BILL'S HOME TECH
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BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Google Family Link

Kids' Google accounts on Android phones and Chromebooks — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for parents and grandparents

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For Family Link on Android, Chromebook & iPhone (parents) · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to Google Family Link, Google's free tool for looking after a child's Google account on an Android phone, tablet or Chromebook. Read it in any order and at your own pace — there is no test, and you can't fall behind. Every setting comes with what it actually does *for you*, and slow, step-by-step directions. Google changes its menus from time to time, so when a button has moved, look for the same words nearby.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What Family Link is, what it can and can't do, what you need before you begin, and the handful of words you'll see in the app. Start here.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If a child or grandchild in your life has an Android phone, an Android tablet or a Chromebook — or is about to get one — you've probably heard the name **Google Family Link**. It's Google's free tool for giving a young person their own Google account while a parent keeps a gentle hand on the wheel: approving apps, setting a bedtime for the screen, and seeing where the phone is.

I'm Bill. I've spent more than 30 years working with technology, and these days I help families here in Portage County feel at home with theirs. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: patiently, in plain English, and without trying to sell you anything.

What this guide will do for you

- Explain, in plain words, what Family Link controls — and what it doesn't.
- Walk you through creating a child's account, signing in on an Android phone or a Chromebook, and supervising a teenager's existing account.
- Show you app approvals, Google Play ratings, daily limits, Downtime and School time.
- Cover Chrome, YouTube, contacts and location.
- Explain the difference between the **family manager** and a **parent**, and how a grandparent can help.
- Tell you what happens when a child turns 13 (the age varies by country), how to unlock a device when your phone isn't handy, and how to fix the common problems.

The big promise: you can't break anything

Almost every setting in Family Link can be changed back with a tap. If a limit is too strict, you loosen it. If you block the wrong app, you unblock it. The worst that usually happens is a phone locks a little early — and the child will certainly let you know.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Family Link lets a child have their own phone or Chromebook while you keep the important decisions: which apps come in, how late the screen stays on, and whether you can find the phone. That means fewer arguments and more peace of mind.

GOOD TO KNOW

Tools, not a substitute for talking

No setting is perfect, and a determined teenager can sometimes find a way around one. The families who get the most from Family Link use it alongside plain conversation about what's okay online.

And I'm only a phone call away

If anything here leaves you unsure, call me at **(330) 200-8042**. There's no such thing as a silly question.

Let's start with what Family Link actually is.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What Family Link Is (and Isn't)

Family Link is two things working together: a **supervised Google account** for the child, and the **Family Link app** on the parent's phone. The rules live on the child's account, so they follow the child onto every Android device or Chromebook they sign in to.

What Family Link can do

- **Approve apps** before they're downloaded from Google Play, and approve purchases.
- **Filter Google Play** by age rating.
- **Set screen time**: a daily limit, a Downtime schedule for bedtime, and School time for school hours.
- **Limit or block single apps.**
- **Filter websites in Chrome**, and choose a YouTube experience that fits the child's age.
- **Choose who the child can call and text** on supported phones.
- **See the device's location** and get alerts when the child arrives at or leaves a place.
- **Lock the device** remotely, and unlock it with a code when your phone isn't with you.

What Family Link can't do

- It can't supervise an **iPhone or iPad**. A parent can use the Family Link app *on* an iPhone, but a child's iPhone needs Apple's own Screen Time instead.
- It doesn't read your child's messages or emails.
- It can't filter every app. Chrome's filter covers Chrome; other apps have their own settings.
- It can't see a device that's switched off or has no internet connection.

GOOD TO KNOW

Now also inside Android's own Settings

Google has been building **Parental controls** straight into Android's Settings app — first on Pixel phones, and since mid-2026 on every phone that updates to Android 17. It's the same family of tools, with a direct path to set up Family Link. Chapter 17 explains how the two fit together.

TIP

Two layers work best

Family Link controls the device wherever it goes. Rules on your home Wi-Fi router cover every device in the house, including TVs and game consoles. Our separate guide to Wi-Fi parental controls covers the router side.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the limits up front saves frustration. You'll know when Family Link is the right tool, and when you need something else.

CHAPTER 3

What You Need Before You Start

Getting these few things together first makes setup go smoothly. It usually takes about half an hour, with the child's device in one hand and your phone in the other.

