



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SMART PHONE SECURITY

11 EASY STEPS TO MAKE YOUR CHILD'S
SMART PHONE SAFER



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Making the Internet Safer for Children and Families

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A Parents Guide to Smart Phone Security

11 EASY STEPS TO MAKING YOUR CHILD'S CELLPHONE SAFER

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Giving children free rein over their device is like throwing them in an ocean full of sharks.

We can all agree that unfettered, Internet access can be a dangerous place filled with hackers, pedophiles, pornography, violence, horror, and drugs.

This is why as a parent (or babysitter letting the kids play with your smartphone while you take a quick breather), it's your responsibility to make your smartphone safe for your kids. Likewise if you decide it is time to provide your child with his or her own phone, you need to make sure it is secure.

You must be thinking: “But where do I even start?”

There's no need to worry because with this guide you can make your smartphone safer for your kids in just 11 easy steps.

Whether you're thinking about letting your kid use your phone or buying them their own, there are some changes you can do to make sure they don't come across any app or site you don't want them using or visiting.

We need to be sure to distinguish if the phone is one being given to a child as his/her own or if it is just being borrowed from a parent.

#1. Uninstall apps

By far the surest way to keep your kids away from apps you don't want them finding is to uninstall these apps before giving them their own phone.

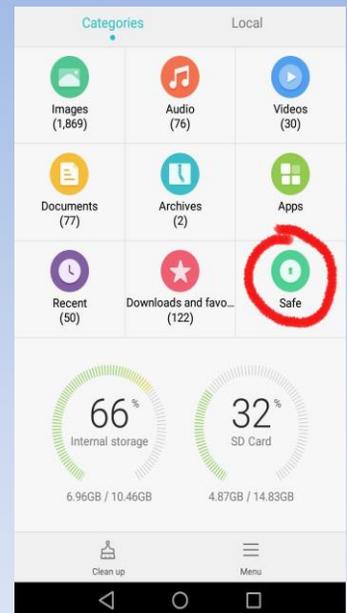
This option won't be so viable when you're just lending them your phone. The repeated need to re-install these apps when you need them quickly becomes a hassle.

Depending on what type of device you're using, you can either uninstall apps simply by deleting the app on your app drawer or by going to settings, then apps, then uninstalling the unwanted apps there.

#2. Secret folder

If you lend your child your own phone, you'll find most android phones have a built-in "secret folder" feature where you can place all the files you don't want your kid (or anyone else, for that matter) from accessing.

This feature is usually found in the "Files" app. If your phone doesn't have this built-in feature, there are lots of secret folder apps available both in Google Play store and the Apple app store.



#3. Family link account

Android allows you to create separate google accounts for different users on the same phone.

It's similar to ordinary Google accounts but it allows you to monitor the account user's activities like:

Downloads;

Purchases;

Search results via [SafeSearch](#);

Permissions requested by apps;

Filtering [YouTube Kids](#) searches and content;

Account password management;

Limit screen time;

Account activity settings;

The location of your child's signed-in and active Android devices; and

Giving another family member account access.

It also allows you to remotely lock your child's device for when it's time for your child to play, study, or sleep.

Do note:

This feature is available only if **your smartphone runs at least Android 4.4 Kit kat**, and **your kid's smartphone is running Android 7 Nougat** (which could be a problem if you've already given them a phone prior to the release of Android 7 Nougat).

#4. Screen pinning

This feature allows you to pin (lock) your phone screen to an app you choose.

This is especially useful for those times that your child just wants to borrow your phone to play a specific game. By using this feature, you're temporarily restricting your phone's screen to show only the app you allowed.

To use this feature:

Go to Settings

Then Security

Then go to Advanced

There you'll find Screen pinning.

Once turned on, you can start using screen pinning by:

First, opening the app you want to pin

Then tapping the "overview" button next to your "home" button.

You can then see a "pin" icon on the app which you can then tap to turn on.

Your phone then shows you a notification which tells you how to cancel pinning. This is usually done by holding down the "overview" button or simultaneously holding the "back" and "overview" buttons.

