



HOW SAFE IS YOUR CHILD ONLINE?

1 in every 4 kids



will encounter **PORN** before reaching puberty

1 in every 5 kids



will encounter **PREDATORY BEHAVIOR** online

1 in every 15 kids



will try to **meet up with a stranger**
they met online

¹ From "Porn Phenomenon" a survey by Josh McDowell Ministry and the Barna Group of 2,700 Americans

² All figures are from Bark's 2021 yearly analysis of more than 3.4 billion messages across texts, email, and 30+ apps and social media platforms.

A Parent's Guide to Technology Control

by Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia's IT team

There is no doubt about it; we live in the technology age. And we'd be hard-pressed to find an area of our lives that has not been impacted. Particularly with the rise of the internet, our world is connected more than ever before. In many ways that's a good thing; we can keep in touch with loved ones over vast distances, Dad can teach himself to fix that leaky faucet by watching a free YouTube video, and we have access to teachings on every verse of the Bible anywhere, anytime. But the internet has also brought incredible danger to our doorstep, over the mantel, down the hall, and into every room of our homes.

This presents a new challenge for parents who want to raise their kids up in the way of Godliness. Our goal in this document is to...

1. Describe what types of digital safeguards should be used to keep kids safe online
2. Recommend specific devices and apps that will help provide these protections

Each of the recommendations in this list is backed by dozens of hours of research and hands-on testing. In this document, we've done our best to avoid technical jargon and keep it approachable for anyone. However, digital safety is a multifaceted problem and unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for all devices and all households.

A Layered Approach to Tech Safety

Building a strategy to keep your kids safe online can be compared to building a pyramid. Each layer of the pyramid represents a different area that requires a parent's focus and attention. The foundation and the first layer of the pyramid don't have to do with technology, but rather with relationship. As Christians, we know the only stable foundation is Christ. The Bible says in James 1:5,

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

It all starts with Him. Next is the parent's relationship with their kids. Parental controls are simply one part of a healthy parent, child relationship. Trust within that relationship will open the door for a child's heart to receive Godly love and correction from their parents.



In this document, we are going to focus on the next two layers which encompass the bulk of the technological side of this problem: the “Wi-Fi” and “Device” layers. If you want more information on how to build a good foundation of digital trust with your children, we highly recommend all the materials from the Christian internet safety organization Protect Young Eyes. And a great place to start is this talk that their founder Chris McKenna gave at a Calvary Chapel on the west coast.

<https://vimeo.com/686010226>¹

Terms to Know

We have tried our best to limit the tech jargon used in this document, but there are a few terms that are essential to know. This section can be used for reference if you need to remind yourself what they mean.

Filtering: Lets parents control WHAT can / cannot be done on the internet
(think blocking websites/keywords)

Monitoring: Lets parents see HOW their children spend their time on the internet
(think alerts/activity reports)

Management: Lets parents control WHEN the internet can be used
(think screen time limits)

These terms also serve as an outline for the three types of digital protection that are available today. The way that you approach each of these categories in your parenting will probably change as your child gets older, but a good strategy will take each of them into account.

Wi-Fi Protection

This type of protection is important because it filters the internet at the source. That way you can be sure that every device on your network is using clean, filtered internet.

There are two methods for filtering your Wi-Fi:

1. Setting your router to use a clean DNS² (see footnote for what that is)
2. Using a parental control router/router companion

¹ You can also find it by Googling “battle ready families vimeo”

² All internet devices use a DNS to find websites kind of like how people used a phone book to look up phone numbers. A clean DNS is a “phone book” that is missing some websites, which means a computer using a clean DNS can’t visit those missing websites.

Now if you are not tech-savvy, you probably will want to do only one approach to protect your Wi-Fi, but it is possible to use a solution from both categories for even better protection. Just be aware this will increase the number of things you need to manage.

Here is a quick breakdown of the difference between the two approaches.

	Clean DNS	Parental Control Router / Router Companion
Cost	Free	\$50 - \$300 (one-time purchase)
Provides Filtering	Yes	Yes
Provides Monitoring	Basic	Basic
Provides Management	No	Yes
“Teen-Proof”	No	No
Difficulty of Setup	Moderate	Easier

It’s important to note that in most situations, Wi-Fi filtering is not enough to keep your kids safe online. That is because...

1. There is no way to make Wi-Fi filtering “teen-proof” and the internet is FULL of tutorials teaching kids how to use VPNs and other workarounds to avoid Wi-Fi protection
2. Even when Wi-Fi protection is working as intended, it only protects devices when they are connected to your home network. So as soon as a device connects to the internet through another path (a smartphone can switch to using the data plan instead of Wi-Fi, or your kids can go stay at a friend’s house with different Wi-Fi), the device loses its protection

In conclusion, Wi-Fi protection is part of a complete strategy, but it shouldn’t stand alone.