For the parent

- Your own **Google account** (a Gmail address works). You must be **18 or older** and live in the same country as the child.
- A phone with the free **Google Family Link** app: an Android phone, or an iPhone. Google's help pages list the minimum versions; any phone updated in the last few years is fine.
- Your Google password, handy. You'll type it several times.

For the child

- An **Android phone or tablet**, a **Chromebook**, or a compatible Fitbit kids' watch. Screen time limits need Android 7 or later.
- Either a brand-new Google account made for them (Chapter 7) or, for a teen, their existing account (Chapter 9).
- A charged battery and a Wi-Fi connection.

HEADS UP

Not for iPhones

If the child has an iPhone or iPad, Family Link can't set limits on it. Use Apple's Screen Time and Family Sharing instead — we have a separate guide for that.

TIP

Write down the child's password

When you create a child's account, write the email address and password somewhere safe at home. You'll need them for every new device, and children forget.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Ten minutes of gathering saves an hour of hunting for passwords halfway through setup.

CHAPTER 4

The Words You'll See

Family Link uses a handful of words over and over. Here they are in plain English. Come back here whenever one puzzles you.

Word	What it means
Supervised account	A child's or teen's Google account that a parent manages with Family Link.
Family group	Up to six people linked together on Google. The child, the parents, and sometimes other relatives are all members.
Family manager	The adult who created the family group. Only the manager can add or remove members or add a second parent.
Parent	An adult in the family group with parent privileges. A parent can manage the child's settings almost as fully as the manager.
Parent access code	A short code from your Family Link app that unlocks the child's device or approves a change in person. It changes every few minutes.
Daily limit	How much screen time the device allows each day.
Downtime	A nightly lock-out, like a bedtime for the screen.
School time	A schedule that keeps the phone or watch quiet during school hours.
Bonus time	Extra screen time you give for today only.
App limit	A time limit on a single app, or blocking it altogether.
Find Hub	Google's service for finding a lost Android device. It used to be called Find My Device.

GOOD TO KNOW

Same idea as Apple's Screen Time

If you've used an iPhone's Screen Time, Downtime and App Limits will feel familiar. Family Link is the Android and Chromebook counterpart.

PART 2

Setting Up Your Family

The family group, who's in charge, how grandparents fit in, and getting a child signed in on an Android phone, a Chromebook, or a teen's existing account.

CHAPTER 5

Your Family Group: Family Manager vs. Parent

Every supervised child belongs to a Google **family group**. A family group can hold up to **six people**. Two adult roles matter, and they're easy to mix up.

	Family manager	Parent
Who	The adult who created the family group	Any adult 18+ in the group given parent privileges
Manage a child's Family Link settings	Yes	Yes
Add or remove family members	Yes	No
Add or remove a second parent	Yes	No
Delete the family group	Yes	No
Step down	Only by deleting the group	Can remove their own parent privileges

Adding a second parent

Only the family manager can do this, and the person must already be in the family group.

1. Invite the adult to the family group first, and wait for them to accept the email invitation.
2. In the Family Link app, open the menu and look for **Manage family** (on the web, go to **families.google.com** and choose **Manage family members**).
3. Choose **Manage parent privileges**.
4. Pick the person and tap **Confirm**. Google sends an email to let everyone know.

TIP

Two parents are better than one

If both parents have parent privileges, either one can approve an app or unlock a phone. It also means the child isn't stuck if one parent's phone is lost.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing who holds which role saves confusion later — especially when someone tries to add a grandparent and wonders why the button is missing.

CHAPTER 6

Grandparents in the Family Group

Grandparents often look after grandchildren after school, on weekends or for a summer week. There are a few ways to help, and the simplest is often the best.

Option 1: No account changes at all

The parent keeps everything. When the child needs an unlock or more time, the grandparent calls the parent, who can approve it from anywhere, or read a **parent access code** over the phone (Chapter 24). Nothing to set up.

Option 2: Join the family group as a parent

If the grandparent is in charge often, the family manager can invite them to the family group and give them **parent privileges** (Chapter 5). The grandparent then installs Family Link on their own phone and can approve apps, give bonus time and unlock the device themselves.

HEADS UP

You can only be in one family group

A Google account belongs to one family group at a time, and you can only switch groups once in 12 months. If a grandparent already has their *own* family group — sharing a Google One storage plan with a spouse, for example — joining the grandchild's group means leaving theirs. Think it through first.

TIP

A good middle ground

Many families find Option 1 is enough. Put the parent's number in the grandparent's phone favorites, and write down how to get a parent access code.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Grandparents can say yes to a homework app or a few extra minutes without a tug-of-war — and without taking over the parent's role.

