

5 ways to block porn on your kid's devices

Tricks and tools to limit adult content on phones, tablets and computers.



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Here's the thing: Porn is all over the internet. You can't totally get rid of it. Still, most parents want to do what they can to prevent kids from seeing explicit content. But here's the other thing: You can set all the blockers, filters, and parental controls in the universe, and not only will your kids still see porn, you still have to talk to them about what porn is, why it exists, and why it's not for them. In fact, using tech tools to limit adult content works best when combined with conversations that convey your values about love, sexuality, and relationships. (Get tips on talking to tweens and teens about internet porn.) Here are five ways to block porn as much as possible.

1. Turn on Google SafeSearch

Pros: Easy to enable

Cons: Easy for kids to turn off

1. Set your search engine to Google

Check the settings on whichever browsers your kids use (Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.) and make sure they use Google as their default search engine. (On an iPhone, go into your phone's settings, scroll down and tap on Safari, and then choose Google under Search Engine; in Chrome, tap or click on the three dots either at the top or bottom of the screen).

2. Enable SafeSearch

On mobile devices, open your Google app (you may need to download it). Tap on the gear icon, scroll down and tap on Search Settings, and then tap "Filter explicit results" under SafeSearch filters. On desktops and laptops, go to www.google.com and click Settings in the bottom-right corner; click on Search Settings; and click Turn on SafeSearch and then Lock SafeSearch.

3. Check all devices, and recheck periodically

Perform steps one and two for all devices your kids use. Regularly check the Google app or preferences section to make sure SafeSearch hasn't been turned off.

2. Use Screen Time on iPhones and iPads

Pros: Built right into the OS

Cons: May require frequent fine-tuning

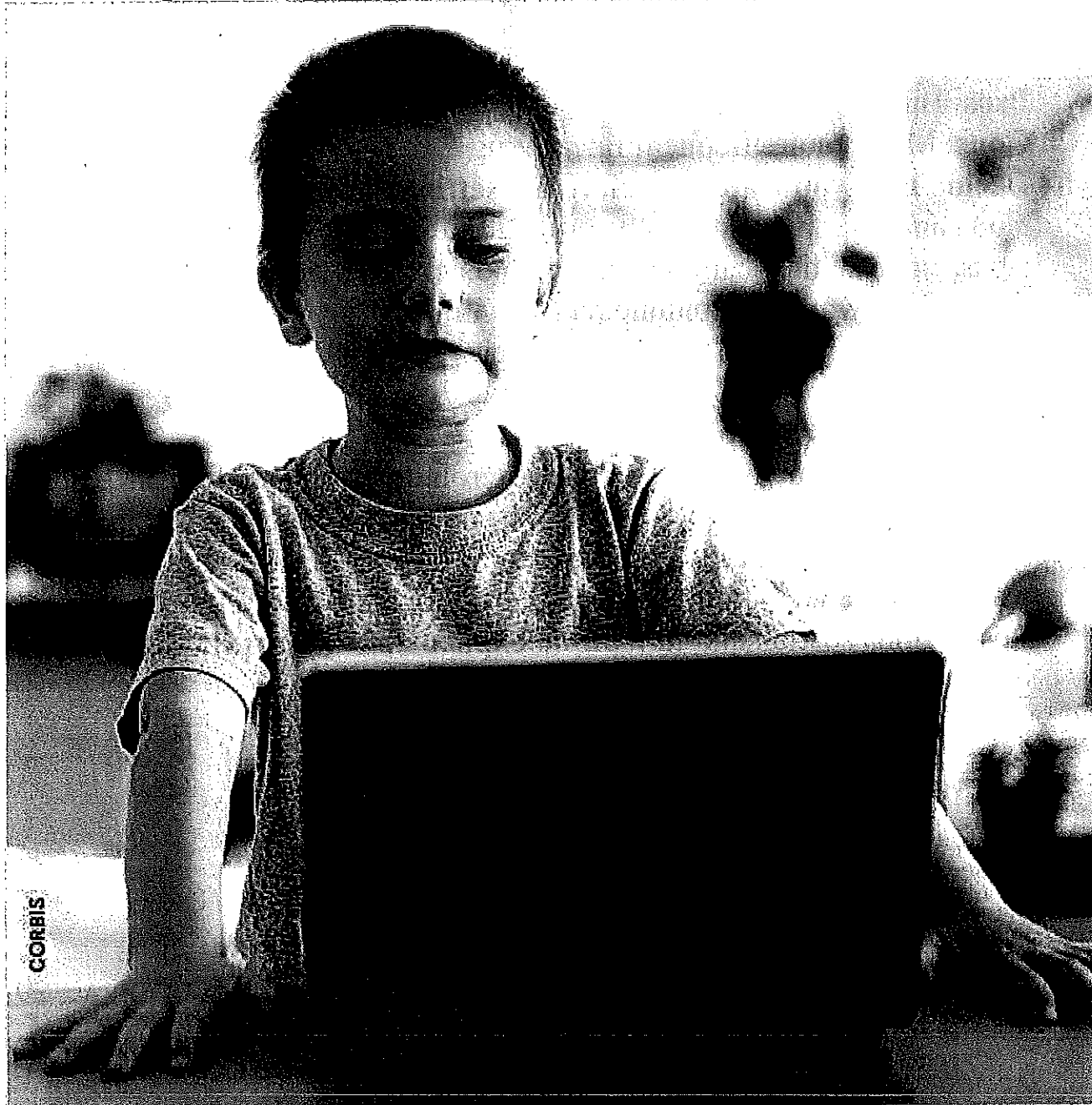
1. **Decide how you want to enable the settings**