Part 1: Clean DNS

We recommend using a clean DNS to filter your Wi-Fi if...

1. You are a bit tech-savvy
2. You are looking for a free option

Here is an awesome article to explain how DNS works (if you want to know) and gives you a step-by-step tutorial on how to set up DNS protection

<https://protectyouneyes.com/how-to-block-porn-on-any-device-for-free/>³

³ You can also find it by Googling “protect young eyes free porn blocker”




















1. CleanBrowsing (Free)

Pros

- Is a very simple but effective product
- Has the easiest setup

Cons

- The free version doesn't give much control over what categories are filtered.
- Doesn't provide parents with any way to tell what was blocked.

Category	Rating	
Easy to Set Up?	3 / 5	  
Easy to Use?	5 / 5	    
Value	5 / 5	    
"Teen-Proof" Rating	1 / 5	
Customer Support	-	Didn't Test
Overall	3.5 / 5	    

















2. (Free)

Pros

- Provides more control over what categories are filtered
- Keeps track of what gets blocked so parents can monitor

Cons

- Setup is a bit more difficult than CleanBrowsing
- Requires the paid version if you want to get reports about blocked content

Category	Rating	
Easy to Set Up?	2 / 5	 
Easy to Use?	5 / 5	    
Value	5 / 5	    
"Teen-Proof" Rating	1 / 5	
Customer Support	-	Didn't Test
Overall	3 / 5	  

Part 2: Routers & Wi-Fi Companions

In our opinion, it's worth paying for a device in this category if...

1. You are looking for an easier setup than using a clean DNS
2. You would like to adjust your Wi-Fi filtering from an app on your phone
3. You want to be able to manage what times of day Smart TVs / Gaming consoles can be used
4. You want to add another layer of Wi-Fi protection in addition to using a clean DNS

1. **GRYPHON**® Routers (\$50 – \$300: one-time purchase)



Pros

- Router setup / adjusting settings is easy with the Gryphon App
- Doesn't slow down your internet speeds (unlike Wi-Fi companions like Bark Home)
- Comes with the best customer support we have found
- Internet filtering is more "teen-proof"
- It's easy to find a used Gryphon router online to save money

Cons

- If you are currently using a 2-in-1 router/modem from your internet provider, then setup can be challenging
- The Gryphon app is very good, but has a lot going on, so it might be overwhelming for some

Category	Rating	
Easy to Set Up?	3.5 / 5	👍👍👍👎
Easy to Use?	4 / 5	👍👍👍👍
Value	4 / 5	👍👍👍👍
"Teen-Proof" Rating	4.5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👎
Customer Support	5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👍
Overall	4.5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👎

* (Used Routers on FB Marketplace / eBay start at \$50)

2. Bark Home (\$80: one-time purchase)



Pros

- Having this device greatly simplifies Bark's text message and social media monitoring on iPhones (more on that later). If you are going down that route, we think this is a must-have
- Easier to set up than Gryphon
- Good customer support

Cons

- Unfortunately, the Bark has the most confusing app we have tested. Expect a learning curve
- Reportedly it has the potential to slow down your home's internet connection. However, we didn't see that in our testing
- Not as "teen-proof" as a router with parental controls (like Gryphon). But still pretty good

Category	Rating	
Easy to Set Up?	4 / 5	★★★★
Easy to Use?	2 / 5	★★
Value	4 / 5	★★★★
"Teen-Proof" Rating	4 / 5	★★★★
Customer Support	4.5 / 5	★★★★☆
Overall	3.5 / 5	★★★☆☆

Honorable Mentions

Here are a couple more Wi-Fi protection products that we tested and like, but that didn't quite make the cut. If you are just interested in our top recommendations, then you can skip this section.

Circle Home Plus

The Circle family of products is similar to the Bark family of products. They both have a router companion for protecting your Wi-Fi and an app that protects your mobile devices. The Circle app is much easier to use than Barks.

However, here are a few reasons why we recommend Bark Home over Circle Home Plus for Wi-Fi protection.

- Bark doesn't charge a monthly fee for their Wi-Fi protection, while Circle does
- In our testing, Circle wouldn't reliably notify the parent if the router companion was unplugged.

Netgear Router + Circle 1st generation

Some Netgear routers are compatible with a legacy version of Circle's parental controls (called Circle 1st generation). In our tests, this is a viable way to go. Especially if you happen to already own one of the compatible Netgear routers. And unlike the Circle Home Plus, it doesn't require a monthly fee.

However, we recommend Gryphon routers over this option for the following reasons.

- Only some Netgear routers are compatible with Circle 1st generation protection and many of the routers have very similar names. This complicates the buying process compared to Gryphon.
- Managing the Gryphon router requires only one app, while the Netgear routers require a separate app for the Circle parental controls. This is concerning because it adds potential for compatibility issues and it means Netgear can choose to drop support for Circle at any time.

