click the **address bar** — the long box across the top.
3. Type a website's address (like *weather.gov*) *or* just what you're looking for (like "weather in Kent Ohio"). Both work.
4. Press **Enter**. The page loads.
5. To follow a **link** (colored or underlined words, or a button), click it once. Use the **<** back arrow to return.

Tabs: several pages at once

A **tab** lets you keep a page open while you look at another, like folders along the top. Click the small **+** beside the tabs to open a new one; click the **x** on a tab to close that page. If a page ever misbehaves, closing its tab and opening a fresh one often fixes it.

> **TIP**
>
> **Save your favorite sites as bookmarks**
>
> When you find a site you'll return to — your bank, the local news, a recipe site — save it as a **bookmark** (or "favorite") so you needn't retype the address. Look for a star symbol in or near the address bar; click it to save the page. Then it's one click away whenever you want it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The whole world, from your chair

The browser puts the library, the newspaper, the shops, the weather, and the answer to nearly any question a click away. Once browsing feels natural, your computer becomes a window onto everything — explored entirely at your own pace.

CHAPTER 21

Looking Things Up

Most trips to the web start with a **search** — asking the internet a question and getting a list of answers. It's the single handiest thing a computer does, and it's as simple as asking a question out loud.

How to search

1. Click the address bar in your browser.
2. Type your question in plain words — "how to remove a wine stain from carpet" or "library hours Ravenna Ohio."
3. Press **Enter**. A list of results appears.
4. Click one that looks right to read it; use the back arrow to return and try another.

Getting better answers

- **Be specific.** "Chicken soup recipe" gives a flood; "easy chicken soup recipe with egg noodles" gives what you want.
- **Add your town** for local things: "pharmacy near Kent Ohio open Sunday."
- **Ask plainly** — type just as you'd ask a person.
- **Judge the source** — for health, money, or official matters, favor known, trustworthy sites over ones you've never heard of.

SCAM ALERT

The first result isn't always the real one

Sometimes the top result or two is a paid advertisement, marked small with "Sponsored" or "Ad." These aren't necessarily the official site you wanted, and scammers sometimes buy ads imitating a real company's "support" line. For anything important — a company's real phone number, a login page — look for their genuine website rather than clicking the very first thing, and never trust a "support number" from an ad. When unsure, call me.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Any question, answered in seconds

A good search turns the whole internet into the world's largest reference desk, always open. Recipes, repair tips, the meaning of a word, store hours, how to get somewhere — you'll rarely wonder about anything for long again. This one skill repays the effort of learning the computer many times over.

CHAPTER 22

Email on Your Computer

Email (electronic mail) lets you send and receive written messages — and photos, forms, and more — to anyone in the world, in seconds, for free. The big screen and full keyboard make a computer a lovely, comfortable way to handle email.

Getting to your email

You reach email either through a **program** on your computer (like Mail or Outlook) or by visiting your email's **website** in the browser (like gmail.com). Both show your messages; use whichever your email was set up with. If you're not sure what your email address is, that's an easy thing to sort out together.

Reading and replying

1. Open your email (its program or website).
2. Your **Inbox** — the list of received messages — appears, newest at top. Unread ones stand out.
3. Click a message to read it.
4. To reply, click **Reply**, type your answer, and click **Send**. The person's address fills in for you.

Writing a new email

1. Click **New**, **Compose**, or **New Message**.
2. In **To**, type the person's email address.
3. Type a short **Subject** ("Lunch Friday"), then your message below.
4. Click **Send**. To attach a photo or file, click the paperclip while writing.

SCAM ALERT

Email is where scammers do their fishing

Be cautious with email from strangers, and even email that *looks* like a company you know. Warning signs: it rushes you ("act now or lose your account!"), asks for a password or payment, or wants you to click a link to "verify" something. **Real companies don't do this.** Never click links or open attachments you weren't expecting. When in doubt, don't — set it aside and call me. It's never a bother.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Your whole correspondence, comfortably

Email keeps you in touch with family near and far, handles business without a stamp or a trip to the mailbox, and keeps a tidy, searchable record. On a computer's big screen and keyboard, it's a genuine pleasure — longer letters are easy, and nothing is cramped.

CHAPTER 23

Staying Safe While Browsing

The web is a wonderful place and mostly a safe one — but a few sensible habits keep you well clear of trouble. None of this is hard; it's just knowing what to watch for. (Part 7 goes deeper on safety.)

The simple rules

- **Check the address before you sign in or pay.** Make sure a website is really the one you meant (your real bank, not a look-alike). A padlock shows the connection is private, but doesn't by itself prove a site is honest.
- **Reach important sites the right way.** Type the address yourself, or use a bookmark *you* saved — never a link from an email or text. This one habit defeats most scams.
- **Ignore scary pop-ups.** A message shouting that your computer is "infected" or you've "won a prize" is a trick, every time. Don't click it — close the tab or the page.
- **Get programs only from the official store** (next part), never from a pop-up or a link.