Note: This feature is available only if **your phone runs Android Lollipop.**

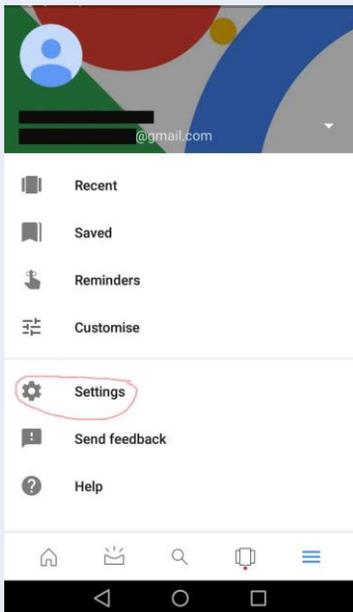
#5. Google SafeSearch

Pornography is too common on the internet these days. Searching for porn is as easy as typing the word “sex” on Google search. This is why it’s important to use Google SafeSearch. Bing has its own safe searching turned on as a default and it therefore safer. But if you choose to use Google, then be sure to use Google SafeSearch.

Google SafeSearch blocks explicit images, videos, and websites from Google Search results.

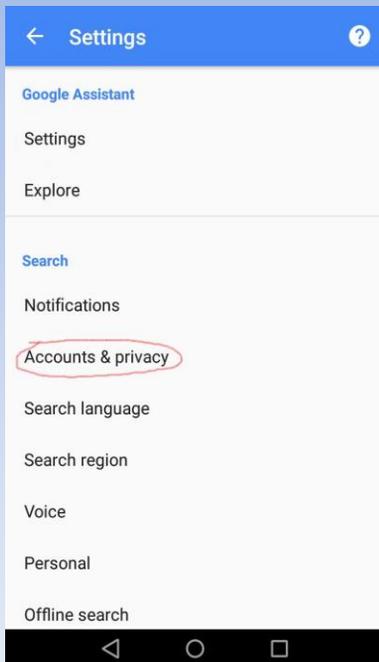
To turn on Google SafeSearch on your phone:

1. Go to your Google account then select “Settings”.

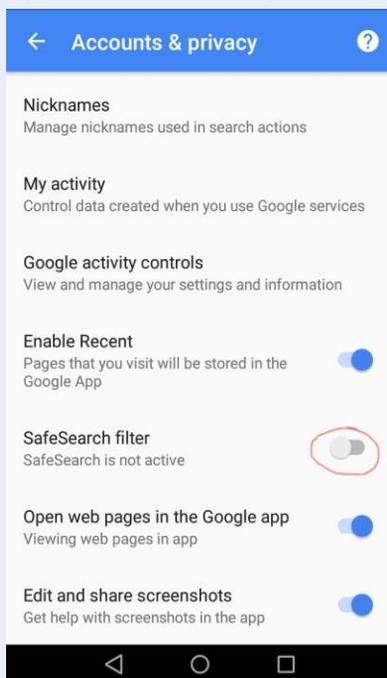


Note: While Google SafeSearch may not be 100% accurate, it does block **most** explicit content.

2. Then go to “Accounts & privacy”.



3. Then you’ll find the “SafeSearch” option which you can toggle on or off.



Note: While Google SafeSearch may not be 100% accurate, it does block **most** explicit content.

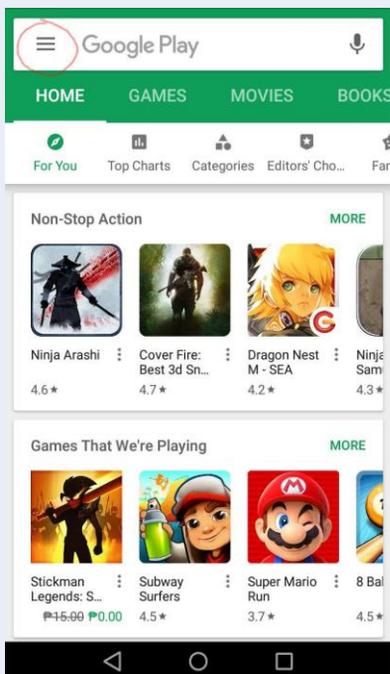
#6. Google play store: parental control

Ever had that feeling when you first entered a toy store as a kid? To a kid who's into mobile games, visiting the Google Play Store for the first time and seeing all the different games they could play is the exact same feeling.

