

# Step-by-Step Tips to Set Up Parental Controls for iPhone

Apple devices have some super-useful settings and features that help parents shape their kids' experiences and block access to things they might not be ready for. Though no tech-based solutions can ever replace the [ongoing conversation we need to have with our kids about using devices and media responsibly](#), the built-in parental controls can point you in the right direction, start a conversation, and help you set limits that work for your family. We'll walk you through the essential questions every parent has about managing their kids' iPhones and explain, step by step, how to do it.

## **Q: Before I hand over the phone, how do I make sure I have some control?**

A: Set up Screen Time.

Here's why you want to:

- Lets you block or limit apps.
- Lets you control your kid's contacts.
- Gives you an idea of how your kid is using the phone.
- Stops them from making changes to the settings.

The first thing you want to do before giving your kid a device is set up Screen Time so you can set restrictions on content and time limits on general use and specific apps. There are two ways to set up Screen Time: You can set it up right on your kid's device, or you can set up Family Sharing first so you can control your kid's settings from your own phone. Setting up Family Sharing means creating an Apple ID for your kid. If you want to use Family Sharing, skip down to that section.

How to set up Screen Time on your kid's device:

1. Tap Settings.
2. Tap Screen Time.
3. Tap "This is My Child's iPhone."
4. Follow the prompts and then create a pass code.
  - a. This code is different from the one you use to unlock your phone. Instead, it's a code you set so kids can't change the settings. Remember to write down the passcode in a safe place because it's a real pain if you lose it. And don't share it with your kids.

How to set up Screen Time using your device:

1. Tap Settings.
2. Tap your Apple ID.
3. Tap Set Up Family Sharing (this is the option you'll see if you don't have a family group set up already).
4. Tap Add Family Member and then tap Create a Child Account. Then follow the prompts to create the account and read the privacy agreement.
5. On the Family Sharing page, tap Screen Time and then tap Add Child.
6. Enter your kid's Apple ID and a password. Note: This is their Apple ID password, not the one you'll use to control Screen Time.
7. On your kid's device, make sure to enter the Apple ID you've created.

**Q: How do I make sure my kid gets permission before downloading and purchasing content?**

A: Set up Ask to Buy.

Here's why you want to:

- Lets you approve or deny purchases even when you're not with your kid.

By default, kids under 13 have to ask to buy or download if they're part of Family Sharing. Parents have the option to set up Ask to Buy for kids under 18.

1. Tap Settings.
2. Tap your Apple ID.
3. Tap Family Sharing.
4. Tap your kid's name.
5. Tap Ask to Buy.

**Q: Now how do I limit time and content?**

A: Use Screen Time to access all those settings.

Here's why you want to:

- Prevents access to mature content.

- Limits time using device and particular apps.

Within Screen Time, you can control lots of elements of your kid's phone — everything from restricting access to mature websites to allowing a little more device time for your kid on the weekends.

1. Tap Settings.
2. Tap Screen Time.
3. Tap your kid's name.

**Q: How do I limit the times of day my kid can use her phone, like during homework and at bedtime?**

A: Set up Downtime.

Here's why you want to:

- Stops device use during a set block of time.

Downtime is best used for a regular span of time, but you can adjust that chunk of time on various days. It's probably most easily applied to bedtime.

1. Tap Downtime.
2. Set a start and end time. Your kid will get a reminder five minute before Downtime starts.
3. Toggle on Block at Downtime.

**Q: How do I limit access to certain types of apps, like games, or specific apps, like Instagram?**

A: Set App Limits.

Here's why you want to:

- Let's you control time limits on particular apps on certain days.

This is where you can customize a bit more around specific time limits for particular apps on certain days. So, if your kid spends lots of time on Instagram, you can give her 30 minutes Monday through Friday and one hour on the weekends.

1. Tap App Limits.

2. Tap Add Limit.
3. Tap the circle next to the app categories you want to limit, or tap All Apps & Categories.
4. For a specific app, tap a category to access a drop-down menu of specific apps and websites that fall into that category.
5. Tap Next.
6. Set a time, and Customize Days will appear.
7. Tap Customize Days to set specific limits for certain days.
8. Tap the name of the category or app to go back one page.
9. Toggle on Block at End of Limit if you're setting up Screen Time on your kid's device.

**Q: Is there a way to let my kid access the stuff on her phone that I don't mind for her to access, even at bedtime?**

A: Set up Always Allowed.