STAY SAFE

The biggest danger isn't a virus — it's a trick

Modern computers are quite secure against viruses sneaking in on their own. The real danger online is a clever person trying to *trick you* — into typing a password on a fake page, calling a fake "support" number, or letting a stranger take control of your computer. Knowing that, you can relax about the machine and focus on the simple rule: when something feels off or rushed, stop, and ask me. Those calls are free.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Confidence, not fear

The goal isn't to make you nervous — it's the opposite. Once you know the handful of tricks to watch for, the worry lifts, because you can see them coming. You get to enjoy everything the web offers, calmly and safely, with a friend on the phone whenever you want a second opinion.

CHAPTER 24

Getting New Programs, Safely

Your computer comes with the essentials, but you can add more — a game, a photo tool, a video-call app. New programs come from one safe place, and it's important to use only that place.

The official store

On a…	Where programs come from
Windows	The Microsoft Store (a shopping-bag icon).
Mac	The App Store (a blue "A" made of brushes).
Chromebook	The Google Play Store (a colorful triangle) and web apps through Chrome.

Installing a program

1. Open the store for your computer.
2. Search for what you want in the box at the top.
3. Click the program. Free ones show **Get** or **Install**; paid ones show a price.
4. Click **Get** / **Install**, confirm if asked, and it installs itself. Find it afterward in your start/apps menu.

STAY SAFE

Only install from the official store

This is a golden rule for staying out of trouble: get programs **only** from your computer's official store. Never install something a website, pop-up, email, or text urges you to — especially anything claiming to "fix" your computer, "speed it up," or warning it's "infected." Those are tricks that install the very problems they claim to cure. When in doubt, don't, and call me.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Add new abilities, safely and easily

The official store means adding a new ability to your computer is as safe and simple as picking a book off a trusted shelf. Everything there is checked, so you can explore and add what you fancy without fear — and skip the risky corners of the web entirely.

CHAPTER 25

Shopping & Banking Online, Safely

Two of the most useful things a computer lets you do — shop and bank from your chair — are also the two where a little care pays off most. Done sensibly, both are safe and a great convenience, especially on a cold day or a busy week.

Banking online

Your bank has a website where you can check your balance, pay bills, and move money — no trip to the branch. The keys to doing it safely:

- **Reach your bank the right way.** Type the bank's address yourself, or use a bookmark *you* saved — never a link from an email or text. This defeats most bank scams.
- **Check the address bar** shows your real bank's address, with the padlock, before you sign in.
- **Use a strong, unique password** and turn on two-factor. Your bank login deserves your best protection.
- **Sign out when done**, especially if others use the computer.

Shopping online

- **Stick to shops you know** or that have a solid reputation. If a deal seems far too good to be true, it usually is.
- **Look for the padlock** and a sensible web address before entering a card number.
- **Keep an eye on your statements** now and then, so an odd charge is spotted early.
- **Be wary of "order problem" messages** — emails or texts claiming trouble with an order and a link to "fix" it. Don't click; check the shop's site yourself.

SCAM ALERT

The fake "delivery" and "order" messages

A very common trick is a message claiming there's a problem with a package, an order, or a payment, with a link to "fix" it. Don't click. If unsure whether a real order has a problem, go to that shop's website yourself and check your account. Delivery companies and shops don't need you to "confirm" card details through a link. When in doubt, call me.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The bank and the shops, open at your convenience

No more driving to the branch before it closes or the shop before it sells out. Banking and shopping from your chair, any hour, done safely, gives back real time and effort. A few sensible habits, and the whole convenience is yours with peace of mind.

PART 5

Files, Folders & Printing

Where your things are kept, saving so you never lose work, finding anything, memory sticks, and printing — the everyday housekeeping that keeps you organized.

CHAPTER 26

Files & Folders: Your Filing Cabinet

Everything you make or save on a computer — a letter, a photo, a downloaded form — is a **file**. Files live inside **folders**, which are labeled containers, exactly like paper folders in a drawer. Getting comfortable here means never losing track of your things.

The filing program

Each computer has a program for seeing your files and folders:

On a…	The filing program
Windows	File Explorer (a yellow folder icon in the taskbar).
Mac	Finder (a blue smiling-face icon in the Dock).
Chromebook	Files (a blue folder in the Launcher).

The common folders

Your computer sets up some folders to start you off — look for these in your filing program:

- **Documents** — the main home for letters and files you make.
- **Pictures / Photos** — where your photos go.
- **Downloads** — things you save from the internet or email land here.
- **Desktop** — anything sitting on your background screen.

TIP

The Downloads folder catches what you save from the web

A frequent "where did it go?" moment: you save something from the internet or an email attachment, and can't find it. Nine times out of ten, it's waiting in your **Downloads** folder — that's where the computer tucks things you save from the web. Check there first, and the mystery usually solves itself.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Everything in its place

Understanding files and folders means every letter, form, and photo has a home you can find — no more hunting. The filing cabinet idea is one you already know from paper; the computer just does it with clicks instead of drawers.

CHAPTER 27

Saving So You Never Lose Work

The one computer habit worth building above all others is **saving**. Saving keeps your work so you can open it again later. Get into the rhythm of it, and you'll never lose a letter you've labored over.

