



BACK-TO-SCHOOL DIGITAL SAFETY SETUP

Parenting Guide for the Digital World

When a child receives a phone, they're not just getting access to the internet — the internet is getting access to them. So the question becomes: **at what age do you want the world to have access to your child?**

SEVEN STEPS BEFORE YOU HAND OVER A DEVICE

01 WAIT AS LONG AS YOU CAN

The most protective choice available to you is to wait. Every year you delay is another year of maturity before your child is handed a device built to hold their attention and open a door to the entire internet — and everyone on it. There's no prize for being early.

02 TAKE STOCK AND CUT THE APPS

The assumption that Snapchat and Instagram are the only "dangerous" apps could not be further from the truth. ANY app with a chat feature — text or audio — can be weaponized for extortion, even ones that look harmless. Have your child show you every app they use, check its features before downloading, and keep only the ones they truly need. Fewer apps means fewer open doors.

03 GET ON THE APPS WITH THEM

For every platform your child keeps, make your own account and connect with them there: follow, friend, add. You don't have to hover — just being present is one of the simplest deterrents there is.

04 TURN ON PARENTAL CONTROLS

Both iPhone (Screen Time) and Android (Family Link) let you approve new app downloads, set quiet hours, and filter content.

05 STRENGTHEN THE BASICS

Set strong, unique passwords and turn on two-factor authentication for their main accounts and email.

06 ADD A SAFETY SERVICE

Two kinds are worth researching: AI monitoring services that scan across your child apps and alert you only when something concerning shows up, and network-level filtering services (including faith-based options) that block harmful content before it ever reaches the phone.

07 PRIORITIZE THE RELATIONSHIP

Controls slow attackers down, but your relationship is what actually protects your child. Have the conversations that make an honest, open relationship possible. Predators feed on shame and secrecy — you can take both away with one tough conversation.

IF YOUR CHILD IS EVER TARGETED

- 01 **It's not their fault.** Even if they sent the image, the moment someone threatens or coerces them, they're the victim of a crime.
- 02 **Don't pay and don't send more.** Complying rarely stops the threats; it usually invites more.
- 03 **Stop responding — but don't block or delete.** Blocking feels like the fastest way out, but it costs you the evidence needed to build a case and get the images removed.
- 04 **Save everything.** Screenshot the account, username, messages, and any payment requests.
- 05 **Report it** using the resources below.

WHERE TO REPORT

REMOVE IMAGES

Take It Down — [Takeltdown.ncmec.org](https://takeltdown.ncmec.org)

REPORT EXPLOITATION

NCMEC CyberTipline — CyberTipline.org / 1-800-843-5678

REPORT THE CRIME

FBI — tips.fbi.gov

LOCAL POLICE

Contact your local police department.



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