CHAPTER 7

Creating a Google Account for a Child Under 13

In the United States, children under 13 need a parent's permission to have a Google account. The age differs in some other countries. When a parent creates the account, it's supervised from day one.

The easiest way: from the parent's phone

1. Open the **Family Link** app on your phone and sign in with your own Google account.
2. Tap to add a child, and choose to create a new Google account for them.
3. Enter the child's name, birthday and gender, then choose their Gmail address and a password.
4. Read Google's parental disclosure and give consent. Google may ask you to confirm with your password or a small card verification.
5. Follow the prompts to choose starting settings. You can change any of them later.

GOOD TO KNOW

Or during the new phone's setup

You can also create the account on the child's new Android phone as you set it up. When it asks for a Google account, choose to create one, enter the child's real birthday, and it will hand over to the parent to sign in and approve.

HEADS UP

Use the real birthday

The birthday decides which features the child gets and when supervision can end. A made-up birthday causes trouble later.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your child gets their own Gmail, Google Drive and Google Play — and you get a say in how they're used, from the very first day.

CHAPTER 8

Signing a Child In on an Android Phone or Tablet

Once the child has an account, sign it in on their Android device. If the device is brand new, do it during setup. If it's a hand-me-down, a fresh start is often cleanest.

Steps

1. On the child's device, start setup (or go to **Settings** and add an account).
2. Sign in with the **child's** Google email and password.
3. When asked, sign in with the **parent's** Google account to approve supervision.
4. Choose which apps the child can keep, then review the starting settings.
5. On your own phone, open Family Link. The child and device should appear.

HEADS UP

One child account per device works best

If other adult accounts are also on the device, the child may be asked to remove them. Plan for the child's account to be the main one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Samsung Galaxy phones and tablets

Galaxy devices use the same Google Family Link. Samsung's own Kids mode is a separate thing; you don't need it to use Family Link.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Once signed in, every rule you set from your own phone reaches the child's device in moments — no need to borrow it back each time.

CHAPTER 9

Supervising a Teen's Existing Account

Teens who already have a Google account can have supervision *added* to it. Unlike a young child's account, this needs the teen's agreement: both of you take part.

How it works

1. Talk first. Agree on why you're doing it and what you'll each be able to see.
2. On the teen's Android device or in the Family Link app, start **adding supervision** to their existing account.
3. The teen signs in and agrees; the parent signs in and approves.
4. Choose settings together.

If the teen wants to stop

- Google's current help says a teen under 18 needs a parent's approval to stop supervision.
- Where a teen can still turn off added supervision without a parent, Google tells the parent and **locks the supervised Android devices for 24 hours**. On a Pixel phone the lock can last until a parent unlocks it.
- If the parent turns supervision off from their own Family Link app, the teen's device isn't locked.
- Rules can differ in some countries.

TIP

Explain what you can't see

Teens often worry that a parent can read everything. You can't read their messages through Family Link. Saying so plainly often makes them more willing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A teen keeps their account, photos and contacts, while you keep a light touch on the big things.

CHAPTER 10

Setting Up a Chromebook for a Child

Chromebooks work with Family Link too. The child signs in with their own supervised Google account, and the same limits and Chrome filters apply.

Steps

1. Make sure the Chromebook is up to date (Google lists ChromeOS 71 or later; anything recent is fine).
2. On the sign-in screen, choose **Add person**.
3. Sign in with the child's Google email and password.
4. When asked, sign in as the parent to approve.
5. In your Family Link app, the Chromebook appears under the child's devices.

Adding the school account the right way

Many schools give children a school Google account. To keep Family Link's rules working, add the school account *inside* the child's own Chromebook profile: open **Settings** > **People**, choose the child's account, and add a school account there. A parent approves it. This needs ChromeOS 89 or later.

HEADS UP

Don't add school as a separate person

If you add the school account as a new person on the Chromebook's sign-in screen, Family Link's parental controls **won't apply** to that sign-in. School-issued Chromebooks follow the school's rules, not yours.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Homework on Google Classroom works, and your screen time and website rules still apply.

PART 3

Apps & Google Play

Saying yes or no before an app is downloaded, filtering Google Play by age, and limiting or blocking a single app.

CHAPTER 11

App Approvals & Purchase Approvals

With approvals turned on, when your child taps **Install** or **Buy** in Google Play, a request comes to your phone instead. You read what the app is, then tap approve or deny.

