

What are parental controls?

Parental controls help you to block or filter upsetting or inappropriate content, and control purchases within apps. You can install parental control software on your child's and family's phones or tablets, games consoles, laptops and your home internet.

Parental controls can help you to:

- plan what time of day your child can go online and how long for
- create content filters to block apps that may have [inappropriate content](#)
- manage the content different family members can see.

What are the best parental controls if I want to:

Block websites: If you just want to limit what your child(ren) can search for, the best option is to enable Safe Search in whichever browser or browsers they use. This is a good precaution to take as soon as your children start going online and you want to make sure they don't accidentally stumble across something unsafe for them.

Block websites and filter content: If you want to prevent access to specific websites and limit your child's exposure to inappropriate content such as mature games or porn, you can use the parental controls that are built into your device's operating system. Every major operating system -- Microsoft's Windows, Apple's Mac OS, and even Amazon's Fire -- offers settings to keep children from accessing stuff you don't want them to see. To get the benefits, you need to use the most updated version of the operating system, and each user has to log in under his or her profile. The settings apply globally to everything the computer accesses. Each works differently and has its own pros and cons. This is the best solution if your children are younger and are primarily using a home device. Check out each one's features: [Microsoft](#), [Apple](#), [Amazon](#).

Block websites, filter content, impose time limits, see what my children are doing: A full-featured, third-party parental control service will give you a lot of control over all of your child's devices (the ones they use at home as well as their phones). These can be expensive (especially if you have several children to monitor), but the cost includes constant device monitoring, offering you visibility into how children are using their devices. These parental controls can only keep track of accounts that they know your child is using, and for some apps, you'll need your child's password to monitor activity. If your child creates a brand-new profile on Instagram using a friend's computer without telling you, for example, the parental controls won't cover that account.

Track my child's location: You can use GPS trackers such as Find My Phone to stay abreast of your child's whereabouts. Your child's phone needs to be switched on, connected to the internet and you would need their id and passwords for these to work.

What are the best parental control options for iOS phones and tablets?

If you have an iPhone or iPad, Apple's Screen Time settings let you manage nearly every aspect of your child's iOS device, including how much time children spend on individual apps and games and what they download. You can even turn the phone off for specified periods, such as bedtime. There are two ways to enable Screen Time: You can either set it up on your

child's device and password-protect the settings, or you can set up Family Sharing through your Apple account and manage the features from your phone.

What are the best parental control options for Android devices?

Android devices can vary a lot in what they offer, so check your device's settings to see what options you have. If your child is under 13, you can download Google's Family Link to track and control online activity, including text messaging and social media, using your own phone. (You can use Family Link on teens' devices, but you can't lock the settings.) You can also use Android's Digital Wellbeing settings, which are built into the latest version of the OS. These can help children become more mindful of the time they're spending online -- and hopefully help them cut down. You'll want to help your child enable the settings that will be most useful on the road to self-regulation.

Do I need to worry about my child disabling parental controls?

Yes, children can undo parental controls. Depending on your software, you may get a notification that the parental control was breached -- or not.

Further reading:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/internet-connected-devices/>