PARENTAL CONTROL SERIES

Keeping Children Safe Online
Introduction

The Internet is part of many children’s daily lives and, because of COVID-19, their time spent online may be increasing. Kids are:

- Streaming TV and movies
- Using social media platforms
- Communicating through cell phones and computers
- Accessing other entertaining and educational content

Risks

While the Internet provides a lot of benefits for children, it also contains content inappropriate for minors. Additionally, it can give children the ability to buy content, products, or apps without a parent or guardian’s permission. Worst of all, is the risk that children will be exposed to cyberbullying or contacted by harmful predators.

Tools to Protect

Fortunately, tech companies have responded to these dangers by providing parental control tools which allow parents and guardians to set appropriate limitations on their children’s online activities. Parents are also encouraged to speak with their children to discuss issues of concern.

Parental Control Series

The NAGTRI Center for Consumer Protection (CCP) is publishing a series of tips for parents to access these parental controls. The installments, which are being periodically released, include tips on:

1. Streaming services
   Released August 7, 2020
   - Including Amazon Prime, AppleTV, Disney+, Hulu, Netflix, and YouTube.

2. Social media
   Released September 15, 2020
   - Including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Tumblr, and Twitter.

3. Mobile devices
   Released November 9, 2020
   - Including iPhone, Android, AT&T, TMobile, and Verizon

4. Video game consoles (Coming soon)

5. More installments to come!

The CCP does not endorse the use of any of the products, platforms, or services highlighted in this series. If you decide to allow your children to be online and choose to use parental controls, talk to your kids about why you are using them—to keep them safe online and help them establish reasonable usage limits. Be aware that the parental control tips provided herein are not 100% foolproof. Kids can undo parental controls and directions on how to get around them can easily be found on the Internet. We recommend you monitor your kids’ Internet usage, look for signs that they may be bypassing controls you have set up, and research parental controls to stay current on how they may be disabled or avoided.

We hope this series helps you keep your kids safe online!

The NAGTRI Center for Consumer Protection

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The National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) serves as the national forum for attorneys general and their staff to collaboratively and effectively address issues important to their work and provides resources to support the work of the offices of attorneys general in protecting the Rule of Law and the United States Constitution.

ConsumerResources.org, brought to you by the NAGTRI Center for Consumer Protection, is a hub of consumer protection information and resources from state and territory attorneys general.

The website features links to consumer protection resources for each attorney general office and federal enforcement agencies. Consumer complaints can also be filed with most attorneys general through the links on the website.

In addition, the website offers educational materials on a variety of consumer topics to help consumers to stay informed on important issues. Topics covered include common scams, education, finances and money, healthcare, internet and privacy, and travel.

Consumer Protection is one of the most important ways attorneys general serve citizens. Find your state and territory attorney general and file a consumer complaint through www.ConsumerResources.org.
Parental Controls for Mobile Devices

Tips to enable controls on mobile devices

Tips include using controls provided on the device and offered separately by the cell phone service carrier. Note that separate parental control apps, other than those offered by the carriers, are not addressed in this installment. Controls provided on the device and offered by the carrier may overlap. Therefore, you will want to determine which avenues of achieving parental controls are best for your situation.
iPhone (iOS 13.4 and Later)

Screen Time settings allow parents to block apps, features, explicit websites, iTunes, App Store purchases, and more.

To activate Content & Privacy Restrictions, go to Settings on your child’s device and select Screen Time.

- Tap Continue and then select This is My Child’s [Device].
- Choose Use Screen Time Passcode to create and confirm a new passcode for screen time settings. Make sure that the passcode is different from the passcode your child uses to log into their device. Anyone wishing to make changes to your child’s Screen Time settings will need this passcode.
- Go back to Content & Privacy Restrictions and turn on Content & Privacy.
- Now that Content & Privacy is activated, you can block apps, purchases, websites, and more on your child’s device.

To block iTunes and App Store purchases, go to Settings on your child’s device and select Screen Time.

- Choose Content & Privacy Restrictions and enter your new Screen Time passcode.
- Select iTunes & App Store Purchases.
- You can now choose Allow or Don’t Allow for the following: Installing Apps, Deleting Apps, and In-app Purchases.
- You may also be required to enter the Apple ID password of the purchasing account prior to any purchases or downloads from iTunes or the App Store. Under Require Password, choose Always Require or Don’t Require.

To block and allow specific apps and features, go to Settings on your child’s device and select Screen Time.

- Choose Content & Privacy Restrictions and enter your new Screen Time passcode.
- Tap Allowed Apps.
- Select the apps that you want to allow. Any apps that you choose not to allow will be hidden from your child’s home screen until they are allowed again.

To block explicit content or content above a certain content rating, go to Settings on your child’s device and select Screen Time. Please note that the below instructions apply to content in the iTunes Store and App Store only.

