



Parental controls.

Simple tools, **safer kids.**

Parental controls are the settings, software and tools that help you manage how your children use devices, apps and the internet at home. In plain terms, they let you **set time limits**, **filter out harmful content**, **decide which apps get installed**, and **keep an eye on how things are going**.

FIRST, LET'S CLEAR SOMETHING UP

Using these tools is not spying — it's parenting. You have every right to help your children manage the online world, the same way you help them manage everything else in their lives. Some of the biggest technology companies are very good at keeping young people in a game or program long after they should have logged off. Controls simply give you a way to help your kids manage that. Talked about openly, they become a support, not a punishment.

Some of what parental controls **can do**

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|--|--|
|  Time limits & schedules
For bedtime and school hours. Depending on the tool, pause the internet, lock the device, or block certain apps. |  Filter harmful content
Block pornography, extreme violence, hate and gambling. |
|  Approve apps & purchases
Require your approval before an app is downloaded or a purchase is made. |  See how devices are used
Which apps are being used, and for how long. |
|  Manage contacts
Help you manage who your child can contact. |  Location
See where your child's device is. |
|  Alerts
Get a heads-up when something concerning turns up (a feature of some paid tools). | |

Why they're **worth using**

Every small thing you put in place chips away at risk. Here is one example we share with parents all the time: if every internet-enabled device comes out of the bedroom at night and goes back in the morning, you have removed a big window of risk in a single move. Controls let you do that automatically, so it is not a battle every night.

They also take the pressure off you to be the expert. You do not need to understand every app your child uses — just a few simple tools working quietly in the background while you get on with being a parent.

TALK ABOUT IT**Set up openly, controls become a support, not a punishment.**



START HERE — NO COST

Free tools you already have

For most families, the free controls built into your child's device can help a lot. **Start here before you pay for anything.**

FREE

Apple Screen Time & Family Sharing

iPhone · iPad · Mac

Time limits and Downtime schedules, content and age restrictions, app approval through Ask to Buy, location, contact limits, and Communication Safety, which detects and blurs nude photos in Messages. Manage it all from your own device.

Setup: on the child's device — Settings → Screen Time.
support.apple.com

FREE

Google Family Link

Android phones & tablets · Chromebooks

Daily limits, bedtime, app approval, activity view, location, and safer browsing and YouTube settings. Set up a Google account for your child and manage it from your phone.

Setup: install the Family Link app on your phone.
families.google/familylink

FREE

Microsoft Family Safety

Windows PC · Xbox · Android · iOS

Screen time across PC and Xbox, web filtering in Microsoft Edge, app and spending limits, weekly activity reports, and location via the mobile app. Create a family group and connect each device.

Setup: create a family group online.
support.microsoft.com/family-safety

FREE

Consoles & home Wi-Fi

Switch & Switch 2 · PlayStation · Xbox · your router

Nintendo: the free Parental Controls app (Switch and Switch 2) sets play time and age ratings. **PlayStation:** the free PlayStation Family app is now the main way to manage play time, spending and content from your phone, alongside Family Management. **Xbox:** use Microsoft Family Safety above. **Home Wi-Fi:** some routers and internet providers offer filtering and time controls that cover every device at once (router-level controls are less fine-grained than per-device tools).

Setup: check each device's settings, and your router or provider's app.

WHERE THE NEW SOCIAL MEDIA AGE RULES FIT IN

Since 10 December 2025, social media platforms in Australia must take reasonable steps to stop under-16s holding accounts on services like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and others. That is a helpful layer — but it does not do the whole job. It does not cover gaming, messaging apps, or content children can see without an account, and some young people will find ways around it. **Controls and conversations still matter.**

A TIP THAT MAKES EVERY TOOL WORK BETTER

Set controls up together where you can. Tell your child what you are turning on and why. eSafety's own advice is that controls work best as supports for learning, not secret surveillance.



WHEN YOU NEED MORE

Paid tools, for a bit more

Paid apps add features the built-in tools do not have, like scanning messages for concerning content and alerting you. Worth considering for an older child who is active across lots of apps.

FROM USD \$5/MO

Bark

iOS · Android · computers · tablets.
Available in Australia.

Its stand-out is **content monitoring**: AI scans texts, email and many social apps, and alerts you only when something concerning appears — bullying, contact from a stranger, signs of distress. Also does screen time, web filtering and location. Content monitoring is Premium-only; Bark Jr does screen time, filtering and location.

Bark Jr: USD \$5/mo + tax or \$49/yr + tax.

Premium: USD \$14/mo + tax or \$99/yr + tax.
bark.us

Note: on iPhone, Bark's content monitoring is limited because Apple restricts what apps can see, and Bark's hardware workaround (the Sync charger) doesn't ship to Australia. Monitoring works best on Android.

FROM AU \$89.95/YR

Qustodio

iOS · Android · Windows · Mac · Chromebook

The all-rounder. Strong web and app filtering, time limits, YouTube monitoring, location, a panic button and clear activity reports, all from one dashboard. Sensible for a household mix of devices and ages. The panic button is Android only, social monitoring is more limited on iPhone, and YouTube monitoring is on the Complete plan.

Free plan (1 device) to try first.

Basic: AU \$89.95/yr.
Complete: AU \$159.95/yr.
qustodio.com

AU \$54.99 1ST YEAR

Norton Family

Child's Windows PC · iPhone · Android

Web supervision and content filtering, screen time limits, activity reports emailed to you, location supervision (where available) and YouTube video supervision. Good value if you already use Norton — it is included in some Norton 360 plans.

AU \$54.99 first year — check the renewal price before buying. 30-day free trial (payment method required; charged unless cancelled).
au.norton.com

A note on pricing and features. Information was checked against each provider's website in July 2026. Features vary by device, operating system, plan and country, and some are only on higher-priced plans. Prices, plans and features change often, and free tools can change what they offer too. Some apps advertise a lower first-year price that renews higher. Before you rely on or pay for any tool, check the current price, exact features and Australian availability on the provider's own site — and use the free trials. This guide is general information, not a specific product recommendation.

Getting started

1

Start with what you own

The free tool built into your child's device covers a lot of a family's needs. Set it up first.

2

Set it up together

Tell your child what you are turning on and why — a support for learning, not secret surveillance.

3

Add a paid tool only if you need more

Reach for content monitoring or alerts when an older child is on plenty of apps and you want an early heads-up.

And the most important part

Controls are only part of the picture. The other part is the culture of communication you build at home, so your child comes to you when something goes wrong. Put a couple of these tools in place, **keep talking**, and review the settings as your child grows and earns more independence. For trusted, up-to-date Australian guidance, the eSafety Commissioner is an excellent first stop: esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/parental-controls