



Your child's screen time

Know the risks, and what you can do to keep your child safe.

What's the problem?

Spending time online and on devices can be a positive thing. But, high levels of screen time can put your child more at risk of:

- Being bullied online
 - Abuse and grooming (when someone builds a relationship with a child to exploit or abuse them)
 - Seeing inappropriate content
 - Not getting enough sleep and exercise
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4 steps you can take to protect your child

1) Set parental controls on devices

Use parental controls to restrict access to in-app purchases and explicit or age-rated content, and, on some devices, how long they can spend on the device.

You'll likely need to set a password. Make sure it's different from the password used to access the device, and that your child doesn't know it.

Parental controls are usually located under 'Settings'. See below for more detailed instructions for different devices.

2) Agree rules on screen time

There are mixed views on 'safe' screen time, but you could agree some limits to stop screen time interfering with your child's sleep or family activities:

- Make a plan together, and stick to it. You could set media-free times and zones, like during meals or in bedrooms
- Try to avoid screens an hour before bedtime
- Model the behaviour you want to see – which may mean no screen time for you at the times agreed with your child. Children are more likely to learn from example
- Try to minimise snacking during screen time

- Turn not using screens into a game, using apps like [Forest](#), where not using devices is rewarded

3) Talk to your child about staying safe online

Tell them:

- To be aware that anyone can pretend to be a child online
- If they talk to people they don't know, not to give away personal information – like what street they live on or where they go to school, or to share their location with them. To say no to any requests they get for images or videos, and stop talking to the other person if they are asked for these things
- To set their profiles to private, to limit what others can see
- To be 'share aware' – think carefully about what they share and with whom. Once it's out there, they've got no control over what the other person does with it. Remember, it's illegal to take, share or view sexual images of under-18s, full stop
- If they see something that upsets them, or someone bullies them, to tell an adult they trust

Don't feel confident starting a conversation with your child about what they're up to online? Read this advice from the NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

4) Encourage off-screen activities

Help your child get active for the recommended 60 minutes a day:

- See www.nhs.uk/change4life/activities for free ideas for activities and games
- Try an app that's designed to get children active – see the examples at www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/apps-to-help-kids-get-active/

How to set parental controls on your devices

Please note: when following the instructions below, the exact steps you need to take may be a little different depending on the device and software version you're using.

Microsoft devices (Windows computers and Xbox)

You'll need to have a family account set up, with 'child' profiles for your children. Learn more here: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/12413>

You can't change existing adult accounts to child accounts.

If your child has an Xbox, you can also use the Xbox family settings app on your phone to set these controls: <https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/community/for-everyone/responsible-gaming>

Set screen time limits

- Go to family.microsoft.com and sign in to your Microsoft account, or use the [Microsoft Family Safety app](#)
- Find your child's name and select 'Screen time'
- Switch 'Use one schedule for all devices' to 'On' to use the same schedule for all devices. Or scroll down and switch on screen time for different devices individually if you want to have separate schedules

- You can set time ranges for using devices, and how many hours per day, for each day.

Set age limits for apps, games and media

- Sign in to your Microsoft account, as above, and find your child's name
- Select 'Content filters'
- Go to 'Apps and games'
- Under 'Allow apps and games rated for', set the age limit for content they'll need permission to access

Block inappropriate websites

- Sign in to your account, and find your child's name
- Click 'More options' > 'Content filters'
- Turn on the 'Filter inappropriate websites' toggle
- To block specific sites, add the links to them under 'Blocked sites'

Manage purchases in the Microsoft Store

- Sign in to an adult account, as above, and find your child's name
- Click 'More options' > 'Spending'
- Turn on the 'Needs organizer approval to buy things' toggle

Read more here: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/account-billing/what-is-a-microsoft-family-group-b6280c9d-38d7-82ff-0e4f-a6cb7e659344>

iPads and iPhones

Set a screen time passcode

- Go to 'Settings' (a grey icon with a circular pattern on the home screen) and tap 'Screen Time'
- Tap 'Continue', then choose whether it's your device or your child's
 - If it's your device and you want to stop your child changing your settings, tap 'Use Screen Time Passcode' to create a passcode. Re-enter the passcode to confirm
 - If it's your child's device, follow the prompts on the device until you get to 'Parent Passcode' and enter a passcode, then re-enter it to confirm

Block in-app purchases

- Go into Settings > Screen Time > Content and Privacy Restrictions. Enter your passcode if asked
- Tap 'iTunes & App Store Purchases'
- Choose a setting (for example, in-app purchases) and set to 'Don't allow'

Block explicit content and set controls on apps

- Go to Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions > Content Restrictions
- Choose the settings you want for each feature or setting under 'Allowed Store Content'

Filter website content

This sets restrictions on what websites children can access (e.g., you can limit access to adult content).

- Go to Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions
- Enter your screen time passcode
- Tap 'Content Restrictions', then 'Web Content'
- Choose 'Unrestricted Access' (access to any website), 'Limit Adult Websites' (to block access to adult content in Safari and apps) or 'Allowed Websites Only' (to set specific websites as 'approved websites' and limit access to only these websites)

Read more here: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT201304>

Fire Tablet

Set a parental controls password

- Swipe down twice from the top of the screen to show Quick Settings
- Tap 'Settings' (a cog icon)
- Tap 'Parental Controls'
- Toggle the switch to 'On'
- Enter a password, confirm it, then tap 'Finish'

Restrict apps, features and content

- In 'Parental Controls', tap 'Amazon Content and Apps' to choose which content or apps you want to block
- You can set controls on playing videos, accessing WiFi and location services by entering your parental controls password. Go into 'Password Protection' in 'Parental Controls' to toggle these on
- To block access to Amazon, go to 'Parental Controls' and press 'Amazon Stores (excluding Video)', and tap to block

Block in-app purchases

In 'Parental Controls', toggle 'Password Protect Purchases' to on

- Set times when your child can use the tablet
- Go to 'Parental Controls'
- Tap the switch next to 'Set a Curfew', then tap 'Curfew Schedule'
- Set the day and time limits you want

To unlock a device during a curfew, enter your parental controls password.

Read more at

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=GG2LBLF5V2T8XUX8> and <https://www.laptopmag.com/articles/parental-controls-fire-tablet>

Android phones

Set up parental controls and set age ratings

- Open the Play Store app, tap the 3-lines button in the top left > Settings > Family > Parental controls
- Toggle Parental controls to on
- Create a PIN. Make sure to choose a PIN your child doesn't already know

You can then choose the highest age rating you want to allow for apps and games, films, TV, books and music. Go into each option and choose the age rating you want.

You can set these controls on the Family Link app too. Family Link is an app that lets parents set “digital ground rules” for their children. See this page for more information:

<https://support.google.com/families/answer/7101025?hl=en>

Restrict purchases

- Open the Play Store and tap the icon in the top right (it should show either your initials or your profile photo)
- Select Settings > Authentication > Require authentication for purchases > For all purchases through Google Play on this device

Manage screen time

You'll need to set up [Family Link](#) to do this.

In the Family Link app, select your child, then:

To set a daily limit on a device, on the 'Daily limit' card, tap 'Set up' or 'Edit limits', then follow the instructions on the screen.

To set time limits for specific apps (only for devices running Android N (7.0) and up), on the 'App activity' card:

- Tap 'Set limits'
- Next to app you want to limit, tap the sand timer icon
- Set limit (an icon with the top half of the sand time filled in)
- Set a daily time limit for the app
- Tap 'Set'

To set a bedtime, on the 'Bedtime' card, tap 'Edit schedule', then follow the instructions on the screen.