Choosing what needs your approval

1. Open the **Family Link** app and select your child.
2. Tap **Controls**, then **Google Play**.
3. Tap **Purchases & download approvals**.
4. Tap **Require approval for** and choose one: **All content** (every free and paid download), **Paid content only**, **In-app purchases only**, or **No approval required**.

Setting	Good for
All content	Younger children. You see every app before it arrives.
Paid content only	Older children you trust with free apps, but not your card.
In-app purchases only	Teens. Stops surprise spending inside games.

GOOD TO KNOW

Only Google Play payments

Approvals cover purchases made through Google Play's own billing. A game or website that takes a card number directly isn't covered, so never save your card inside a child's apps. Updates and apps you already approved don't need a new approval.

Answering a request

1. A notification appears on your phone: "[Child] wants to install …"
2. Tap it to see the app's name, rating and price.
3. If you're not sure, look the app up first, or ask your child what it's for.
4. Tap **Approve** or **Deny**.

SCAM ALERT

"Free" games that ask for gift cards

Some games and chat contacts tell children to buy Google Play gift cards for "free coins" or to "unlock" a prize. Real games never need a parent to buy gift cards and read out the code. Tell your children: anyone asking for a gift card code is a scammer.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No surprise apps, and no surprise charges on your card. You get to see every new app before it arrives.

CHAPTER 12

Google Play Age Ratings

Google Play rates apps, games, movies and books by age. You can tell Google Play to hide anything rated above a level you choose.

Setting the ratings

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Controls** > **Google Play**.
3. Under content restrictions, choose **Apps & games** and pick the highest rating allowed.
4. Do the same for **Movies**, **Books** and other types if they appear.

HEADS UP

Ratings aren't perfect

Google warns that restricted content can still show up in search results or open from a direct link. Approvals (Chapter 11) are the stronger safeguard for young children.

TIP

Start stricter, loosen later

It's easier to raise the rating as a child grows than to take something away. Many families revisit the setting each birthday.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Grown-up games and movies simply don't appear, so there are fewer requests to say no to.

CHAPTER 13

Limiting or Blocking a Single App

Sometimes one app is the problem — a game that eats the evening, or a video app. You can give that one app its own time limit, block it, or let it run without counting against the daily limit.

Steps

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Controls** > **App limits**.
3. Pick the app.
4. Choose **Set limit** (a time per day), **Block**, or **Always allow**.

Choice	What happens
Set limit	The app works for that many minutes a day, then stops. The overall daily limit still applies too.
Block	The app won't open at all. It may take about five minutes to reach the device.
Always allow	The app doesn't count toward the daily limit. Good for a reading app, a calculator or a music lesson app.

TIP

Calls still work

Even when the phone is locked by a limit, a child can still answer calls and make emergency calls.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You can rein in one troublesome app without taking away the whole phone.

PART 4

Screen Time

A daily limit, a bedtime for the screen, quiet hours at school, and Android's own built-in parental controls.

CHAPTER 14

Daily Screen Time Limits

A daily limit is the total time the device can be used each day. When it runs out, the device locks, though calls still work. You can set a different amount for each day of the week.

Setting a daily limit

1. Open **Family Link** and select your child.
2. Tap **Screen time** (on some versions, **Controls** > **Screen time**).
3. Choose **Time limits**, then **Daily limit**.
4. Turn it on and set the time for each day of the week — perhaps less on school days, more on weekends.
5. Save.

GOOD TO KNOW

Each device counts separately

If your child has both a phone and a tablet, the daily limit applies to each device on its own, not shared between them.

Giving a little extra: Bonus time

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Find the **Screen time** section.
3. Tap **Bonus time** below the device's name.
4. Choose how much extra time to give for today, and confirm.

TIP

Bonus time is for today only

Tomorrow the normal limit comes back on its own. You don't have to remember to change anything.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The clock does the reminding, so you don't have to — and children tend to argue less with a timer than with a parent.

CHAPTER 15

Downtime: A Bedtime for the Screen

Downtime locks the device for a stretch of time each day, usually overnight. It's one of the most useful Family Link settings, and it helps everyone sleep.

Setting Downtime

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Screen time**, then **Schedules**.
3. Choose **Downtime** and turn it on.
4. Set the start and end times for each day — for example, 8:30 p.m. to 7 a.m. on school nights.
5. If asked, sign in or enter your parent access code to confirm it's you.

