

Smartphones for Children and Teens

a quick guide for parents and educators

Parents can help their children use smartphones in a safer way by talking to them about online risks, which include contact with strangers and exposure to inappropriate content, setting rules, and using parental controls. This guide lists the most important safety and privacy settings for specialized phones designed for use by children and teens, along with information about the basic parental controls available in Apple and Android smartphones.

More parenting advice on digital device safety can be found here: <https://internetsafety101.org/digital-devices>.



Bark

Bark offers customized smartphones designed specifically for children and teens with built-in parental controls and safety features. Bark runs on a modified form of Android and includes a parental controls dashboard. Parents can restrict the apps that run on the phone, filter web access, set daily time limits and restrict access during specified times, manage contacts, monitor a child's location and activity, and receive a variety of alerts. Learn more: <https://www.bark.us/bark-phone/>



Gabb

Gabb smartphones are built on the Android OS and designed specifically for children and teens, with a focus on safety and reduced screen time. Gabb phones limit use to a curated set of safe apps, and restrict access to social media, app stores and internet browsing. Parents can restrict access during specified times, manage contacts, monitor a child's location and activity, and receive a variety of alerts. Learn more: <https://gabb.com/gabb-phone>



MMGuardian

MMGuardian offers customized Samsung phones using the Android OS, designed specifically for children and teens. Parents can restrict the apps that run on the phone, filter web access, set daily time limits and restrict access during specified times, manage contacts, monitor a child's location and activity, and receive alerts for inappropriate texts, location changes, and other activities. Learn more: <https://www.mmguardian.com/>



Pinwheel

Pinwheel is a smartphone designed for children and teens that focuses on gradually introducing more advanced features as children mature. Pinwheel is built on Android with a customized interface. Pinwheel restricts access to social media and internet browsing. Parents can restrict access during specified times, manage contacts, monitor a child's location and activity, and receive a variety of alerts. Learn more: <https://www.pinwheel.com/>



Troomi

Troomi analyzes videos, GIFs, and emojis sent via text for preemptive blocking, flagging, and alerts based on custom filters. Parents can set safe contacts, track location, approve apps, see images sent or received, view word clouds, and see real-time text conversations. They can whitelist websites or enable a filtered browser with monitoring. Troodi™, a parent-visible safe AI chatbot, promotes well-being, showing parents how, not just what, their child is doing. Learn more: <https://troomi.com/>



amiGO™

AT&T amiGO™ Jr. Phone offers a Samsung smartphone combined with AT&T's dedicated amiGO app, designed with the controls parents need to safeguard their children's online activity and access. The app enables parents to manage approved websites and apps, create Safe Zones (to alert parents if the user leaves a designated area), establish user schedules and time limits, and monitor real-time location. Learn more: <https://www.att.com/buy/phones/att-amigo-jr-phone.html>

Built-in Parental Controls in Standard Phones



Apple

Apple iPhone Screen Time is a set of parental controls for managing access to certain iPhone features included free with modern iPhones. Parents can use Screen Time to restrict access to specific apps and features, set daily time limits and restrict access during specified times, manage contacts, monitor a child's location and receive location alerts. Learn more: <https://www.apple.com/families/>



Android









Google Android smartphones, such Samsung and Motorola, include a set of parental controls. Implementing the most useful features requires parents to install a free app called Google Family Link. Parents can restrict access to specific apps and features, set daily time limits and restrict access during specified times, manage contacts, monitor a child's location and receive location alerts. Learn more: <https://safety.google/families/>



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This table lists important safety features for smartphones designed for use by children and teens, along with built-in settings for Apple iPhones and smartphones that use the Android operating system, such as Samsung. The table is divided into three sections: general administrative controls, application-level controls such as content filtering, and monitoring and alert options. Where an option is available there is a "learn how" link to the appropriate documentation page providing instructions on how to use the safety setting. The information in the table is current as of March 2025. This document may not reflect subsequent changes or updates.

	Smartphones for Children and Teens						Standard Phones	
								
	Bark	Gabb	MMGuardian	Pinwheel	Troomi	amiGO™	Apple	Android
Administrative Controls								
Parents can manage controls remotely	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Parents can block/allow phone and text contacts	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Parents can schedule screen time on and off	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Parents can set screen time limits for each day	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Child can request change in permissions	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Application Controls								
Parents can restrict installing apps	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Includes a set of curated safe apps	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✗
Web filtering for explicit content	✓ Learn how	<i>Not applicable</i>	✓ Learn how	<i>Not applicable</i>	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Instant Messaging filtering for words	✗	✓ Learn how	✗	✗	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✗
Parents can see deleted text messages	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✗	✗
Monitoring and Alerts								
Alerts for inappropriate texts	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✗	✗	✗
Alerts for questionable activity	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✗
Live location monitoring	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Alerts for location change	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
Monitoring of app activities	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how
View content of text messages	✓ Learn how	✗	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✓ Learn how	✗	✗
View content of social media activity	✓ Learn how	<i>Not applicable</i>	✓ Learn how	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	✗	✗	✗
View content of email messages	✓ Learn how	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

For more information, visit internetsafety101.org.

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