Saving a file for the first time

1. When you've written or made something, click **File** at the top, then **Save** (or press **Ctrl-S**, or **Command-S** on a Mac).
2. A small window asks what to call it and where to put it. Type a clear **name** you'll recognize ("Letter to the bank").
3. Choose **where** — **Documents** is a sensible home for most things.
4. Click **Save**. From now on, the program remembers — just press **Ctrl-S** (Command-S) now and then to save your latest changes.

Save often — it's a good habit

Pressing Ctrl-S (Command-S on a Mac) every few minutes as you work is a wonderful habit. It takes a second and means that if the power blinks or the computer hiccups, you lose almost nothing. Many programs also save on their own these days, but the habit is still worth having — it's cheap insurance for your effort.

TIP

Give files names you'll actually understand

A file named "Document 1" tells you nothing in six months. A file named "Insurance renewal 2026" tells you everything. Spend the extra three seconds to name things plainly — your future self will thank you, and so will anyone helping you find something.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Your work, kept safe

The simple habit of saving — a clear name, a sensible folder, and a tap of Ctrl-S now and then — means the letters, forms, and lists you create are always there when you want them, and never lost to a stray mishap. It's the foundation of trusting your computer with anything that matters.

CHAPTER 28

Finding, Moving & Deleting Files

Once you have a few files, you'll want to find them, tidy them, and clear out what you no longer need. These housekeeping moves are quick and, happily, forgiving — there's a safety net for deletions.

The everyday file moves

- **Open a file:** double-click it.
- **Find a file:** use the **search box** in your filing program (or the computer's main search) — type part of its name.
- **Move a file:** drag it onto a folder and let go.
- **Rename a file:** right-click it and choose **Rename**, then type the new name.
- **Make a new folder:** right-click an empty spot and choose **New Folder**; name it.
- **Delete a file:** right-click it and choose **Delete** (or drag it to the Trash / Recycle Bin).

The safety net

Deleting a file doesn't destroy it right away — it goes to the **Recycle Bin** (Windows), **Trash** (Mac), or **Trash** (Chromebook), where it waits. If you change your mind, open that bin, find the file, and choose **Restore** or **Put Back**. The bin only truly empties when you tell it to, so you always get a second chance.

HEADS UP

When in doubt, don't delete it

If you come across a file or folder and aren't sure what it is, **leave it alone**. Only delete things *you* recognize and put there — your own documents, downloads, and photos. The computer keeps its important files tucked away, and the safe habit is never to clear space by guessing. Unsure? We'll tidy up together.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Organized, and forgiving

A little tidying — clear names, a few folders, the odd clear-out — keeps everything findable, and the bin means a wrong deletion is easily undone. You get the satisfaction of an orderly computer with none of the fear of losing something by accident.

CHAPTER 29

Memory Sticks & External Drives

A **memory stick** (also called a USB stick, flash drive, or thumb drive) is a little gadget for carrying files between computers or giving photos to a friend. A larger version, an **external drive**, holds a great deal more — handy for backups. Both are simple to use.

Using a memory stick

1. Plug it into a **USB** slot on your computer (a small rectangular socket on the edge).
2. It appears in your filing program as a new drive (often named by its brand, or "USB Drive").
3. To copy files onto it, drag them from a folder onto the stick's drive. To copy off, drag them the other way.
4. **Before you pull it out**, tell the computer you're done (eject it — see below), so nothing is lost mid-copy.

Ejecting safely

Before physically removing a stick or drive, **eject** it so the computer finishes any copying: right-click the drive and choose **Eject** (Windows/Mac), or click the eject symbol beside it. Wait for it to vanish from the list, then unplug. Pulling it out mid-write is the one way to garble the files on it.

TIP

A memory stick is a simple way to share or carry files

Want to give the grandchildren's photos to a friend, or carry a document to the library to print? A memory stick does it simply: copy the files on, hand it over (or carry it), copy them off. They're cheap, reusable, and need no internet — a handy tool to have in the drawer.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Carry your files anywhere

A little stick in your pocket can hold hundreds of photos or documents to share, carry, or keep as a spare copy. It's the modern equivalent of a folder under your arm — simple, reliable, and always handy for moving things from one place to another.

CHAPTER 30

Printing from Your Computer

Printing is refreshingly simple once your printer is set up. Most modern printers connect over Wi-Fi, so you can print from across the room with no cable at all.

Setting up a printer (once)

1. Make sure the printer is turned on and connected to the *same* Wi-Fi as your computer.
2. Open **Settings** and search for **Printers** (Windows: "Printers & scanners"; Mac: "Printers & Scanners"; Chromebook: "Printing").
3. Click **Add** — your printer should appear; click it to add.
4. That's it — your printer is ready for good.

Printing something

1. With the thing you want to print open (a document, a web page, a photo), click **File** then **Print** (or press **Ctrl-P** / **Command-P**).
2. Check the **printer** name is yours, and choose how many **copies**.
3. Click **Print**. Your pages appear in the tray.

