

Layer up for online safety

A **step by step guide** on how to use safety settings to keep children safe online



Instead of thinking about parental controls as one big switch, it can help to think in layers, adding the right support around your child as they grow.

You don't need to do everything at once. Start with the basics, add more when it feels right, and change things as your child becomes more confident online.

Even one layer makes a difference.



At the centre: your child

Every child is different. Their age, confidence and curiosity all play a part in how they use the internet.

Parental controls aren't about stopping children exploring. They're there to support them, help reduce risk and give you space for ongoing conversations as they grow

Layer 1 Network controls - the basics

This is often the easiest place to start.

Network controls can cover multiple devices at the same time, helping keep children safe online at home and on the go.



At home (your broadband / Wi-Fi)

Most broadband providers offer tools that can:

- filter out adult content
- apply age-based content filters
- cover all devices on your Wi-Fi (including smart TVs and games consoles)
- sometimes include extra features like virus protection or Wi-Fi schedules to help manage screen time

On the go (mobile network / data)

- Adds filtering when children use 4G or 5G
- Helps when they're not on home WiFi



Get Started

- ✓ Broadband, mobile and WiFi providers list of parental control guides [here](https://internetmatters.org):
internetmatters.org > set controls > broadband and mobile networks

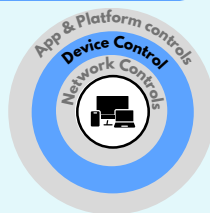


Remember

- If children use public or shared Wi-Fi, your network safety filters may not work, so **online safety conversations still matter**
- This layer gives you a solid safety baseline, without needing to change lots of settings.

Layer 2 Device controls - Finding the Balance

This is support that fits your child and their device. Most phones, tablets and consoles already have built-in tools to help manage how they're used.



These settings can help with:

- Screen time and downtime
- Privacy and location sharing
- In-app spending
- Age-appropriate content
- Passport protect app stores to limit downloads



Get Started

- ✓ Set parental controls on an **Apple, Android and other devices:**
internetmatters.org > set controls > smartphones and other devices
- ✓ For **video games and consoles** step-by-step guides:
internetmatters.org > set controls > online gaming

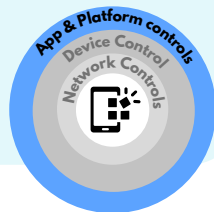


Remember

- Device controls are flexible. You can loosen or tighten them over time as your child grows and shows they're ready for more independence
- Set a good example with your own screen use
- create screen free zones in your home
- charge devices outside bedrooms
- set digital boundaries and routines together (Family Agreement).

Layer 3 Apps & Platform control - shaping the experience

This is where you get more specific. Each app, game or platform has its own set of safety settings, and they can vary quite a lot



These settings can help with:

- Filter what children see within features specific to the app
- Manage messaging and who can contact your child
- Set boundaries around comments, followers and friends
- Support more positive online experiences
- Block or report harmful behaviour
- Limit chat and data sharing on online games
- set up Family pairing to supervise social media platforms



Get Started

- ✓ For safe **entertainment and search engines**:
internetmatters.org > set controls > entertainment and search engines
- ✓ To help children manage different **social media apps**:
internetmatters.org > set controls > social media

Remember



- Many platforms also include tools children can use themselves to protect their experience
- it can help to go look at app's settings or safety centre and explore what's available, ideally with your child, so they understand the choices too.
- Talk about tough topics like cyberbullying, grooming and pornography in age-appropriate ways