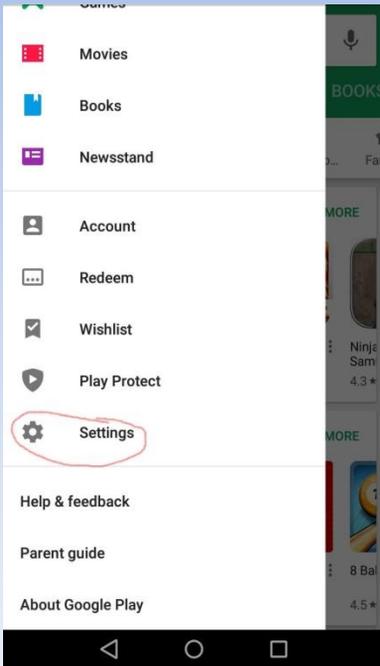
If you allow your kid to choose what games they can buy or download from the Google Play Store, you'll want to restrict the kind of games available to them. Don't be *that* parent who lets their kid play *clearly* ultra-violent and sexually-oriented games rated only 18+ and then gets surprised at the stuff that comes out of their kid's mouth come family time.

To turn on parental control:

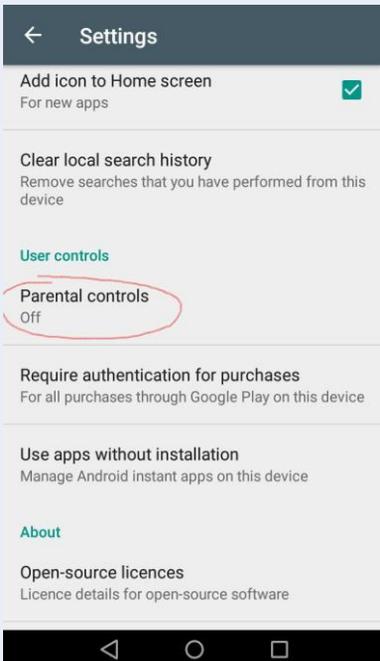
1. Open Google Play Store and go to account settings.



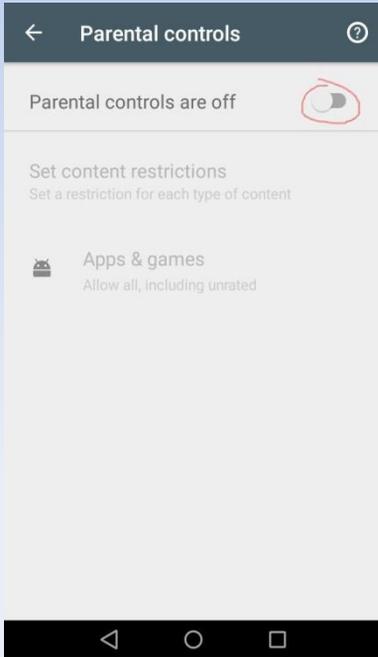
2. Then go to “Settings”.



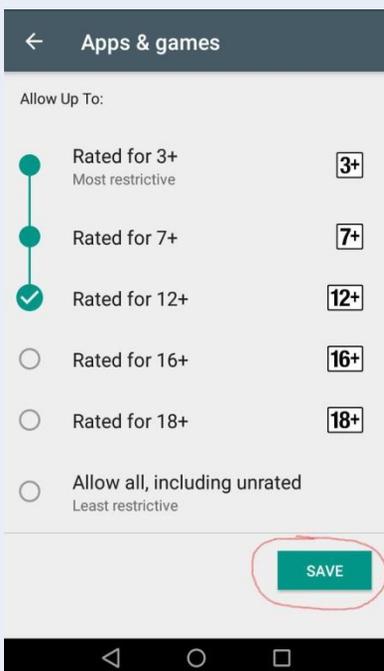
3. Then “Parental Controls”.