TIP

If the printer won't print

The usual culprits, in order: is it turned on, does it have paper and ink, and is it on the same Wi-Fi as the computer? Turning the printer off and on again clears most hiccups. Printers can be the most stubborn gadget in the house — if yours is giving you grief, it's a very common thing to call me about, and usually a quick fix.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Paper copies, whenever you need them

Letters to sign and mail, a recipe for the kitchen, photos for the album, a form for the doctor — printing turns what's on your screen into something you can hold, sign, post, or pin up. Once your printer is set up, it's a couple of clicks away any time.

PART 6

Doing Things You'll Love

Writing letters and documents, your photos, video calls to see family, entertainment, and copy-and-paste — the rewarding things a computer makes easy.

CHAPTER 31

Writing Letters & Documents

One of the most satisfying things a computer does is let you write — a letter, a list, a flyer for the church sale — neatly, fixing mistakes without correction fluid, and printing or emailing the result. Let's get you writing.

The writing programs

On a…	To write
Windows	WordPad or the free online Word; many have Microsoft Word. For quick notes, Notepad.
Mac	Pages (free) for proper documents; TextEdit for simple notes.
Chromebook	Google Docs (free, in the browser) — the main way to write on a Chromebook.

Writing and tidying your document

1. Open the writing program and start a **blank document**.
2. Type your letter. Don't worry about mistakes — you can fix them any time.
3. Use the toolbar at the top to make text **bold**, change its size, or center it.
4. **Save** it (Ctrl-S / Command-S), give it a clear name, and keep it in Documents.
5. **Print** it (Ctrl-P) or email it when ready.

TIP

The computer catches your typos as you go

As you type, the computer quietly underlines misspelled words in red. Right-click a red-underlined word to see suggested corrections and click the right one. It's like a patient proofreader looking over your shoulder — one you can ignore whenever you like.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Your words, neat and shareable

From a grocery list to a heartfelt letter, writing on a computer means no cramped handwriting, no correction fluid, and an easy choice to print or email the result. Make a mistake? Fix it and no one's the wiser. It's writing made comfortable — and your letters come out looking lovely.

CHAPTER 32

Copy & Paste: The Handiest Trick

If you learn one "power move" on your computer, make it **copy and paste**. It lets you grab some text or a picture and drop a duplicate somewhere else — saving endless retyping. It feels awkward the first time and effortless by the tenth.

How to copy and paste

1. **Select** the text you want: click just before it, hold the mouse button, drag across it so it highlights, and let go.
2. **Copy** it: press **Ctrl-C** (**Command-C** on a Mac), or right-click and choose **Copy**.
3. Click where you want it to go.
4. **Paste** it: press **Ctrl-V** (**Command-V**), or right-click and choose **Paste**. There it is — no retyping.

And its cousin, Undo

A close friend of copy-paste is **Undo**: press **Ctrl-Z** (**Command-Z**) to take back your last action — a mistyped word, an accidental deletion, anything. It's a lifesaver, and you can press it several times to step back further. Between Undo and copy-paste, you can fix and rearrange almost anything with ease.

TIP

Copy-paste shines for addresses, codes, and links

Anytime you'd otherwise squint back and forth retyping a long email address, a confirmation number, or a web link, copy-and-paste does it perfectly in two steps — no typos. It's one of those small skills that, once learned, you'll use nearly every day.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

No more retyping, and mistakes undone

Copy-paste saves you from retyping anything you can already see somewhere, and Undo forgives every slip. Together they take the fear and the drudgery out of using a computer — you can experiment freely, knowing a wrong move is a single keystroke away from being fixed.

CHAPTER 33

Your Photos on the Computer

A computer is a wonderful place to enjoy, organize, and share your photos — on a big, clear screen, with room to see every detail. Let's look at how photos get onto your computer and what you can do with them.

Getting photos onto the computer

- **From your phone** — if your phone and computer share an account (Apple, Google), your photos may appear automatically. Or connect the phone with its cable and copy them over.
- **From a camera** — plug in the camera's memory card or cable and copy the photos.
- **From email or the web** — save a photo someone sent you (right-click, Save).

Enjoying and organizing them

Your computer's **Photos** program gathers your pictures in one place. You can scroll through them, double-click to see one large, group them into albums ("Grandkids," "Garden"), and search — many can even find "beach" or "dog" photos on their own. Little fixes like brightening or trimming are a click away, and always undoable.

TIP

Make sure your photos are backed up

Photos are often the most irreplaceable things on a computer. Turning on the backup that comes with your account (iCloud, Google Photos, or OneDrive) keeps a safe copy online, so a broken computer can't take your memories with it. It's worth setting up — and a perfect thing to call me about if you're unsure.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A lifetime of memories, on the big screen

No more squinting at tiny prints or wondering which drawer holds that photo. On a computer, every picture is large, searchable, organized, and easy to share or print — and safely backed up. Your photos become a joy to revisit, any time you like.

CHAPTER 34

Video Calls to See Family

A computer's big screen and built-in camera make it a lovely way to **video-call** family — a call where you can *see* each other, free, over the internet. For seeing the grandchildren's faces, nothing quite beats it.

The apps

Use whatever your family uses — **Zoom**, **Google Meet**, **Facebook Messenger**, **WhatsApp**, or (on a Mac) **FaceTime**. They all work much the same: you pick a person and start a video call, and there they are. Most run right in your browser or as a program you install from the store.