TIP

Let a few apps through

Depending on the app version, you may be able to let chosen apps through during Downtime — an alarm clock, for example. Look for an option to allow apps in the schedule.

GOOD TO KNOW

Emergency calls always work

A locked device can still answer calls and make emergency calls. Downtime never cuts a child off from 911.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No more nightly "five more minutes." The phone goes quiet on its own at bedtime.

CHAPTER 16

School Time

School time quiets the phone or watch during class hours, so it's there for emergencies but not for games. It works on Android 7 and later and on some kids' watches.

Turning on School time

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Screen time** > **Schedules**.
3. Turn on **School time**.
4. Set the hours for each school day.
5. Choose which apps stay available, if any, using **Unlimited apps**. A calculator or a school app might make sense.

Days off and early dismissals

On a snow day or a field trip, open your child's School time in Family Link and tap **Change for today**. Turn off the start and end times to skip School time for just that day; the regular schedule returns tomorrow.

TIP

Check the school's own rules

Many schools have their own phone policy. School time pairs nicely with it: the phone stays in the backpack and quiet.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your child can reach you in an emergency, without the phone competing with the teacher.

CHAPTER 17

Android's Built-In Parental Controls

Google has been building parental controls into Android's own Settings app. It started on Pixel phones, and in June 2026 Google announced it for every phone that updates to **Android 17**. You set these up right on the child's device, protected by a PIN.

What's in it

- A daily screen time limit, and a Downtime schedule that locks the device at night.
- Google Play rating filters.
- Blocking an app or limiting its time.
- Extra time when it's needed.
- A direct path to set up Family Link on the parent's phone.

Finding it

Menu names differ by phone maker. Open **Settings** and type **Parental controls** into the search bar at the top. Depending on your phone, it may sit under **Google** or under **Digital Wellbeing & parental controls**.

HEADS UP

Choose a PIN you'll remember

The controls are locked with a PIN of at least four digits. Add a recovery account when asked, in case you forget it — and don't use a birthday the child knows.

Settings or Family Link?

	Built-in controls	Family Link app
Set from	The child's device	The parent's own phone, anywhere
Daily limit, Downtime, app limits	Yes	Yes
School time	Use Family Link	Yes
Play purchase approvals	Use Family Link	Yes
Location alerts	Use Family Link	Yes

GOOD TO KNOW

You can use both

Google says you can move between the built-in controls and Family Link. Many families start in Settings and add Family Link when they want to approve apps or see location.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

On a newer phone, the basic rules are already built in — no extra app needed to get started.

PART 5

Websites, YouTube & Contacts

Filtering grown-up websites in Chrome, picking the right YouTube for your child's age, and choosing who can call and text them.

CHAPTER 18

Chrome & Website Filters

When your child signs in to Chrome on their Android device or Chromebook with their supervised account, Family Link's website rules come along.

Choosing a filter

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Controls** and look for **Google Chrome** (or **Content restrictions** > **Google Chrome**).
3. Pick one: **Allow all sites**, **Try to block explicit sites**, or **Only allow certain sites**.
4. Under **Manage sites**, add any sites you want always **approved** or always **blocked**.

Setting	Good for
Only allow certain sites	Young children. You build a short list of safe sites.
Try to block explicit sites	Most children. Google tries to hide sexually explicit sites.
Allow all sites	Older teens, with your own blocked list if needed.

GOOD TO KNOW

Labels may differ a little

Depending on the app version, the middle choice may read "Try to block mature sites" or "Try to block explicit sites." They mean the same thing.

When your child asks for a blocked site

If your child reaches a blocked page, they can ask you for permission. You get a notification in Family Link and can approve or deny it.

HEADS UP

No filter is perfect

Google says so itself. Filters catch the accidental click, not every bad page. Other browsers and apps aren't covered by Chrome's filter, so check app approvals too (Chapter 11).

TIP

Exact labels may vary

Google adjusts these menu names now and then. If a label doesn't match, look for the words **Chrome** or **sites** in your child's controls.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The mistyped address or bad search result — which is how young children often stumble onto things — gets caught before it opens.

CHAPTER 19

YouTube & YouTube Kids

YouTube is where children spend much of their screen time, so it's worth choosing the right version. There are two main choices for a supervised child under 13 (or the age in your country).

Option 1: YouTube Kids

A separate app with a simpler look, made for younger children. You can choose content by age group or approve videos yourself.