Device Protection

The previous section talked about how to add basic filtering to your Wi-Fi. This section covers the steps needed to make sure each device is fully protected—even if it isn't on your Wi-Fi.

Part 1: A Simple Solution for Phones

One of the best ways to protect your kids in the digital world is to reduce the number of ways they can access the internet. This is especially true for mobile devices because those devices can be used anywhere, including places where healthy accountability is not present. But you still might want your children to have a phone. Below is an awesome company that makes phones/phone watches with features that your kids will love. But these devices are truly kid/teen safe; they have no way to access the internet and no app store available to download new apps. In fact, if you use one of these devices, you don't have to do any of the other steps in this section to protect the device. Because of options like this, we strongly recommend that parents delay letting their kids have a smartphone for as long as possible.



GOLDEN DOVE AWARD



Pros:

- Gives you all the benefits of a phone without the dangers of the internet
- Gives you all-the-time access to your child's location through Gabb's parent portal
- Devices are affordable (\$150 for a watch/basic phone or \$200 for a higher-end phone)
- One of the only phones that is fully Teen-Safe (no workarounds)
- Good USA coverage (uses Verizon cell tower network)
- Cell plans don't have a contract lock-in so you can cancel anytime without penalty
- Uses Gabb Guard to filter and block spam calls/texts. It even filters content it thinks is explicit from known numbers to prevent sexting

Cons:

- Requires you to buy the cell service through Gabb. Plans run \$15 / month for the watch and \$25 - \$35 / month for the phones
- It currently doesn't support using the Bark app to monitor texts/calls (see "Parental Control Apps" section)

Category	Rating	
Easy to Set Up?	5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👍
Easy to Use?	5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👍
Value	5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👍
"Teen-Proof" Rating	5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👍
Customer Support	-	Did not test
Overall	5 / 5	👍👍👍👍👍

Honorable Mentions

Here are a couple more kid-safe phones that we researched and like, but that didn't quite make the cut. If you are just interested in our top recommendations, then you can skip this section.

Troomi and Pinwheel

We are not against these phones, but the reality is that they are smartphones that still have access to the internet. Troomi and Pinwheel just provide services that make managing their smartphones easier. And for that service, they charge monthly fees on top of carrier fees. However, most of the features that Troomi and Pinwheel provide can be achieved for free with a standard smartphone and the phone's built-in parental controls (see the next section called "device settings"). So in our opinion, Troomi and Pinwheel are only worth it if you are ok with giving your child some access to the internet on their mobile device, and want the convenience of a protected smartphone with minimal setup and management.

Part 2: Device Settings

The rest of this section on the "Device" Layer covers how to protect internet-enabled devices. And the first step in that process is to make sure the device is set up correctly. Most devices have the ability under their device settings to give your child some privileges on the device but reserve some privileges only for you, the parent. This is especially important when it comes to being able to install new apps. Each new application is a new pathway to the internet, which is why we recommend that all the devices that your child uses be set up to require your approval before a new app is installed.

A device's built-in parental controls usually offer lots of other features including internet filtering, screen time management, and more. It's up to you if you want to use these features, but in our opinion, the parental controls in a device's settings are best kept simple and only used to prevent downloading unapproved apps. Apps like Qustodio and Bark are better places to set up filtering / management because their protection automatically applies to all of your child's devices.

Below are some articles and tutorials for some common devices.

1. Apple IOS – Screen Time
Tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWEsHV93XVw&ab_channel=AppleSupport ⁴
2. Android Phones, Tablets, Chromebooks – Google Family Link
Tutorial: <https://protectyoungeyes.com/how-to-set-up-family-link-parental-controls> ⁵
Tutorial: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7b-0gbQW0mc&ab_channel=Bark ⁶
3. Windows Computers – Create non-admin accounts for your kids
Tutorial (Windows 10):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6DWR0e0465E&ab_channel=GCFLearnFree.org ⁷

⁴ You can also find it by Googling "create family sharing iphone youtube"

⁵ You can also find it by Googling "protect young eyes free family link"

⁶ You can also find it by Googling "google family link bark youtube"

⁷ You can also find it by Googling "windows 10 parental controls gcf youtube"

4. macOS - Create non-admin accounts for your kids
Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfigYwWnTGU> ⁸

5. Kindle Fire Tables
Tutorial: <https://protectyoungeyes.com/devices/kindle-fire-hd-parental-controls> ⁹

Part 3: Parental Control Apps

This category is for powerful parental control apps that you can install on laptops, phones, and tablets. Both Qustodio and Bark have a monthly fee, but they are well worth it. They are easy to use, cover many devices, are “teen-proof”, and provide all three categories of parental controls: filtering, monitoring, and management. Unfortunately, you can’t use Qustodio and Bark together because they will interfere with one another.