Joining a call

Often the easiest way is to be *invited*: a family member sends a **link** by email or message, you click it at the right time, allow the computer to use your camera and microphone, and you're in. We have a whole separate manual — "Staying in Touch with Grandkids" — full of ideas for making the most of these calls.

TIP

If they can't hear you, check the microphone first

The number-one video-call hiccup is a muted microphone — everyone does it. If people say they can't hear you, look for the microphone button and make sure it *doesn't* have a line through it. Second most common: the volume is down. Both are quick fixes, and nothing to be embarrassed about.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The next best thing to being there

A video call turns "how are you?" into really *seeing* how family are — across any distance, in the comfort of your own chair, on a nice big screen. For grandparents and far-flung families, it's one of the most joyful things a computer offers.

CHAPTER 35

Entertainment: Shows, Music & More

Your computer is a fine entertainment center too — movies and shows, music from your youth, free programs on every subject, games, and more. Here's a taste of what's on offer.

What you can enjoy

- **Shows and movies** — streaming services (Netflix, and others) play right in your browser. We have a whole "Cutting the Cord" manual on this.
- **Music** — rediscover favorite songs through music services or free radio in the browser.
- **Free video** — YouTube is a bottomless well of how-tos, old performances, church services, documentaries, and more.
- **Games and puzzles** — solitaire, crosswords, word searches, jigsaw puzzles; many free, good for a pleasant half-hour and keeping the mind nimble.

TIP

Use headphones to enjoy without disturbing anyone

Plug headphones or earbuds into your computer (a small round socket, or connect wireless ones) and you can enjoy a show, music, or a video call at just the right volume for you, without filling the room with sound. The clearer sound right in your ears can be easier to hear, too.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A world of enjoyment on one machine

The songs you love, shows to watch, a free lecture on a subject that fascinates you, a crossword for a quiet afternoon — all gathered in the one computer, ready whenever you have a moment. Entertainment on your schedule, at your volume, with no trip anywhere.

CHAPTER 36

Calendars, Reminders & Staying Organized

Your computer can keep your days in order — appointments, birthdays, to-dos, medications — and nudge you at the right moment so nothing slips. These gentle helpers are built in and easy to use.

The calendar

1. Open the **Calendar** program (or your email's calendar, like Google Calendar in the browser).
2. Choose to see the day, week, or month.
3. To add an event, click a day (and time), type what it is ("Dentist"), and save.
4. Set an **alert** so it reminds you beforehand — and if your phone shares the same account, it'll remind you there too.

Reminders and lists

A **reminders** or **to-do** program (or a simple notes app) lets you jot tasks and tick them off: "call the pharmacy," "pay the water bill," "take the bins out Thursday." Set a time and the computer nudges you. For anything you take on a schedule — like medications — a daily reminder is one of the genuinely useful things a computer does.

TIP

Your notes and calendar can follow you everywhere

If your computer, phone, and tablet share the same account, your calendar and notes stay in step across all of them — add an appointment on the computer and it's in your pocket on the phone. You write it once and have it everywhere, with nothing to copy over.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Nothing important forgotten again

Appointments, birthdays, medications, the bills — written down once and quietly remembered for you, with a nudge at just the right time. That's a real weight off the mind, and your computer carries it gladly.

CHAPTER 37

Maps & Planning Trips

Your computer is a whole road atlas and travel guide in one. On its big screen, it's wonderful for *planning* — looking up a place, checking a route, exploring before you go — whether a new doctor's office across town or a trip to see family.

Looking up a place or route

1. In your browser, go to a maps website (Google Maps is the common one) or open the Maps program (on a Mac).
2. Type an address or a place name ("Kent library") in the search box.
3. Click **Directions**, enter your starting point, and it lays out the route with the time and distance.
4. You can even see photos of a place, its hours, and reviews before you decide to go.

TIP

Plan on the computer, navigate with your phone

The computer is grand for *planning* a trip in comfort beforehand. For actual turn-by-turn directions while driving, you'll want them spoken aloud from your phone. Many maps let you send the trip from the computer to your phone, or you just look it up again on the phone before you set off.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Never lost, never guessing

Whether it's finding a new office, checking how far a drive really is, or exploring a town you're about to visit, maps on your computer give you confidence before every outing — all from the comfort of your chair, on a nice big screen.

PART 7

Staying Safe & Running Smoothly

Good passwords, spotting the scams aimed at all of us, keeping the computer updated and backed up, and the simple fixes for when something goes wrong.

CHAPTER 38

Passwords & Staying Secure

Passwords protect everything on and beyond your computer — your email, your bank, your accounts. A few sensible habits keep you far safer than most people, and your computer can carry most of the burden for you.

The simple rules

- **Use a different password for each important account.** That way, one leak can't unlock everything.
- **Make them long** — a passphrase of a few random words ("copper-lantern-biscuit-river") beats a short cryptic jumble, and is easier to remember.
- **Let your computer remember them.** Your browser or a password manager can store and fill them in, so you remember only one.
- **Never share a password** with someone who contacts you — no real company asks.