Option 2: A supervised YouTube experience

The regular YouTube app, with three content levels a parent chooses:

Level	What it covers
Explore	Videos generally suitable for younger viewers, roughly 9 and up.
Explore more	Videos generally suitable for viewers 13 and up.
Most of YouTube	Almost everything, except videos marked as 18 and up.

Setting it

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Controls** > **YouTube**.
3. Choose YouTube Kids or a supervised experience, and pick the content level.
4. You can also pause watch or search history from here.

HEADS UP

Filters still miss things

No setting catches every unsuitable video. For younger children, watch together sometimes and keep the tablet in a shared room.

TIP

Screen time still counts

YouTube counts toward the daily limit like any app. An app limit just for YouTube (Chapter 13) is a good choice.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Your child gets videos that fit their age, without you having to block YouTube entirely.

CHAPTER 20

Contacts, Calls & Texts

On supported Android phones and kids' watches, Family Link can decide who your child can call and text. It's especially helpful for a first phone.

Adding contacts and setting the rule

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Controls** and look for the **contacts** setting (called **Contacts, calls & texts** on many versions).
3. Add the people your child may talk to — parents, grandparents, a few friends. You can add up to 100 contacts.
4. Choose who your child can call and text. With **Only contacts I add**, anyone else is blocked.

When your child wants to add a friend

With **Only contacts I add**, your child can send you a request to add a new number. You get a notification to approve or deny it.

HEADS UP

Only certain apps are covered

The contact rule covers the phone's regular calling and texting. Apps like WhatsApp aren't covered, so your child could still talk to people outside the list there. Use app approvals (Chapter 11) to decide about those. Also, anyone can still leave a voicemail.

TIP

Add grandparents first

Put both sets of grandparents and a trusted neighbor on the list on day one, so the child always has someone to call.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Strangers can't call or text your child out of the blue, and you see every new friend before they're added.

PART 6

Location & Finding Devices

Seeing where your child's phone is, getting a note when they arrive at school or home, and finding a lost device.

CHAPTER 21

Seeing Where Your Child Is

Family Link can show the location of your child's Android phone on a map in your app. It's off until you turn it on.

Turning on location

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Tap **Location**, then **Set up location**.
3. Tap **Next**, then **Turn on**.
4. On the child's phone, make sure **Location** is on in Settings.

Arrival and departure alerts

You can get a notification when your child arrives at or leaves a place you save, such as home or school.

1. First, make sure **Location Accuracy** (or **High accuracy**) is turned on for the child's phone. Alerts switch off when it's off.
2. In **Family Link**, select your child and tap **Location** > **Family places**.
3. Add a place — home, school, a grandparent's house — or pick one you've saved.
4. Turn **Arrives** and **Leaves** on or off.

When the location won't show

- The phone is switched off, has no internet, or hasn't been used recently.
- If the child is signed in on more than one device, only the most actively used one shows.
- Location is turned off on the child's phone.

> **TIP**
>
> **A little more battery**
>
> Arrival and departure alerts use a bit more of the child's battery. A charger in the backpack helps.

HEADS UP

Talk about it

Older children deserve to know their location is shared. Tell them plainly, and explain it's for safety, not snooping.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A quiet buzz that says "arrived at school" saves a worried text — and it works without the child having to remember to check in.

CHAPTER 22

Find Hub & a Lost Device

Find Hub is Google's service for finding lost Android phones, tablets and more. It used to be called Find My Device, and you'll still see the old name in some places.

From Family Link

1. In **Family Link**, select your child.
2. Find the device in the child's list of devices.
3. Look for the option to make it **ring** or to see it on a map.

From Find Hub

Open the Find Hub app on an Android phone, or go to **google.com/android/find** in a web browser. Devices belonging to children you supervise may appear there too, as long as their location and Find Hub are turned on and the device has a screen lock.

GOOD TO KNOW

Offline phones

If the phone is off or out of signal, you may only see where it was last. Check again later — it updates when the phone reconnects.

STAY SAFE

If a phone is stolen

Don't go after it yourself. Call the police, and use Find Hub to lock or erase it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A lost phone under the couch cushions rings even if it's on silent — and a lost one at the park can often be spotted on a map.

PART 7

Growing Up & Fixing Problems

What changes when a child turns 13, how to unlock a device when your phone isn't handy, and the common problems families run into.

CHAPTER 23

What Happens at 13 (or the Age in Your Country)

In the United States, 13 is the age when a child can choose to manage their own Google account. In some other countries the age is different. Supervision doesn't simply switch off on the birthday.