4. Turn on Parental controls. This step lets you set up a PIN code for parental controls so your clever kid won't be able to change it. Remember not to use easy PIN codes like: 1234, 1111, 0987, or your kid's date of birth. Your child may be more clever than you think (this comes from first-hand experience!).



5. Then just choose the age limit for available games and tap "Save".



#7. Youtube restricted mode or kids mode

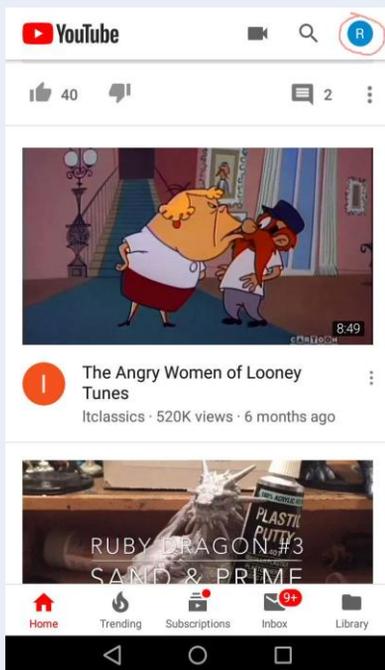
If you've ever searched for videos in YouTube, you know how some YouTubers like to "clickbait" viewers by posting sexually provocative videos or thumbnails.

But, they're just the tip of the iceberg.

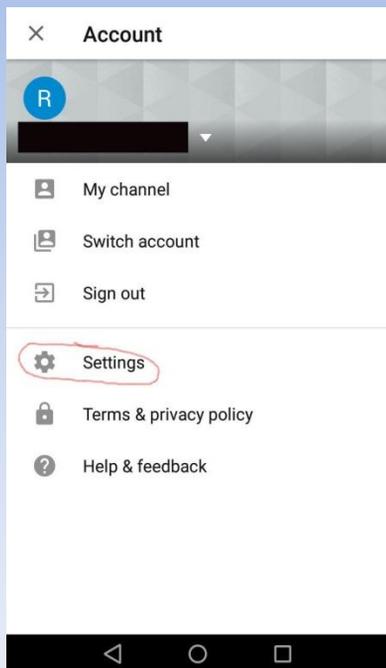
YouTube has loads of **illegal** content like porn and terrorist execution videos. Needless to say, you'd want your kids to steer clear of them. So, it's a good thing that YouTube also has a restricted mode.

To use restricted mode:

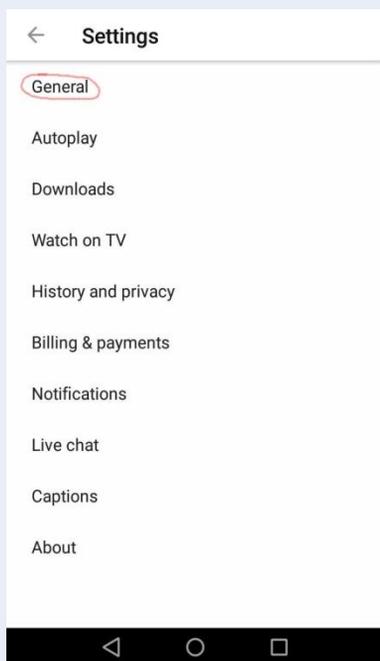
1. First, go to your account settings.



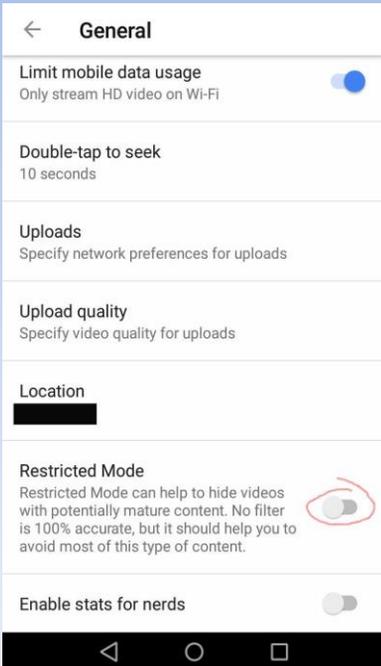
2. Then go to “Settings”.



