The 7 Best Parental Control Apps of 2022

Parental control apps aren't necessarily a "one size fits all" stop. Parents should find what fits their needs and abilities best. Here are some of the best options we have found to help you narrow down your search.

- **Most Comprehensive** (best for older kids): Bark

The bark app is, by far, the most proactive app of the ones we have chosen. It not only allows you to set the controls for content and screen time, but it monitors everything from texts, email, social media, and more for any harmful content. It sends real-time alerts when your child may be in danger- whether danger from a stranger online or if their activity suggests signs of depression or suicidal thoughts.

Unfortunately, Bark premium is the most expensive app at about $165 annually. There is a cheaper version for younger kids that does not offer some of the more important features. It also only works on mobile devices. However, if you have more than one child with a mobile device, you can add an unlimited number of child profiles and add however many devices you want. There is a free 7 day trial before officially signing up.

- **Budget Friendly:** Qustodio

Qustodio checks all the boxes for what caregivers might want in a parental control app: content and app filters, device monitoring, screen time control, location tracking, call and text monitoring, real-time alerts, and multiple device linking options. To put it simply, all your bases will be covered.

Compatible with many devices, Android, iOS, Windows, Mac, Chromebook, and Kindle, it can support up to 15 devices depending on the plan. This app is somewhat pricey but comes in under Bark, with plans ranging from $55-$138 annually.

- **Best for Budget:** Google Family Link

Google Family Link is our pick for a budget-friendly parental control app because it allows you to monitor limitless users and devices, and it's totally free to use.

Google Family Link is definitely minimalistic. It allows for activity monitoring, app management, screen time limits, and location tracking. It does not have the in-depth reporting, website blocking, and real-time monitoring. Once a child reaches 13, which Google considers "age of consent" control options become much more limited.

This app is best for families who have already laid the groundwork in navigating the internet and social media. It allows the kids more autonomy, which isn't a bad thing for kids to have once they have learned how to safely navigate the digital world.

- **Best for Younger Kids:** Canopy

  Canopy is an excellent option in general, but we love it for younger kids because it's great at filtering and blocking explicit and potentially harmful content (including photos they take themselves).

  Canopy doesn't have any of the text monitoring, but that's not usually what younger kids are doing on their devices. These plans range from $8 to $16 per month and can be used for up to 10 devices.

- **Best for Real-Time Monitoring:** NetNanny

  While summary reports about your child's internet browsing are helpful, NetNanny gives parents a bit more insight with several real-time options. As with most parental control apps, NetNanny allows parents to track their child's location in real time, but it doesn't stop there. Caregivers can set their parental control settings to alert them every time their child tries to access a blocked or restricted website, and they can customize what content falls into the "blocked" or "restricted" categories. Additionally, NetNanny comes with an in-app family feed that parents can look at in real time to get updates on what their kids are doing online. There are plenty of other useful controls, too, including internet filters, screen time management, app blocking, and digital well-being reports. While you can't use the app to monitor your child's calls or texts, NetNanny's filter does work well with social media sites (including TikTok) and YouTube.

  This app pairs with devices with Android or iOS operating systems, Macs, Windows, and Kindle Fire. NetNanny's pricing structure is based on a number of devices: The first tier is $39.99 annually and covers one desktop; the second covers five devices (PC, Mac, and Mobile) for $54.99 annually; and the top tier covers 20 devices (PC, tablet, and mobile) for $89.99 a year.

- **Best for Time Monitoring:** FamilyTime

  If you're looking for a parental control app that will help you manage your child's screen time, you can't go wrong with FamilyTime. Parents can use the app to do everything from setting screen time limits to creating internet time blocks to "pausing" (freezing) their child's phone remotely.
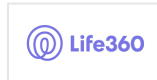
  We particularly love how the app encourages kids to sign off early to save up and bank some of their minutes to use at a later time as "fun time" (which parents also have full control over). The

app works with devices with Android or iOS operating systems, and you can link up to five devices to an account.

As great as all of the time management features are on their own, the app does offer additional features. You can block apps, create website and internet filters, and set up alerts for when certain people contact your child. There's also an SOS/Panic button that kids can push that will alert their caregiver when they think they're in danger, and parents will know where to find them thanks to location tracking. Finally, if you have a teen who drives, this app also lets you monitor their speed and will alert you any time they drive faster than a speed limit you set.

- **Best for Location Tracking:** Life360

Life360 is by far the best app for parents most concerned with tracking their child's whereabouts. While it doesn't offer any internet, call, text, or app monitoring, it keeps track of your child's location, gives you alerts when they reach a specific location, and keeps an eye on your teen's driving (and helps keep them safe in the event of a crash).

There are three membership options: Free, Gold for $14.99 per month, and Platinum for $24.99 per month. Each membership tier has special features, and you get a little more with each step. Features include up to 30 days of location history, location/place alerts, SOS alerts, family and individual driver reports, roadside assistance, emergency dispatch, towing, crime reports, digital safety protection (such as identity theft), travel support, stolen phone protection, and more.

Regardless of the plan, though, you can add an unlimited number of family members to your circle. Simply download the app to your kid's device, and you can start tracking them.