- Choose Content & Privacy Restrictions and enter your new Screen Time passcode.
- Tap Content Restrictions.
- Tap Ratings For to select the country/region whose content ratings should be applied.
- You can now choose the maximum rating for the following:
  - Music, Podcasts & News: Choose Clean or Explicit.
  - Music Profiles & Posts: Choose Off to prevent the automatic sharing of what music your child listens to.
  - Movies: Set the maximum content rating to G, PG, PG-13, R, or NC-17. You may also choose Don’t Allow Movies.
TV Shows: Set the maximum content rating to TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-Y7-FV, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, or TV-MA. You may also choose Don’t Allow TV Shows.

Books: Choose Clean or Explicit.

Apps: Set the age rating to 4+, 9+, 12+, or 17+. You may also choose Don’t Allow Apps.

To filter and restrict explicit website content, go to Settings on your child’s device and select Screen Time.

- Choose Content & Privacy Restrictions and enter your new Screen Time passcode.
- Tap Content Restrictions and Web Content.
- Choose from Unrestricted Access or Limit Adult Websites.
- You may also choose Allowed Websites Only and then enter specific websites under Always Allow and Never Allow.

To restrict what web searches your child can make using Siri, go to Settings on your child’s device and select Screen Time.

- Choose Content & Privacy Restrictions and enter your new Screen Time passcode.
- Tap Siri.

- Choose Web Search Content to Allow or Don’t Allow Siri to search the web.
- Choose Explicit Language to Allow or Don’t Allow Siri to display explicit language.

To restrict what your child has access to in the Game Center, go to Settings on your child’s device and select Screen Time. Please note that this applies only to games available through the Game Center.

- Choose Content & Privacy Restrictions and enter your new Screen Time passcode.
- Tap Game Center.
- Choose Multiplayer Games to Allow or Don’t Allow your child to play multiplayer games.
- Choose Adding Friends to Allow or Don’t Allow your child to add friends in Game Center.
- Choose Screen Recording to Allow or Don’t Allow your child to capture their screen while playing games.

The above instructions can also be used to activate parental controls on your child’s iPad and iPod Touch. These features can also be activated through your own device by using Apple’s Family Sharing feature.
Android (Android 10 and Later)

Android phones use **Google Play** to access apps, games, music, movies, and more. Google Play allows parents to set up **parental controls** to restrict your child's access to content.

To set up **parental controls** for apps on your child's device, open the **Google Play Store**.

- Click the three horizontal bars in the upper-left hand corner of the home screen and choose **Settings**.
- Scroll to **User Controls** and turn on **Parental Controls**.
- Enter a parental control PIN. Make sure it is a combination your child does not know.
- To make future changes to parental controls settings, your new PIN will be required.

To **restrict apps** on your child’s device, open the **Google Play Store** and click the three horizontal bars in the upper-left hand corner to open the menu. Note that the below only applies to content accessed through the Google Play Store.

- Tap **My Apps & Games**.
- Choose **Installed** and then delete any apps you do not want your child to access.
- Go back to the menu and choose **Settings** and then **Parental Controls**.
- Under **Set Content Restrictions**, you may restrict the following content types for your child based on content ratings:
  - **Apps & Games**: Set the age rating to 3+, 7+, 12+, 16+, or 18+.
  - **Movies**: Set the content rating to G, PG, PG-13, R, or NC-17.
  - **TV**: Set the content rating to TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-Y7-FV, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, or TV-MA.
  - **Books**: Choose **Restrict Sexually Explicit Books** or **Allow All**.
  - **Music**: Choose **Restrict Music Marked Explicit by Content Providers** or **Allow All**.

To prevent your child from **purchasing apps or content** without permission, open the **Google Play Store** and click the three horizontal bars in the upper-left hand corner to open the menu.

- Choose **Settings**.
- Tap next to **Require Authentication for Purchases** to restrict purchases in the Google Play Store.
- You will be prompted to re-enter your Google account password to confirm the changes. Before making future purchases, the Google account password will need to be re-entered.

You can also prevent your child from **downloading apps from sources other than the Google Play Store**. To do so, go to the home screen of your child's device and choose **Settings**.

- Choose **Lock Screen and Security**.
- Toggle on the **Unknown Sources** setting. Now your child can only use the Google Play Store to download apps and content.
AT&T’s Secure Family app allows parents who are AT&T Wireless customers to activate parental controls and monitor their child’s activity on their smartphone for $7.99/month following a free 30-day trial. To get started, parents will need to download the Secure Family app for Apple or Android.

After downloading the app, sign in with your existing myAT&T ID. If you do not already have a myAT&T ID, tap Register Now.

- After signing in, you will be asked to confirm your enrollment in AT&T Secure Family and agreement to pay $7.99/month following a free 30-day trial. Select Continue to confirm your enrollment.

- On the next page, confirm your phone number from the list of numbers associated with your AT&T account and tap Continue.

- On the next page, check the boxes next to the phone number of the child (or multiple children) that you want to add to Secure Family and enter their name. Tap Sign Up to continue and confirm your subscription.

- You can cancel your subscription at any time by tapping the 🛋️ icon in the top-right corner of the app. Tap Account and then Cancel Secure Family to cancel your account.