You can either put restrictions on your kid's devices (and lock them with a pass code so they can't change them back; see Part 2 below). Or, you can manage your kid's phone remotely through Apple's Family Sharing feature, similar to other parental-control products (see step 3 below).

2. **On your kid's phone or tablet**

Open Settings on your kid's device. Scroll down and tap Screen Time. Select Content & Privacy Restrictions and then toggle that feature on. Go through each setting and determine what you'll allow and what you want to limit. To cut down on porn, drill down into the Content Restrictions section and turn off all explicit content for all media, including Web Content.

3. Pass code-protect the settings



What to do when your kids ask about online pornIn Settings/Screen Time, tap Use Screen Time Passcode. Type in a four-digit code that your kid doesn't know and won't guess. (If your kid has already created a pass code, you'll need the number to change it to something only you know.)

4. On your device

Open Settings, tap your name, scroll down, and tap on Family Sharing.

Follow the instructions for adding a family member. Once they're set up, you can control all of iOS's Screen Time features — including all Content & Privacy Restrictions — from your phone.

3. Ask your internet service provider (ISP)

Pros: Depending on your service, settings can apply to TV channels as well as the internet

Cons: Some cost money; controls can be confusing

1. Check the website or call your ISP

The folks you pay to bring you your internet connection may offer parental controls, content filters, or other screen-time-management features that will effectively limit exposure to porn. In the U.S., Xfinity, for example, offers parental controls, website blocking, and device limits through its customer portal and app. Verizon offers a program called Smart Family that provides parental controls for a monthly fee. Every company designs its own features differently, so figuring out how they work can take some effort.

4. Install parental controls

Pros: Provide a lot of control, including website blocking, screen limits, and even social media monitoring

Cons: May not work across all platforms (for example, PCs and Macs) or all devices (for example, phones on Wi-Fi and network-connected desktops); kids can get around them using a variety of easily searchable methods

1. Explore the offerings

A wide range of parental-control products means you'll need to do your research to find the one that really works best for you. This chart offers a good overview of available products and what they do.

2. Review the settings

Plenty of features—such as the ability to block specific websites, restrict certain domains (such as those from porn producers), and alert you to search terms kids might use, such as “sex”—give you a lot of options. Take advantage of free trials (from reputable companies) to get a sense

of whether the products address your specific needs, work with your existing devices, and feel manageable to you.

5. Go the hardware route

Pros: Can monitor every device on the network, including those that are Wi-Fi-enabled and network-connected

Cons: May lack advanced features such as ultrafast connections and download speeds; can include pricey subscriptions; don't cover kids' devices on other networks

1. Determine your existing setup

Internet routers—the devices that bring the internet into your home—are typically not user-friendly at all. In fact, many people simply use the one supplied by their ISP and don't worry about it unless its lights stop flashing. Your router may already have built-in filtering services you don't use because you haven't wanted to muck around in your network settings. Don't be intimidated. Open the network icon on your main computer to see whether it includes anything that looks like parental controls (filtering, blocking, etc.) in its software.

2. Check out the available products

New products that either replace or work with your existing network router, such as Circle with Disney and Torch, are popular with families because they offer appealing designs and easy-to-use software. If you're buying a new router, look for one that has advanced features *and* parental controls (here's a **good guide**). You'll want to buy the most state-of-the-art product within your budget to keep up with your family's growing needs. Streaming services, gaming, new phones, and tablets will all put demands on your router.

3. Determine which devices you want monitored

The big advantage of router-based solutions is that their settings can apply to all your devices, from the game console to the family PC to your kids' phones. You may not want to monitor your own devices—unless there's a chance your kids will use them. Remember, if your kid goes off your network, such as at a friend's house, it's not covered (although some products, such as Circle, offer mobile monitoring through an app you download on your kid's phone).