
Parenting, Media, and Everything In Between

Parents' Ultimate Guide to Parental Controls

Do you need parental controls? What are the options? Do they really work? Here's everything you need to know about the wide array of parental control solutions, from OS settings to monitoring apps to network hardware. By [Caroline Knorr](#) 2/27/2019

Topics: [Cellphone Parenting](#), [Privacy and Internet Safety](#), [Social Media](#)

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Even if you've talked to your kids about [screen-time limits](#) and [responsible online behavior](#), it's still really tough to manage what they do when you're not there (and even when you are). Parental controls can support you in [your efforts to keep your kids' internet experiences safe, fun, and productive](#). They work best when used openly and honestly in partnership with your kids -- not as a [stealth spying method](#).

Figuring out what kind of parental control is best is entirely based on your own family's needs. Some families can get by with simple, free browser settings to filter inappropriate content. Some families need help clamping down

on screen time. Some folks are cool with spot-checks on their kids' devices. Wherever you are in your search, this guide can help you make sense of the wide array of options for managing your family's devices. Find the answers to parents' most frequently asked questions about parental controls.

[What are the best parental controls for blocking websites?](#)

[What are the best parental controls for blocking websites and filtering content?](#)

[What are the best parental controls for setting limits and monitoring kids?](#)

[What are the best parental controls for kids' phones?](#)

[What are the best parental controls for tracking location?](#)

[What are the best network parental controls?](#)

[What are the best parental control options for iOS phones and tablets?](#)

[What are the best parental control options for Android devices?](#)

[Can I set parental controls in specific apps, such as Snapchat?](#)

[Do I need to worry about my kid disabling parental controls?](#)

[Will my kid know that I'm using parental controls?](#)

What are the best parental controls if I want to:

Block websites. If you just want to limit what your kids can search for, your best option is to enable Google SafeSearch in whichever browser or browsers you use. First, you need to make sure your browsers use Google as their default search engine, and then you need to turn on SafeSearch. This is a good precaution to take as soon as your kids start going online and you want to make sure they don't accidentally stumble across something yucky.

Block websites and filter content. If you want to prevent access to specific websites and limit your kid'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 kids 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 kids 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 kids are doing. A full-featured, third-party parental control service such as [Qustodio](#) or [NetNanny](#) will give you a lot of control over all of your kid's devices (the ones they use at home as well as their phones). These can be pricey (especially if you have several kids to monitor), but the cost includes constant device monitoring, offering you visibility into how kids are using their devices. These parental controls can only keep track of accounts that they know your kid is using, and for some apps, you'll need your kid's password in order to monitor activity. If your kid 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.

Monitor my kid's phone. To keep tabs on your tween or teen's phone, your best bet is to download an app such as [Bark](#), [KidBridge](#) (formerly TeenSafe), or [WebWatcher](#), which monitor text messages, social networks, emails, and other mobile functions. These are especially helpful if you're concerned about potentially risky conversations or

iffy topics your kid might be engaging in. Bark, for example, notifies you when it detects "alert" words, such as "drugs." To monitor social media, you'll need your kid's account information, including passwords.

Track my kid's location. You can use GPS trackers such as [Find My Friends](#) and [FamiSafe](#) to stay abreast of your kid's whereabouts. Your kid's phone needs to be on for these to work, though.

Manage all devices on the network, limit screen time, filter content, turn off Wi-Fi. There are both hardware and software solutions to control your home network and your home Wi-Fi. To name a few popular ones: [OpenDNS](#) is a download that works with your existing router (the device that brings the internet into your home) to filter internet content. [Circle Home Plus](#) is a device and subscription service that pairs with your existing router and lets you pause access to the internet, create time limits, and add content filters to all devices on your home network (including Wi-Fi devices), plus manage phones and tablets outside the home. Some internet service providers such as Comcast and Verizon offer parental control features that apply to all devices on the network, too. Network solutions can work for families with kids of different ages; however, mucking around in your network and Wi-Fi settings can be challenging, and the controls may not apply when kids are on a different network.

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 kid's iOS device, including how much time kids spend in 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, either by setting it up on your kid's device and password-protecting the settings or by setting up Family Sharing and managing 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 kid 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 also use Android's Digital Wellbeing settings, which are built into the latest version of the OS. These can help kids become more mindful of the time they're spending online -- and hopefully help them cut down. You'll want to help your kid enable the settings that will be most useful on the road to self-regulation.

Can I set parental controls in specific apps, such as Snapchat?