3. Then “General”.



4. Once there, you just turn on “Restricted mode”.



Alternatively, if you have a younger child, you can instead download the [YouTube Kids app](#).

This app has content tailored exclusively for young kids. It also provides you parental controls like:

Creating profiles for up to 8 kids

Blocking videos you don't want your kids to watch

Report videos to notify YouTube of inappropriate videos that shouldn't be in the app

Set up a timer so you can limit how long your kids can watch videos

Keep tabs on the videos your kids are watching

Watch on TV so you can gather your family and videos together

#8. Social media username and password

Let's face it:

Social media has connected the world (for better or worse).

This means that everyone and their grandma is registered to some form of social media-- most likely Facebook.

Now, Facebook doesn't allow kids below 13 years old to register and that's good. But, even then, teenagers aren't 100% safe. The news is rife with stories of how easily teens can be duped by "that little 13-year old who's in the same school needing help with her homework" who turned out to be a 40 something sexual predator.

If you want to avoid these types of situations happening to your kids, ask them for the username and password to their social media accounts. I know this may sound intrusive but it's the only way to truly monitor who they're communicating with through social media.

#9. Apple device restrictions

I use an Android device so most of the steps I listed above demonstrate what you can do on your Android phone. Most of the steps in this guide aren't available on your device if you're using an iPhone.

But, you'll be glad to know:

Apple has their own form of [parental controls in all their devices](#). They call these parental controls "Restrictions" and block or limit specific apps and features on your child's iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch.

Using this feature is easy:

1. First, go to Settings.
2. Then "General".
3. Then "Restrictions".

There you'll be able to turn off the apps you don't want your child to access. You can also prevent your child from installing or deleting third-party apps or make in-app purchases.

#10. Parental control apps or launcher

If you plan to give your child their own smartphone, you might want to download a parental control app or launcher.

These apps let you monitor your child's device activity as well as block certain websites or limit your child's use of their phone.

There are a lot of parental control apps for both Android (like [Kaspersky SafeKids](#)) and Apple devices (like [Qustodio](#)).

Note: Users have complained about their children simply turning off these apps. This is why it's important to come to an agreement with your child about their phone privileges.

Remember: It's still **YOUR** phone so you have the right to set the limits for your child's use.

Limiting your child's smartphone usage at a young age ensures that they don't develop [mobile-phone addiction or dependency](#)-- a phenomenon that's similar to drug abuse.

#11. Use a VPN

Last but certainly not least:

If you allow your child to surf the web on their phone, you should know that they're still in deep water *even with* you monitoring their online activity.

Why?

Because lurking just below the surface of the internet are hackers, identity thieves, and criminals. These people can monitor and steal your and your child's information through your child's internet activity and use that information for their own malicious purposes. These people are especially common in places with free public wifi (like Starbucks).

This is why it's always a good idea to install a Virtual Private Network ([VPN](#)) on your child's phone. The VPN can be set to automatically turn on whenever the phone starts up or whenever a connection to the internet is made.

Warning: Not all VPNs are secure. I'd stay away from free VPNs as they've been known to sell user data to 3rd party companies.

There are lots of VPNs that are both secure **and** affordable and even let you use several devices with just one account (perfect for you and your whole family).

If you want *my* opinion for the best VPN for your family, I personally recommend **ExpressVPN**. It's **VERY** secure and lightspeed-fast (plus you can use it to torrent and access Netflix). But, don't take my word for it. Here's [a review](#).

Final thoughts

In the end:

These tips I've suggested are just the ones that have worked for me. There are probably more I've missed and haven't tried yet.

I still say that the best way to ensure a child's safety while using a smartphone is by personally monitoring their use of it. But, since being a stay-at-home parent means being a *busy* parent, I hope I've shared enough of what I know to help you keep your kids safer while using their smartphone.

Finally, [Internet Safety 101](#) (InternetSafety101.org) is a one-stop shop offering a clearinghouse of current Internet safety resources, guidelines and tools to keep children and families safe online. Be sure to also check out their "Rules & ToolsSM" checklist featuring safety rules and software tools to keep your child safe in the digital world.