What to expect

1. Shortly before the birthday, both the child and the family manager get an email from Google.
2. The child can choose to **keep supervision** as it is, or to **manage their own account**.
3. A child under 18 who wants to stop supervision needs a parent's approval.
4. If supervision ends, the account stays — Gmail, photos, contacts and all. Only the parental controls go away.

TIP

Plan the conversation ahead

Talk about it a few weeks before the birthday. Some families keep only Downtime and location for a while, and loosen the rest. A gradual change often goes more smoothly than all at once.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some things change with age

Some YouTube and Google features are only for children 13 and older. A supervised teen can still keep those features while you keep a few rules.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

No surprise on the birthday. You and your child decide together how much independence comes next.

CHAPTER 24

Unlock Codes When Your Phone Isn't Handy

Sometimes the child's device locks — Downtime started, the daily limit ran out, or it needs a parent to approve a change — and you're not next to it. Family Link has two ways to unlock it.

1. From your own phone, anywhere

If the child's device is online, you can give bonus time, change the schedule or unlock it from your Family Link app, wherever you are.

2. A parent access code

A parent access code is a short code that proves a parent is approving. It works even if the child's device has no internet connection.

1. On your phone, open **Family Link**.
2. Look for **Parent access code**. Depending on the app version, it's under your child's profile or in the menu.
3. Read the code to the person with the child's device — over the phone works fine.
4. They type it on the child's device where it asks for a parent.

GOOD TO KNOW

No phone at all?

You can also get the code on the web by signing in at **families.google.com** with your parent account. Google never sends the code by email or text message.

HEADS UP

Codes change every few minutes

Use the code straight away. If it's rejected, get a fresh one, and check that the clock on the child's device is set correctly — a wrong clock is a common reason codes fail.

TIP

For grandparents

If you're babysitting and the tablet locks, call the parent and ask them to read you the parent access code. It takes a minute and needs no setup.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A locked tablet at Grandma's house is a one-minute phone call, not an evening of tears.

CHAPTER 25

Common Problems & Fixes

Here are the problems families run into most, and what to try, in order.

The child's device is locked and the code won't work

- Get a fresh code — they change every few minutes.
- Check the date and time on the child's device.
- Make sure you're signed in to Family Link with the right Google account.
- Update the Family Link app, or unlock with the parent's Google password instead.

A limit or schedule stopped working

- Check the child's device is online — changes need the internet to arrive.
- Check the device's time zone.
- Check whether the app is set to **Always allow** or is on the Unlimited apps list.
- Restart the child's device.

Location isn't showing

See Chapter 21: the phone may be off, offline, unused lately, or have Location turned off.

A request never arrived on my phone

- Check that notifications are turned on for the Family Link app on your phone.
- Open the app and look at the child's page — requests often wait there.

Removing a child's account from a device

1. On the child's device, open **Settings** and find the **Accounts** section (the name varies by phone maker and Android version).
2. Choose the child's account and tap **Remove account**.
3. When asked, sign in as the parent. If the device is offline, use a parent access code from your Family Link app.

HEADS UP

Remove before you delete

If you delete a child's Google account before removing it from a device, that device may lock and need a factory reset. Always remove the account from the device first.

SCAM ALERT

"Family Link bypass" apps and videos

Websites and videos promising to "remove Family Link without a parent" often push harmful apps or fake tools. Never install one on a child's device, and talk to your teen if you find one.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most Family Link problems come down to one of a handful of causes. Working down the list usually fixes it in minutes.

PART 8

Staying Safe, Getting Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

The scams that borrow Google's name, an honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary of the whole guide.

CHAPTER 26

Scams & Safety Around Family Link

Parents and grandparents who look after children's accounts are a favorite target for scammers. Here are the tricks that show up around Family Link and Google accounts, and how to spot them.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "Google support" phone numbers

Searching for "Family Link help" can turn up ads for support lines that aren't Google. They may ask to take control of your computer or charge you for a "fix." Use the help pages inside the Family Link app, or go to support.google.com yourself. Google doesn't call you out of the blue.

SCAM ALERT

"Your child's account will be deleted" emails

An email or text warns that your child's Google account is about to be closed and asks you to click a link and sign in. Don't click. Open the Family Link app yourself; if something really needs your attention, it will show there.