Let the computer do the remembering

When you sign in to a website, your computer offers to **save** the password and fill it in next time. Say yes — it's safe and a great convenience. For the fullest protection, a dedicated **password manager** handles all of this beautifully; we have a whole separate manual on passwords if you'd like to go deeper.

STAY SAFE

Turn on the extra lock: two-factor

For your most important accounts — email and bank especially — turn on **two-factor authentication**, an extra step where a one-time code (or a tap on your phone) is needed along with your password. It means a stolen password alone can't get in. It's the single best protection there is, and I'm glad to help you set it up.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Strong protection, little effort

A few good password habits — different, long, remembered by the computer, with two-factor on the important ones — protect your money, your memories, and your peace of mind. And because the computer does the remembering, it's actually *easier* than the tangle of sticky notes most people struggle with.

CHAPTER 39

Spotting Scams

This may be the most important chapter in the book. The computer itself is quite secure — the real danger is a clever person trying to *trick you* into giving up money or a password. These tricks are called **scams**, and once you know their playbook, you'll spot them a mile off.

The feeling to watch for: urgency

Almost every scam tries to make you feel **rushed, frightened, or excited**, so you act before you think. "Your account will be closed!" "Your computer is infected — call now!" "You've won!" **That rush is the tell.** Real companies don't operate by panic. When you feel that jolt, slow down, don't speed up.

The common scams

The scam	What's really going on & what to do
The pop-up virus warning	A scary screen: "Your computer is infected! Call this number!" A fake, every time. Don't call. Close the page, or restart the computer.
The "tech support" caller	Someone claims to be from Microsoft, Apple, or your internet company, wanting to "fix" your computer or get "remote access." Hang up. Real companies don't cold-call like this.
The urgent account email	A message says there's a problem and you must "verify" by clicking a link. Don't. Reach the company the way you normally would.
The grandchild in trouble	A call or message claiming a grandchild urgently needs money, secretly. Hang up and call family directly. Almost always a cruel fake.
The gift-card demand	Anyone asking to be paid in gift cards is a scammer, full stop. No real business is paid that way.

SCAM ALERT

Never let a stranger "remote into" your computer

One dangerous scam convinces you to let a "technician" take control of your computer from afar to "fix" a problem — then they steal, lock your files, or empty your accounts. **Never let anyone who contacted you take control of your computer.** Real help you sought out is one thing; a stranger who called or popped up is always a crook. Hang up, and if you're shaken, call me — those calls are free.

STAY SAFE

When in doubt, stop and call me

If a call, email, text, or pop-up ever makes you uneasy — about money, a password, your computer, anything — **stop and call me before you do a single thing**, at **(330) 200-8042**. I'll never charge you, and never think less of you, for a "is this a scam?" question. Those calls are exactly what I'm here for, and they've saved folks real money and heartache.

CHAPTER 40

Keeping It Updated

Your computer regularly offers free **updates** — new features, and most importantly, fixes that close security holes crooks try to slip through. Keeping reasonably up to date is one of the simplest ways to stay safe and running smoothly.

Checking for updates

On a…	To update
Windows	Settings → Windows Update → Check for updates.
Mac	Apple logo → System Settings → General → Software Update.
Chromebook	Settings → About ChromeOS → Check for updates.

Let it download and install — it may restart once, which is normal. You can usually set updates to happen on their own, often overnight, so you're protected without having to remember.

HEADS UP

Updates come from the computer itself — not from pop-ups

A real update never arrives as a web page shouting that your software is "dangerously out of date, click here!" Those are tricks. Genuine updates come quietly through the computer's own Settings. If a website ever pressures you to download an update or a "player" to watch a video, close it — and if unsure, call me.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Safe, smooth, and current

Letting your computer keep itself updated means it runs its best and stays protected against the latest tricks — with almost nothing for you to do. It's quiet, automatic upkeep that pays off in fewer problems and far better security.

CHAPTER 41

Backing Up Your Memories

A **backup** is a spare copy of everything on your computer, kept somewhere safe, so that if the computer is ever lost, stolen, or simply stops working, your photos, documents, and memories aren't lost with it. This is the insurance nobody thinks about until the day they desperately wish they had it.

Two kinds of safety net

- **Online backup (the cloud)** — your account's service (OneDrive on Windows, iCloud on Mac, Google on Chromebook) keeps copies of your files and photos safely online, automatically. Easy and always worth turning on.
- **An external drive** — a small box you plug in that holds a complete copy of your computer (Windows "File History," Mac "Time Machine"). The gold standard for a full restore after a disaster.

FROM BILL

Let me make sure your backup is really working

Backups are the one thing people most often *think* are set up but aren't — until the day a computer dies and the photos are gone. It takes me a few minutes to check yours is switched on and working, or to set one up. If you've never confirmed it, please call me; it's the cheapest insurance there is for a lifetime of memories. **(330) 200-8042**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The day something goes wrong, you'll be so glad

Computers fail, laptops get dropped, coffee spills. With a backup, any of those becomes a bad afternoon instead of a lost lifetime of photos and documents. Setting it up takes a little while once; the peace of mind lasts for years. If you do one thing from this part, let it be this.