In addition to blocking specific people, most apps let you disable features that could pose some risks for kids. For example, you may be able to turn off chatting, restrict conversation to friends only, and hide your profile so that it won't show up in search results. Some apps go a step further by letting users [control their own use of the app](#). TikTok's [Digital Wellbeing features](#) help curb time spent on the app and limit inappropriate videos. YouTube lets you set a reminder to take a break. To find out if your kids' favorite apps offer any types of restrictions, go to the app's settings section (usually represented by the gear icon). Unless an app offers passcode-protection for its settings (and most don't), your kid can easily reverse them.

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

Yes, kids can undo parental controls. In fact, the directions on how to get around them are easily available on the internet. Depending on your software, you may get a notification that the parental control was breached -- or not. Kids can figure out all sorts of ingenious methods to keep doing what they want to be doing -- talking to friends, staying up late playing Fortnite, and watching videos you don't want them to see. If you notice something fishy such as a steep drop-off in your parental control notifications, Wi-Fi or data activity after you've turned off the network, or anything else that indicates the parental control isn't working the way it's supposed to, your kid may have figured out how to get around it. It could be for another reason, though, since parental controls can be affected by system updates, power outages, and other technical issues.

Will my kid know that I'm using parental controls?

It really depends on the type of controls you install and the devices you have. Some parental controls can be installed without your kids knowing, but Common Sense Media doesn't recommend it (unless you have a really serious issue with your kid and you need to monitor discreetly). In fact, be cautious with companies that promise covert monitoring, as they tend to prey on parents' fears. Parental control companies that encourage open dialogue will most likely be more helpful anyway, because at some point you'll need to discuss what you find. And that's a lot easier to do if your kid already knows you're monitoring them. If you decide to use parental controls, talk to your kids about why you're using them (to help keep them safe) and how your ultimate goal is for them to learn how to interact online responsibly and regulate their own usage independently. Check out our [talking points](#) for building trust with your kid when you're using parental controls.



[About Caroline Knorr](#)

As Common Sense Media's parenting editor, Caroline helps parents make sense of what's going on in their kids' media lives. From games to cell phones to movies and more, if you're wondering "what's the right age for...?"... [Read more](#)

Consejos sobre medios y tecnología para tu familia

Nuevos controles parentales para teléfonos celulares y otros dispositivos

Estos controles parentales ofrecen opciones variadas para administrar aparatos electrónicos. Haz que tu iPhone, computadora y televisión sean seguras para tus hijos. By [Caroline Knorr](#) 25/7/2016

Categorías: [Tecnología y educación](#), [Recursos en español](#)

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Cuando se trata de administrar el acceso de sus hijos a los contenidos en línea, muchos padres se adhieren a la filosofía de "cruzar los dedos y esperar que nada pase". Pero, aunque hayas tenido las conversaciones sobre los [límites de tiempo con los aparatos electrónicos](#), la [conducta responsable en línea](#) y las precauciones de seguridad, es realmente difícil controlar qué hacen tus hijos cuando no estás (e incluso cuando sí estás). Los controles parentales para Iphone, Android y otros dispositivos —los reales, técnicos— pueden apoyar tus esfuerzos

para lograr que las experiencias de tus hijos en internet sean seguras, divertidas y productivas. Cuando mejor funcionan es cuando se usan abiertamente y con honestidad, junto con tus hijos.

Felizmente, hay una nueva serie de controles parentales que ofrecen muchas más funciones y más flexibilidad que las versiones anteriores, demasiado restrictivas y fáciles de esquivar, que abusaban de los miedos de los padres frente a los riesgos del mundo en línea. Estas soluciones actualizadas también reflejan una filosofía nueva, más progresiva, de los controles parentales: son mucho más pro internet y se enfocan menos en sembrar temores. Por supuesto, no hay nada que sea totalmente a prueba de fallos, y tendrás que seguir conversando con tus hijos sobre la necesidad de hacer buenas elecciones.