Here's why you want to:

- Lets you choose specific, approved apps your kid can access any time.

If your kid uses music or a meditation app to help them go to sleep, you can allow those apps—and only those apps—even during Downtime.

1. Tap Always Allowed.
2. Tap the green plus sign next to the apps you want your kids to be able to access during Downtime.

**Q: Is there a way to control my kid's Contacts list and who can call them during Downtime?**

A: Use Communication Limits.

Here's why you want to:

- Lets you control your kid's contacts list, set up who can contact them during Downtime, and prevent them from making changes.

Controlling your kid's list of contacts won't prevent them from friending people on social media apps, but it will limit the people they can communicate with via phone Message, AirDrop, and FaceTime.

1. Tap Communication Limits.
2. Toggle on Manage Contacts.
3. Toggle off Allow Contact Editing if you don't want your kid to make changes.
4. Tap During Allowed Screen Time.
5. Select Allowed Communication from Everyone or Contacts Only.
6. Tap Allow Introductions in Groups if you want to be able to add contacts or family members to group conversations.
7. Tap During Downtime.
8. Tap Specific Contacts to limit who your kid can call during Downtime.
9. Tap Add Contacts.
10. Tap Choose From Your Contacts and make selections.

**Q: I'm afraid to hand over a phone because of all the mature content that's out there. Is there a way to limit my kids' access to it?**

A: Set Content & Privacy Restrictions.

Here's why you want to:

- Lets you adjust ratings on content like movies and books and restrict access to certain websites.

The ability to choose ratings for movies (or allow movies at all), choose "clean" music, and create a list of websites your kid can access won't prevent them from ever seeing or hearing anything objectionable, but it will limit their direct access on their own devices.

1. Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions.
2. Tap Content Restrictions.
3. Choose your settings for the level of mature content your kid can see in music, movies, apps, and more.
4. Tap Web Content to choose settings limiting access to adult websites or to create a list of websites you'll allow.

5. Tap on Web Search Content and Explicit Language to control the search results Siri delivers.
6. Tap Multiplayer Games if you want to control access to them.

**Q: Is there a way to make sure my kid got home safely? What about if my kid can't find her phone?**

A: Set up Location Services and use the Find My app.

Here's why you want to:

- Keeps track of your kids—and their phones.

Using Location Services like Share My Location and the Find My app, you can see where your kids and their devices are.

1. Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions.
2. Tap Location Services and make sure it's toggled on (green).
3. Tap Share My Location and toggle it on if you want to see your kid's location.
4. Tap Don't Allow Changes if you don't want your kid to be able to change these settings.
5. Tap other app titles to control whether or not those apps can access your kid's location.
6. Go back to the home screen.
7. Tap the Find My app.
8. Tap Allow While Using App.
9. Tap People or Devices to see their locations.

**Q: Is there a way to make sure my kid can't change the password or Touch ID to unlock the phone?**

A: Change the setting for Passcode Changes.

Here's why you want to:

- Prevents kids from changing overall access to the device.

Even with the remote controls Screen Time gives you, you still want to be able to access your kids' devices, so if you want to maintain a shared passcode, you can make sure they can't change it.

1. Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions.
2. Scroll down to Allow Changes.
3. Tap Passcode Changes.
4. Tap Don't Allow.
5. Explore the other settings to see if there are other settings you want to lock.

**Q: I'd love to check in with my family every week to talk about how much we're all using devices. Is there an easy way to do that?**

A: Use Share Across Devices.

Here's why you want to:

- Continues a conversation about device use as a family.

Approaching device use as a team and setting goals to reach together—if you feel things are out of balance—can be a great way to use the time tracking Screen Time offers.

1. Tap on Screen Time.
2. Toggle on Share Across Devices.

Setting up your kid's device is only one step in a process that includes an ongoing conversation with your kid. And it's worth noting that there are ways kids have found to get around Screen Time, including (but not limited to):

- Changing the date and time to reset how much time they have (you can prevent this by setting a Screen Time passcode on their phone).
- Downloading a previously installed (and approved) app to circumvent a time limit (you can block the App Store, but then no apps will update).
- Using the embedded version of YouTube in iMessage to send videos.

And it's not just Screen Time: Kids have a knack for hacking most parental controls (or Googling to see how to do it). So, after you set up your kid's phone, remember that your relationship with your kid is going to be the most powerful tool you have in keeping them responsible and safe.