CHAPTER 42

When Something Goes Wrong: Simple Fixes

Every computer has an off day now and then — a program freezes, the internet drops, something acts strangely. The wonderful news is that a small handful of simple moves fix the vast majority of problems. Keep this chapter handy.

The golden rule: restart first

Before anything else, try **restarting** the computer (shut down and turn back on, or choose Restart). This clears up an astonishing number of glitches, and it never deletes your files. If you remember one fix, remember this one.

A checklist for common troubles

If this happens…	…try this
The whole computer is slow	Restart it. Close programs you're not using. Make sure updates have finished.
A program is frozen	Wait a moment; if still stuck, close it (Windows: Ctrl-Shift-Esc opens Task Manager to end it; Mac: Apple logo → Force Quit), then reopen it.
The internet isn't working	Restart your router (unplug one minute, plug back in). Check Wi-Fi is connected.
The screen is black	Press a key or move the mouse — it may be asleep. Check a laptop has charge; check the monitor's power on a desktop.
No sound	Check the volume isn't down or muted. Make sure sound isn't going to headphones you forgot about.
A website won't load	Try another site to test the connection. Close the tab and reopen it.

TIP

A screenshot helps me help you

If something odd appears — a confusing message, an error — take a picture of the screen to show me. On Windows, press the **Windows key + Shift + S**; on a Mac, **Shift-Command-4**; on a Chromebook, the **screenshot** key. A picture tells me in a second what might take ten minutes to describe. It's the single most helpful thing you can do when asking for help.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Most problems, solved by you, in two minutes

You don't need to be a technician to handle the everyday hiccups. Restart the computer, close a stuck program, restart the router — these few moves clear up most of what ever goes wrong, and now they're yours. That's real confidence: not that nothing will glitch, but that you'll know what to do when it does.

CHAPTER 43

The Cloud: Your Things, Safe & Everywhere

You'll hear a lot about "the cloud," and it sounds mysterious — but it's a simple, useful idea worth understanding, because it quietly keeps your files and photos safe and lets you reach them from anywhere.

What "the cloud" really means

The cloud is just a plain way of saying "kept safely on the internet" rather than only on your own computer. Your files live in a secure storage room online that the company runs for you. Because they're online, they're safe even if your computer is lost or breaks, and you can reach them from your phone or another computer too.

Your computer's cloud storage

On a…	Its cloud
Windows	OneDrive — Microsoft's cloud, built in. Your Documents and photos can save there automatically.
Mac	iCloud — Apple's cloud, keeping files, photos, and more safe and synced.
Chromebook	Google Drive — the heart of a Chromebook; nearly everything saves to the cloud by default.

GOOD TO KNOW

The cloud is why your stuff can be everywhere at once

When your files are in the cloud, they're not trapped on one machine. Write a letter on the computer, and you can open it on your phone at the doctor's office. Snap a photo on your phone, and it appears on the computer. The cloud is the quiet magic that keeps your whole life in step across your devices — and safely backed up at the same time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Safe, and always within reach

The cloud means your important files and photos are kept safe online — so a broken computer can't take them — and reachable from any of your devices. You get both protection and convenience from the same quiet service, usually with nothing to do but leave it switched on.

CHAPTER 44

Speeding Up a Sluggish Computer

Over time, a computer can start to feel slower than it was. Before you despair (or spend money), know that a few simple, safe steps often perk it right up. Here's what to try.

The safe speed-ups, in order

1. **Restart it.** A computer left on for weeks gets sluggish; a restart clears it out. Try this first, always.
2. **Close programs you're not using.** Each open program uses a little of the computer's effort; closing the ones you've finished with frees it up.
3. **Make sure updates have finished.** A half-done update can bog things down; let them complete.
4. **Free up some room.** A nearly-full computer slows down — empty the Recycle Bin/Trash, and clear out old downloads you don't need.
5. **Restart your internet router** if it's the *internet* that's slow, not the computer itself.

When it might be more than that

If it's still slow after all that, the cause might be something running in the background, a computer that's simply getting on in years, or — occasionally — a trace of something unwanted. That's worth a proper look rather than guesswork. (We even have a whole separate manual on speeding up a slow computer.)

HEADS UP

Beware "speed up your computer!" programs and pop-ups

A word of caution: those ads and pop-ups promising to "clean" or "speed up" your computer are almost always a trick — many *cause* problems or charge for nothing. Never install a "cleaner" or "optimizer" a pop-up pushes on you. The safe speed-ups are the simple ones above; for anything beyond them, ask me rather than a flashy ad.

FROM BILL

If it's still slow, let me take a look

A genuinely sluggish computer is one of the most common and most fixable things I'm called about — often it's a simple tune-up, not a new machine. Before you assume you need to buy a replacement, let me have a look; I'll tell you honestly whether a quick fix will do. **(330) 200-8042**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

A pep in its step again

A few safe, simple steps — restart, close extras, free up room — often restore much of a computer's old speed, for free and with no risk. Knowing them means a slow computer is usually a minor annoyance you can handle yourself, not a reason to give up or spend money.

PART 8

Your Everyday Cheat-Sheet

The quick reference to keep by the computer: the moves at a glance, a plain-English glossary, where to learn more, and my standing offer to help.