SCAM ALERT

Someone asks for a parent access code

A parent access code unlocks your child's device. Only give it to the family member who is with the child right now. Google never asks you to read a code to a caller, and a stranger online who asks a child to "get the code from Mom" is up to no good.

SCAM ALERT

Gift card requests in games and chats

Anyone — a "friend" in a game, a pop-up, a caller — who asks for Google Play gift card codes is a scammer. Real companies never ask to be paid in gift cards.

Keep your own account locked tight

Your Family Link controls are only as safe as your own Google account. If someone gets into it, they can change the child's rules too.

- Use a strong password that you don't use anywhere else.
- Turn on **2-Step Verification** or a passkey for your Google account. Our separate guide to your Google account walks through it.
- Don't let children watch you type your Google password, and don't save it on their device.
- If you think a child has learned your password, change it.

Using supervision the right way

Family Link is made for parents and guardians looking after their own children. Be open with children about what's turned on, especially location. Using monitoring tools secretly on another adult's phone is a serious invasion of privacy and may be against the law.

STAY SAFE

If a child may be in danger

If your child tells you about a stranger pressuring them, or you see threatening messages, keep the messages, don't confront the other person, and call 911 if the child is at risk.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A few simple habits — use the official app, guard your password, never read a code to a stranger — keep the controls in your hands, where they belong.

CHAPTER 27

When to Call Bill

Most of what's in this guide you can do yourself, at your own pace. But part of being helpful is being honest about when a hand saves you time and worry. Here's my straight advice, with no pressure.

Times it's well worth a call

- **Setting it all up in one visit** — the family group, the child's account, the phone or Chromebook, approvals, a bedtime and location — then testing it with you.
- **A hand-me-down phone** that still has an adult's account on it, or a phone that needs a fresh start before a child can use it.
- **Grandparents who help often** and want to understand the parent role, the one-family-group rule, and parent access codes before deciding anything.
- **A Chromebook with a school account** where the rules don't seem to apply.
- **A device that's locked** and nothing in Chapter 25 is working.
- **A child turning 13**, when you'd like to plan which rules stay and which go.
- **A mixed family** — some children on iPhones, some on Android — and you'd like it all to make sense.

What working with me is like

I work at your pace, explain what I'm doing in plain words, and never talk down to anyone. I'll tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money, and I don't sell subscriptions. I've been doing this kind of work for more than 30 years, and I serve Portage County, Ohio, in person, and folks farther away by remote help.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call **(330) 200-8042** or book a time at **billshometech.com/book**. My help is **$49 remote · $99 in your home**. This guide is yours to keep for free; if you'd like a hand, I'm only a phone call away.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may meet Sophie first

When you call or visit billshometech.com, you might be greeted by **Sophie**, my AI receptionist. She can answer quick questions and help you book a time. A real person — me — does the actual help.

Thank you for taking the time to look after the young people in your life. Take it one step at a time, and remember: the best parental control is still a good conversation.

— Bill

CHAPTER 28

Your Google Family Link Cheat-Sheet

Keep this somewhere handy. The whole guide, boiled down.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
Works on	Android phones and tablets, Chromebooks, some kids' watches. Not on a child's iPhone.
Parent app	Google Family Link, free, on Android or iPhone.
Family group	Up to six people. Only the family manager adds members or a second parent.
Approve apps	Controls > Google Play > Purchases & download approvals.
Daily limit & Bonus time	Screen time section. Bonus time is for today only.
Bedtime	Downtime schedule. School time for class hours.
One app	Controls > App limits: Set limit, Block or Always allow.
Websites & YouTube	Chrome filter; YouTube Kids or Explore / Explore more / Most of YouTube.
Location	Location > Set up location. Alerts for arriving and leaving.
Locked device	Unlock from your app, or read a parent access code. Codes change every few minutes.
Turning 13	Email to child and family manager; plan it together.
Newer phones	Settings > search "Parental controls" (Android 17).

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Child's Google email	_____
Where the child's password is kept	_____
Family manager (who created the group)	_____
Second parent / helpers	_____
Child's devices	_____
Downtime hours	_____
School time hours	_____
Date the child turns 13	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Is the child's device turned on and connected to the internet?
2. Are you signed in to Family Link with the right Google account?
3. Is the date, time and time zone right on the child's device?
4. Try a fresh parent access code, or unlock from your app.
5. Update the Family Link app on your phone.
6. Restart the child's device.
7. Still stuck? Call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

STAY SAFE

If a child may be in danger

Keep any messages, don't confront the other person, and call 911 if a child is at risk.