

USING PARENTAL CONTROLS

There are lots of ways of limiting what content your kids can see online, which apps and programs they can access and how much time they can spend online. What tools are available depends on what kind of device they're using, and what browser they use to access the web.

INTERNET PROVIDERS

Many Internet providers provide tools and services to help you manage your child's online experience. Check with your provider to see what they offer that will allow you to block different sites, monitor your kids' online activities and set times when the Internet is not available.

OPERATING SYSTEMS

Operating systems are the "toolbox" that your computer, phone or other digital device uses to run programs and apps.

Android

On Android phones and tablets, you can set what [content rating](#) you want your kids to be able to access. Android allows you to set different content ratings for different types of content (movies, books, music, games, etc.) For information on how to do this, see <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738?hl=en>.

Android and Chrome OS also allow you to use the Family Link app if your children already have a Google account, which gives you more direct control over what content they can see and how much time they can spend using the device. For information on how to do this, see <https://families.google/familylink/>.

Apple

On iOS devices like iPhones and iPads you can disabled different features (like Camera and AirDrop), prevent your child from making in-app purchases, block access to content with specific ratings, block access to websites with adult content, and adjust privacy settings such as whether apps can share your child's location. For information on how to do this, see <https://support.apple.com/en-ca/ht201304>.

Windows

On computers, phones and tablets running Windows you can prevent your child from accessing content above a certain age rating, require them to get permission from you before buying apps or making in-app purchases, and limit how much time they spend using the device. For information on how to do this, see <https://support.microsoft.com/en-ca/help/12413/microsoft-account-what-is-family>.

BROWSERS

Browsers are the programs your computer uses to access websites. Your computer may have more than one browser installed, so make sure that you have set the parental control options you want on all of them.

Chrome

There are no parental controls built into the Chrome desktop browser. There are third-party plugins available in the Chrome Web Store: <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/category/extensions>.

On the Chrome browser for tablets and mobile phones, you can turn on SafeSearch, which blocks explicit images, videos and websites. For information on how to do this, see <https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/510> and click on “Android.”

Edge

Edge’s parental controls are set using the general controls for the Windows operating system.

Firefox

Firefox does not have any built-in parental controls. However, when used on a computer using Windows 10 it will reflect the parental control settings you have chosen for that operating system. You can also install third-party add-ons for a variety of parental control functions: <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/search/?q=parental+control&cat=all>.

Safari

When using Apple’s Safari browser on a desktop Mac, click on the Apple icon and then select System Preferences. Choose the Parental Controls icon and then choose which account you want the settings to apply to. Click the Lock icon at bottom left and enter your password. Now you can set content rules for apps, websites and app stores. (If you want to know how to create an account for your child, see <https://support.apple.com/en-ca/HT201084>.)

SEARCH ENGINES

Search engines are the tools you use to find websites. Any search engine can be accessed through your browser, and some can also be installed as apps on a mobile device. Most browsers and devices have a default search engine that they automatically use for searches.

Google

If you have a Google account you can turn on SafeSearch, which blocks explicit image, videos and websites. You can also lock SafeSearch to prevent someone else from turning it off (though they can turn it off if they log into a different Google account). For information on how to do this, see <https://www.google.com/preferences>.

Bing

Bing has three levels of Safe Search: Strict, Moderate and Off. You can select the one you want at <https://www.bing.com/account>.

DuckDuckGo

DuckDuckGo has three levels of Safe Search: Strict, Moderate and Off. You can select the one you want at <https://duckduckgo.com/settings>.

VIDEO SITES

One of the most popular online activities for kids is watching video. Here’s how you can limit what they can watch on two of the most popular video sites – whether they’re visiting the website with a browser or using an app on a mobile device.

Netflix

Netflix lets you set parental controls to require anyone to enter a 4-digit PIN of your choosing before watching content above a particular maturity level. (The available options are Little Kids Only, Older Kids and Below, Teens and Below and All Maturity Levels.) You can also create a separate limited profile for your kids, but keep in mind that they can leave this just by clicking on Exit Kids. For information on how to do this, see <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/264>.

YouTube

If you have a Google account, you can set YouTube to Restricted Mode, which blocks some inappropriate content and also prevents you from seeing comments on videos. For information on how to do this, see <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/174084>.

If you're using YouTube Kids, you can also block specific videos and channels. For information on how to do this, see <https://support.google.com/youtubekids/answer/7178746>.

Prime Video

Prime Video parental controls allow you to set restrictions for video content that can be viewed or purchased on your account. Prime Video parental controls work by requiring entry of your Account PIN to bypass purchase or viewing restrictions enabled on your account. For more information on how to do this, see [here](#).

Alexa

Set controls such as daily time limits and learning goals, using the [Parent Dashboard](#). By using the Parent Dashboard you'll be able to monitor your child's apps, books, videos and more while using Alexa.

SPECIFIC GAMES

In Roblox, log into the account, go to Settings (a gear icon on the computer version and a three-dots icon on mobile). Pick Settings, then Parental Controls. In the Account Restrictions section, move the toggle so that it turns green. You can learn more at <https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/360000375686>.

There are no content controls on Minecraft, but you can turn off chat (so other players can't contact you):

- In the PC Bedrock or Java editions, from the server menu you can press the Esc key to see options and then select Chat Settings. Click on the button that says Chat:Shown at the top left so that it changes to Chat:Hidden.
- On mobile, start by entering a world, then select Settings, tap Accessibility, and tap the Enable Open Chat toggle so that it's off.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Most social networks have Parent or Family centres. If you want information about one that's not listed below, do a search for the social network's name and "parent centre" or "family centre."

- TikTok offers a Restricted Mode that "limits the appearance of content that may not be appropriate for all audiences." You can see how to turn that on here: <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/limiting-unwanted-content>
- Snapchat has information on how to "restrict sensitive content" here: <https://parents.snapchat.com/parental-controls>
- Instagram lets you turn on Sensitive Content Control: <https://help.instagram.com/251027992727268>

MONITORING SERVICES

Some commercial products and services allow you to directly monitor what your children are doing online, as well as to block different kinds of content. While these can be useful with young children, and may be an appropriate consequence if your kids have misused digital tools, it's important to keep in mind that they are only ever part of the solution. Kids are very good at getting around tools like these and using these tools can lead children to try to cover up when things go wrong, rather than coming to you for help. If you do decide to use monitoring software because you are concerned about your child's safety, it's important you be upfront about it rather than spying behind their back as this will erode trust.

FINAL TIPS

Most of these settings can be changed by your kids if they know how: the most secure are the operating system settings, which you can require a password to change.

Remember that no parental controls are perfect, and they should never be a substitute for talking to your kids about what is and isn't appropriate and how you expect them to behave online.

When kids are exposed to inappropriate content, it's often by accident – and kids say that's one of the things that bothers them the most. Make sure you've told your kids to come and tell you if they ever see something, and reassure them that they won't get in trouble if they do.