CHAPTER 45

The Everyday Cheat-Sheet

Here's the one-page reference to come back to. These are the things you'll do most, with the simplest way to do each. Keep it by the computer and glance at it whenever you need to.

The essential moves

To do this…	…do this
Turn it off properly	Start/Apple/clock menu → Shut Down (don't just hold the button)
Open a program	Click its icon, or the corner Start/apps button, then click it
Close a program	Click the X in the top corner
Save your work	Press Ctrl-S (Command-S on a Mac)
Undo a mistake	Press Ctrl-Z (Command-Z)
Copy / paste	Select, Ctrl-C to copy, click, Ctrl-V to paste
Make a web page bigger	Hold Ctrl (Command) and press the + key
Find a file	Use the search box in the filing program or Start menu
Get online	Click the Wi-Fi icon, pick your network, type the password
Print	Ctrl-P (Command-P)
Fix almost anything	Restart the computer
Show me a problem	Take a screenshot and email it to me

TIP

Keep this page close for the first few weeks

Nobody learns all this at once, and nobody should try. Keep this cheat-sheet by the computer and glance at it whenever you need to. Within a few weeks you'll find you've stopped needing it — the moves will simply be in your fingers. That's exactly how it's meant to go.

CHAPTER 46

A Plain-English Glossary

If a word ever slips your mind, look it up here. Every term appears somewhere in the book.

Term	In plain English
Computer	A machine that does many jobs — writing, photos, internet, and more.
Windows / Mac / Chromebook	The three common kinds of computer, by their maker's software.
Laptop / desktop	A fold-up portable computer, or a stay-on-the-desk one in pieces.
Program / app / application	A tool that does one job — writing, email, the web, and so on.
Icon	A small picture you click to open a program or file.
Click / double-click / right-click	Press once to choose; twice to open; the right button for a menu of options.
Pointer / cursor	The little arrow you move with the mouse or trackpad.
Window	A rectangle holding an open program; you can move and resize it.
Desktop	The main background screen your programs sit on top of.
Taskbar / Dock / shelf	The bar of favorite programs along the bottom of the screen.
Start / apps button	The corner button that opens all your programs.
File	A single saved thing — a letter, a photo, a form.
Folder	A labeled container that holds files.
Save	To keep your work so you can open it again (Ctrl-S / Command-S).
Recycle Bin / Trash	Where deleted files wait until you empty it — a safety net.
Wi-Fi	The wireless way your computer connects to the internet at home.
The internet / the web	The worldwide network, and the pages you read in a browser.
Browser	The program for visiting websites — Edge, Chrome, or Safari.
Email	Written messages sent over the internet.
Account	The email-and-password that keeps your computer's things safe and synced.
Password	A secret word that unlocks an account or your computer.
Two-factor authentication	An extra safety step: a one-time code on top of your password.
Update	A free improvement from the maker that fixes problems and closes security holes.

Term	In plain English
Backup	A spare copy of your things, kept safe in case the computer is lost or breaks.
Memory stick / USB drive	A little gadget for carrying files between computers.
Scam / phishing	A trick to fool you into giving up money, a password, or control.

CHAPTER 47

Where to Learn More & When to Call Bill

You've reached the end — well done. You needn't have memorized a word; that's what keeping the book nearby is for. Here's where to turn when you want to learn more, and a few parting words from me.

Good places to learn more

- **The maker's help website** — support.microsoft.com (Windows), support.apple.com (Mac), or search "Chromebook help" (Google). Reliable, step-by-step.
- **GCFGlobal.org** — free, patient lessons for beginners and seniors; no sign-up, no cost. One of my favorites.
- **Your library** — many libraries, likely yours in Portage County, offer free one-on-one computer help.
- **YouTube how-tos** — search exactly what you want to do. (Stick to well-known channels, and never call a number a video flashes on screen.)
- **And me, anytime** — when you'd rather just ask a real person who'll explain it kindly.

A few parting words

Here's the truth to carry away: **there is no such thing as a dumb question.** Not one. The folks I help are smart, capable people — they simply weren't handed a manual that spoke plainly. Now you have one.

Don't feel you must learn it all at once — you never will, and you don't need to. Pick one small thing this week: write a letter, send an email, look something up. Before long it feels like second nature. And truly, **you can't break it** — almost anything you change can be changed right back.

And if a call, text, or pop-up ever makes you uneasy, stop and call me *before* you do anything. Those "is this a scam?" calls aren't a bother; they're exactly what I'm here for. No charge, no judgment, ever, for asking.

How I can help

I'm Bill, and helping folks feel at home with their technology is what I've done for more than 30 years. I serve **Portage County, Ohio**, in plain English, at a pace that suits you — whether that's setting up a new computer, getting your backups and email going, or just answering the questions this book stirred up. There's never any rush, and you can book a

visit any time at **billshometech.com/book**.

FROM BILL

My standing offer

If anything in this book — or anything your computer does — ever puzzles you, pick up the phone. No question is too small, no problem too silly. I'll come out, or talk you through it, as plainly and as patiently as it takes. That's the whole reason I do this work. Welcome to your computer — you're going to do just fine.

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