AI GAPS · For parents/caregivers

Parental Controls: Quick Setup

Settings for the phones, apps and AI tools kids use most. Set them up **with** your child. Steps checked November 2026; apps change often.

Before you start: Controls help, but they don't replace a conversation. Most controls don't let you read your child's chats. Many chatbots also work without logging in, which skips any controls you set, so talk about why the settings matter.

Start with the phone (covers every app)

- **iPhone or iPad:** Settings › Screen Time, set up for your child through Family Sharing. Use **Downtime** (phone-off hours), **App Limits**, **Communication Limits** and **Content & Privacy Restrictions** (age ratings for apps and websites). Turn on **Ask to Buy** so new apps need your OK.
- **Android:** Use the **Family Link** app to set daily limits and a bedtime, require **approval for new apps**, set Play Store content ratings and see app activity.
- **One habit that helps most:** charge phones outside the bedroom overnight.

Popular apps

- **Instagram:** Teen Accounts are private by default, and teens under 16 need a parent's OK to loosen settings. Add **supervision** (Family Center) for time limits, sleep mode and who they follow and message.
- **TikTok: Family Pairing** links your account to your teen's to set screen time limits and control direct messages, search and content filters.
- **Snapchat: Family Center** shows your teen's friends and who they've messaged recently (not the messages), and lets you restrict My AI.
- **YouTube:** Use a **supervised account** through Family Link, or YouTube Kids for younger children.
- **Discord: Family Center** shows new friends and servers joined, not message content.
- **Gaming** (Roblox, Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo): each has parental controls for chat, spending and play time. Turn off chat with strangers for younger kids.

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AI chatbots

ChatGPT (teens ages 13 to 17)

- You and your teen each need a ChatGPT account. Sign in, click your profile picture, then **Settings › Parental controls**.
- Click **Add family member**, enter your teen's email, choose **My child** and send. Your teen accepts the invite from their email.
- Then review the settings: **reduce sensitive content** (on by default), **quiet hours** (times ChatGPT can't be used), and turning off **memory**, **voice mode** and **image generation**. You can also opt out of their chats being used to train models.
- You won't see your teen's conversations. OpenAI may notify you if its systems detect signs of a serious safety risk.

Google Gemini (through Family Link)

- Open the **Family Link** app or familylink.google.com and select your child.
- Tap **Controls › Gemini › Gemini Apps** and turn access on or off. On older versions: **Controls › Content restrictions › Gemini**.
- You'll get an email the first time your child uses Gemini.

Meta AI (Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook)

- Use **supervision** (Instagram's Family Center) to see whether your teen chats with AI and to set a daily time limit, which includes time with AI.
- Meta paused teens' access to its AI characters in January 2026 and has announced more controls for when they return.

Claude (Anthropic)

- Claude is for adults 18 and older, so it has no teen accounts or parental controls. Anthropic disables accounts that show signs of a user under 18.
- Make sure your child's correct birth date is set in Apple or Google family settings. In some states, the Claude mobile app uses that age to block sign-in for anyone under 18.

AI companion apps

- **Companion apps:** Many AI "friend" apps are for adults only. Character.AI ended open-ended chats for users under 18 in late 2025. Check age ratings before approving a download.

Our family plan

☐ Accounts linked ☐ Quiet hours set ☐ New apps need OK ☐ We talked about why

Times and places phones and AI are off in our home

Who our child can go to when it matters

In a crisis, call or text **988**, or chat at **988lifeline.org**, any time. In an emergency, call 911.

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