Solamente tú puedes determinar el nivel de protección que necesitas para tu familia. Aquí te presentamos algunas opciones básicas:

- **Sistemas operativos:** Tanto Windows de Microsoft como Mac OS de Apple tienen controles parentales incorporados. Al crear cuentas de usuarios, puedes elegir distintas protecciones para distintos usuarios. Para conseguir los mayores beneficios, debes usar la versión más actualizada del sistema operativo. El sistema operativo Android no tiene controles incorporados, pero hay muchas aplicaciones de controles parentales para Android.
Es bueno saber: los controles parentales de los sistemas operativos funcionan bien porque se aplican de forma global a todo a lo que la computadora tiene acceso.
Útil para: Todas las edades.
- **Navegadores web:** los navegadores —el software que se usa para el internet— ofrecen diferentes formas de filtrar y dejar afuera sitios web que no quieras que tus hijos visiten. Safari, Chrome e Internet Explorer te permiten escribir el nombre de sitios web y dominios (que se aplican a categorías enteras de sitios, por ejemplo los de pornografía) que específicamente quieras bloquear. Si usas Firefox, debes descargar un complemento, porque el navegador básico no ofrece filtros de contenidos.
Es bueno saber: Las soluciones para un navegador determinado no se extienden a otros. Por eso, si usas más de un navegador en tu máquina, tienes que activar filtros en cada uno.
Útil para niños pequeños: los más grandes —en especial los muy decididos— pueden superar fácilmente las restricciones de los navegadores, ya sea descubriendo tu contraseña o sencillamente descargando un navegador nuevo.
- **Navegadores para niños:** llamados a veces "espacios protegidos", estos son entornos resguardados que llenan toda la pantalla (los niños no pueden hacer clic y salir). Son una especie de combinación entre un sistema operativo y un navegador, diseñados específicamente para los niños, con sitios web previamente aprobados, correo electrónico y actividades varias. Se trata, por ejemplo, de Zoodles, Kido'z o Kidzui.
- **Es bueno saber:** los navegadores para niños suelen ser gratuitos en su versión básica, pero cuestan dinero (en general una suscripción mensual) si se opta por la versión superior. Los que son totalmente gratuitos en general ofrecen contenidos de un proveedor apto para niños, que la empresa ha obtenido bajo licencia y probablemente incluya publicidad o contenido promocional.
Útil para niños pequeños: los espacios protegidos son demasiado restrictivos para los más grandes, que necesitan (o a quienes se les permite) mayor acceso a un internet.

- **Software de control:** son los programas clásicos de control parental, con todas las funciones, que permiten bloquear sitios web, imponer límites de tiempo y vigilar la actividad en línea (por ejemplo, qué sitios visita tu hijo). Muchos de estos programas también ofrecen seguridad adicional contra *malware* (programas maliciosos) y virus, y envían un resumen de lo que tu hijo hizo mientras estaba conectado. Esta categoría de productos incluye *NetNanny*, *Qustodio*, *Safe Eyes* y *BSecure*.
Es bueno saber: debido a que tienen tantas funciones, los programas de software de control tienen un costo inicial alto, además de requerir una suscripción mensual.
Útil para niños de todas las edades: en especial los que necesitan mucho apoyo para seguir las reglas de los padres.
- **Dispositivos móviles:** algunos dispositivos móviles tienen controles parentales básicos, pero las opciones varían mucho de un dispositivo a otro, lo que sirve para un iPhone no necesariamente sirve en un Android. Como mínimo, sin descargar ninguna aplicación extra, quizá puedas prevenir compras indeseadas (incluidas las compras desde una aplicación), restringir el tipo de contenido que se puede descargar (por ejemplo, bloquear los juegos aptos para adultos), y eliminar u ocultar aplicaciones y funciones que no quieras que tu hijo use (por ejemplo, video-llamadas). La familia cada vez mayor de las tabletas Kindle Fire de Amazon cuenta con controles parentales previamente cargados con la suscripción Kindle FreeTime.
Es bueno saber: para agregar filtros de contenido al dispositivo móvil de tus hijos, debes desactivar el navegador que ya tiene y descargar un navegador apto para niños o una aplicación que filtre contenidos, como *Mobicip* (Apple), *AVG Family Safety* (Windows) o *Kid Mode: Kids Games and Videos* (Android).
Útil para niños pequeños: una vez que los niños crecen, tienden a resistir todo intento de limitarles el acceso o sencillamente descubren una manera de superar las trabas que les has impuesto.
- **Redes domésticas:** ¿tienes problemas para controlar a qué pueden acceder tus hijos en sus dispositivos móviles? Si es así, quizá necesites una solución más contundente. Piensa en tu router de internet, que es el objeto que hace que el internet funcione en tu hogar. Considera un software como *OpenDNS*, que trabaja junto con el router que ya tienes para filtrar contenidos de Internet.
Es bueno saber: las soluciones vinculadas al router evitan que los contenidos indeseados entren en tu hogar.
Útil para todas las edades.

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[Acerca de Caroline Knorr](#)

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