1. (Free - \$12 / month)








Pros:

- Covers virtually all smartphones, tablets, and computers
- Their parent portal is excellent and extremely easy to navigate and use
- Very easy to set up
- Does a very good job of being “teen-proof” (provided the device is set up correctly)
- Provides the option to turn off filtering / management and switch to only monitoring as your child approaches adulthood

Cons:

- The free tier is limited to one device and a subset of the features
- YouTube monitoring is not the best. We recommend blocking the YouTube app and only allowing access through the YouTube website

Category	Rating	
Easy to Set Up?	5 / 5	
Easy to Use?	5 / 5	
Value	5 / 5	
“Teen-Proof” Rating	4 / 5	
Customer Support	-	Did not test
Overall	5 / 5	

⁸ You can also find it by Googling “because family parental controls on macos youtube”

⁹ You can also find it by Googling “protect young eyes kindle”

2. bark (\$4 - \$8 / month if paid annually)


























This app especially shines if you want to allow your kids to have some social media.

Pros:

- Best-in-class texting, and social media monitoring using artificial intelligence for detecting child predators, bullying, and self-harm
- Using it affords your kids a degree of privacy: Bark only provides visibility to flagged content
- Provides helpful tech news to keep parents up to date if there are concerning trends happening in social media
- The most “teen-proof” software we have found: including on iPhones

Cons:

- Unfortunately, the Bark app is the most confusing app we tested. Expect a learning curve

Category	Rating	
Easy to Set Up?	4 / 5	   
Easy to Use?	2 / 5	 
Value	5 / 5	    
“Teen-Proof” Rating	5 / 5	    
Customer Support	4.5 / 5	    
Overall	4 / 5	   

Honorable Mentions

Here is another parental control app that we tested and like, but that didn’t quite make the cut. If you are just interested in our top recommendations, then you can skip this section.

Mobicip

Mobicip is a very similar product to Qustodio, in price and features. In fact, Mobicip actually does a better job of filtering and monitoring YouTube (which is a big deal). But we chose not to make it our main recommendation for the following reasons

1. It lacks a free tier
2. Their parent portal is much more difficult to use and lacks some essential features
3. We also ran into some significant bugs in our testing that were difficult to work through

Despite these drawbacks, if you are tech-savvy and interested in their best-in-class YouTube monitoring, Mobicip is a good alternative to Qustodio.

Circle App

The Circle family of products is similar to the Bark family of products. They both have a router companion for protecting your Wi-Fi and an app that protects your mobile devices. The Circle app is much easier to use than Bark's but there are a few reasons why we recommend Bark's App Protection over Circle's App protection,

- Bark monitors social media and text messages. Circle doesn't do either
- In our testing, Circle wouldn't reliably notify the parent if monitoring was turned off

Conclusion and Further Reading

Being a parent is hard, and technology has not made it any easier. Unfortunately, the same is true for our kids who are growing up in today's crazy world. May God strengthen us to be sympathetic, loving, engaged adults who walk alongside this next generation through this tech-filled world. An internet filter is great but will never replace the role a loving parent plays in the development of their child. Our prayer is that these tools open the door for you to have important conversations with your children in the time and place where they need it the most.

There are still two layers of protection to consider in the parental controls "pyramid"

Location: Managing where your kids are using technology

Apps: Managing which apps your children are using and how they are using them
(many apps have their own parental control settings)

We will not be discussing them here. Please check out the talk from Chris McKenna mentioned in the introduction of this document for more guidance on the "Location" layer. And for the "App" layer, Protect Young Eyes' website has great articles breaking down each of the major social media apps. You may also want to download their parent education app available on the IOS and Android app stores (search for "protect young eyes"). It's full of 5 min lessons to help you stay encouraged, informed, and up to date.

May God strengthen and lead you as you do the same for our children

Detailed Recommendations Data Table

And if you are the kind of person who likes to see all the data at once, this section is for you.

This table covers how we recommend setting up each type of protection on each type of device.

Category	iPhones / iPads	Androids	Windows Computer	macOS	Smart TVs	Gaming Consoles	Fire Tablets	Chromebook
Filtering	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Filtered Wi-Fi + Device Settings	Filtered Wi-Fi + Device Settings	Qustodio	Qustodio or Bark
Monitoring	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	App Settings	Device Settings	Qustodio	Qustodio or Bark
Management	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Qustodio or Bark	Filtered Wi-Fi	Filtered Wi-Fi + Device Settings	Device Settings	Qustodio or Bark
Require Approval for New Apps	Screen Time	Google Family Link	Screen Time	Device Settings	Device Settings	None	Device Settings	Google Family Link