To activate parental controls and restrict content, open the Secure Family app and select the child whose restrictions you would like to manage. Then complete the following:

- Tap Content Filters. From here, you can block social media, specific apps and websites, features, and more on your child’s device.

- To block social media, tap Social Media. You can toggle on All Social Media to block all social media apps and websites. Alternatively, you may scroll down to block specific apps such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat.

- To block specific websites, tap Add A Website. Then tap Blocked to add websites that should always be blocked on your child’s device or Trusted to add websites that should always be allowed on your child’s device.

The Secure Family app also allows you to track your child’s web and app activity:

- After opening the Secure Family app, select the child whose web and app history you would like to view.

- Scroll down to Recently Visited and tap View History.

- On the next pages, you will be able to view your child’s browsing history and app activity over the last seven days.

Through the Secure Family app, you can also set a schedule to limit your child’s Internet access—for example, during school hours or at night:

- Open the Secure Family app and select your child’s device. Scroll down and tap Time Limits.

- Tap School Hours or Night Hours to set the range of hours during which you don’t want your child to access the Internet. Tap Save to confirm any changes.

- To add further time limits, tap Add A Time Limit and tap Save to confirm any changes.
T-Mobile/Sprint offers a free service called Web Guard to all T-Mobile customers. This feature allows parents to restrict web content on your child’s smartphone based on their age. If you are the primary account holder for your family, you can activate Web Guard by signing in to My T-Mobile on your web browser. Then complete the following:

- Click your profile in the top right of the screen and then click Family Controls.
- Click the Down Arrow to choose your child’s phone number from the list of phone numbers associated with your account.
- Click Web Guard and then choose Child, Teen, Young Adult, or No Restrictions based on your child’s age. To see more about the restrictions for each filter level, click Show Filter Levels.
- Click Save to confirm your changes.

Based on the age level you selected for restrictions, your child will now be blocked from viewing content above what is appropriate for their age in their smartphone’s web browser.

Please note that these restrictions only apply when your child browses the web using the T-Mobile cellular network; if your child is connected to Wi-Fi, Web Guard will not be activated. Furthermore, Web Guard does not block adult content in downloaded apps or emails and text messages.
Verizon’s Smart Family app allows Verizon customers to set parental controls and monitor their child’s smartphone usage for $4.99/mo. or $9.99/mo., depending on the features chosen. To sign up, download the Apple or Android Verizon Smart Family app and complete the following:

- Open the app and tap Get Started. Enter your mobile phone number and My Verizon password and Sign In.
- Verizon has two pricing plans to choose from: Verizon Smart Family ($4.99/mo) or Verizon Smart Family Premium ($9.99/mo). Verizon Smart Family Premium includes all the features of Verizon Smart Family with the addition of location services. Choose your preferred plan and tap Next.
- On the next page, select the phone numbers of the child(ren) you would like to monitor and enter their names.
- When finished, tap Sign Up.

To fully utilize the app’s features, you will also need to install the Smart Family Companion app on your child’s Apple or Android smartphone. To link your child’s device to your app, open the Smart Family app on your device:

- Tap the ☰ icon in the top-right corner of your screen to open Settings. Then tap Family Settings.
- Tap the device of the child you want to pair with and then click Smart Family Companion.
- Tap Send Invite to send a pairing invitation to your child’s phone number.
- On your child’s smartphone, open the text steps and tap Allow for all permissions requests.

Now that your devices are paired through the Smart Family/Companion apps, you can activate parental controls on your child’s devices. To do so, open the Smart Family app on your smartphone:

- Choose the child whose activity you would like to restrict at the top of the screen.
- Under the Manage Controls section, tap Content Filters. Then tap Websites.
- Tap Trusted Websites and enter any websites you want your child to be able to access. Tap Blocked Websites and enter any websites that you never want your child to access.
You may also **block specific contacts from calling or texting your child**. To do so, open the Smart Family app on your smartphone:

- Choose the child whose contacts you would like to restrict at the top of the screen.
- Scroll down to **Manage Controls** and click **Contacts**.
- Tap **Blocked Contacts** and then **Block A Number**. Enter up to 20 phone numbers you wish to block from contacting your child. Tap **Save** to confirm your changes.
- To prevent any private and/or restricted phone numbers from contacting your child, toggle on the **Block Private and Restricted Texts and Calls** switch. Tap **Save** to confirm your changes.

You can also use the Smart Family app to **check your child’s Internet and app usage**. To do so, open the **Smart Family** app on your smartphone:

- Choose the child whose activity you would like to restrict at the top of the screen.
- Under **Web & App Activity Today**, you will see a general overview of your child’s activity.
- Tap **View More** to see a more detailed account of your child’s activity on their smartphone and use right and left arrows at the top of the screen to view activity on different days.

To pause Internet for your child, open the **Smart Family** app and complete the following:

- Choose the child whose Internet access you would like to pause.
- Tap **Pause Internet** and **OK**. Your child’s Internet access will now be blocked until you tap **Unpause Internet**.