BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Teens & Social Media

The settings parents should know on Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord and YouTube — explained in plain English

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 Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord & YouTube · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to the parent dashboards built into the apps teenagers use most: Instagram, Facebook and Messenger, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord and YouTube. Read it in any order and at your own pace — start with the app your teen uses. Every setting comes with what it actually does *for you*, what it can't do, and slow, step-by-step directions. Apps change their menus often, so when a button has moved, look for the same words nearby.

Part 1 — Getting Started

1 A Note from Bill
2 Why Every App Now Has a Parent Dashboard
3 Age 13, and Why the Birthday Matters
4 Talking With Your Teen, Not Spying
5 The Words You'll See

Part 2 — Instagram, Facebook & Messenger

6 Instagram Teen Accounts: What's On by Default
7 The PG-13 Setting and Limited Content
8 Supervision with Meta Family Center
9 Instagram Map and Location
10 Facebook & Messenger Teen Accounts

Part 3 — Snapchat

11 Snapchat Family Center: What Parents Can and Can't See
12 Setting Up Snapchat Family Center
13 Snap Map, Ghost Mode & Family Location Sharing

Part 4 — TikTok

14 TikTok's Teen Defaults
15 TikTok Family Pairing

Part 5 — Discord, YouTube & the Phone Itself

16 Discord: Teen Settings and Family Center
17 YouTube: Supervising a Teen Account
18 The Phone's Own Controls

Part 6 — Sextortion, Scams & Reporting

19 Sextortion: What Every Parent Should Know
20 Other Scams Aimed at Teens
21 Getting Images Taken Down
22 Reporting and Blocking in Each App

Part 7 — Keeping It Going

23 A Ten-Minute Monthly Check-Up

24 When Something's Not Working

Part 8 — Getting Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

25 When to Call Bill

26 Your Teens & Social Media Cheat-Sheet

PART 1

Getting Started

Why every big app now has a parent dashboard, what the age rules really are, how to start the conversation, and the handful of words you'll see in every app.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you have a teenager — or a grandchild who's suddenly old enough for Instagram, Snapchat or TikTok — you've probably wondered what really happens inside those apps, and whether there's anything you can do about it. There is. Over the last two years, every one of the big apps has built a **parent dashboard**. Most families have never opened one.

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

- Show you what each app already does for teens automatically — before you touch a thing.
- Walk you step by step through linking your account to your teen's on Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord and YouTube.
- Be honest about what parents *can* see (friends, time spent, settings) and what they *can't* (the actual messages).
- Explain location sharing, including Snap Map and Instagram's map, in plain words.
- Prepare you for sextortion and the scams aimed at teens, and tell you exactly where to report.
- Help you talk *with* your teen about all of it, instead of spying on them.

The big promise: you can't break anything

Every setting in this guide can be changed back. Supervision can be ended by either of you. If a rule turns out to be too strict, you loosen it. Nothing here deletes your teen's account, photos or friends.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why this matters

Ten minutes in each app's parent dashboard tells you more about your teen's online world than hours of worrying. You'll know who can message them, whether their location is shared, and how late they're scrolling — and you'll have a calm, factual starting point for a conversation.

GOOD TO KNOW

Grandparents, check with the parents first

These dashboards are designed for a parent or guardian. If you're helping a grandchild, set things up together with their mom or dad, and follow the family's rules.

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's changed.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

Why Every App Now Has a Parent Dashboard

Not long ago, a 13-year-old on Instagram got the same account as a 40-year-old. That has changed. Under pressure from parents, lawmakers and courts, the big apps now treat teenagers differently from adults — automatically, from the day the account is created.

Two layers, in every app

Layer	What it is
Teen defaults	Protections that switch on by themselves for anyone the app believes is under 18: a private account, limits on who can message them, a bedtime quiet period, and filtered content. You don't have to do anything to get these.
Parent supervision	An optional link between your account and your teen's. It lets you see some activity and change some settings from your own phone. Your teen has to agree to the link, and is told it's there.

The names each app uses

App	Teen defaults	Parent dashboard
Instagram	Teen Accounts	Supervision in Meta Family Center
Facebook & Messenger	Teen Accounts	Supervision in Meta Family Center
Snapchat	Built-in teen protections	Family Center
TikTok	Teen default settings	Family Pairing
Discord	Teen-by-default settings	Family Center
YouTube	Teen protections	Supervised teen account, through Family Center

GOOD TO KNOW

What no app will show you

None of these dashboards lets a parent read a teen's private messages. They show *who* and *how much*, not *what was said*. That's on purpose, and it's one reason talking with your teen (Chapter 4) matters so much.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most of the protection is already switched on. Your job is mostly to check it's still on, link up where it helps, and keep talking.

CHAPTER 3

Age 13, and Why the Birthday Matters

Every app in this guide sets its minimum age at **13** in the United States. That number comes from a federal children's privacy law (COPPA), which puts strict rules on collecting information from children under 13. Rather than follow those rules, most apps simply don't allow younger children.

Everything depends on the birthday

The teen protections in Chapters 6 to 17 switch on because the app thinks your child is under 18. If your child typed in a fake birthday to sign up, the app may be treating them as an adult — no teen defaults, no bedtime quiet period, and strangers able to message them.

1. Sit down with your teen and open the app together.
2. Look in the account or personal details section for the birthday.
3. If it's wrong, talk about why it matters, and fix it together. Some apps make you confirm an age change with ID or a video selfie.

Apps are starting to guess age for themselves

Because so many kids fib about their birthday, apps are starting to estimate age from how an account behaves. YouTube, Instagram and Discord have all said they use some form of age estimation. If an app decides someone is probably under 18 — whatever birthday they entered — it can switch teen protections on. Adults who are wrongly flagged are usually asked to confirm their age, for example with an ID or a selfie.

HEADS UP

A second account is common

Some teens keep a "main" account for family and a second one for friends. Supervision only covers the account you link. If you find a second account, talk about it rather than punishing it.

TIP

Under 13?

If your child is under 13, the honest answer is that these apps aren't built for them. YouTube has a separate supervised experience for pre-teens, and TikTok offers a limited, view-only experience for younger users in the U.S. For a child's first phone, see our separate guides on Apple Screen Time and on a kid's first phone or watch.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Checking one birthday is the single quickest way to make sure every protection in this guide actually applies to your teen.

CHAPTER 4

Talking With Your Teen, Not Spying

Every dashboard in this guide is designed so that your teen **knows** it's there. That's deliberate. The aim is to be the adult your teen comes to when something goes wrong — and they'll only do that if they trust you.

A good way to start

1. Pick a calm moment — not right after an argument or a scary news story.
2. Ask them to show you the app. What do they like about it? Who do they follow?
3. Explain what you'd like to turn on and why, in one sentence: "I want to know who can message you, not read your messages."
4. Set it up together, on both phones, so nothing is a surprise.
5. Agree on a few simple rules: phones out of the bedroom at night, no sharing location with people they haven't met, come to you if anyone asks for photos or money.
6. Promise — and mean it — that if they come to you with a problem, you'll help first and ask questions later.

> **FROM BILL**
>
> **The one promise that matters most**
>
> Scammers who target teens rely on shame and secrecy. A teen who is sure they won't lose their phone for telling you is far safer than one with every filter turned on. Say it out loud: "Whatever happens online, you can tell me, and we'll fix it together."

Loosening up as they grow

A 13-year-old and a 17-year-old need different rules. Several apps build this in: Instagram and Facebook require a parent's OK for younger teens to loosen settings, but let 16- and 17-year-olds change more on their own. Plan to step back a little each year.

HEADS UP

Secret monitoring apps

Some paid apps promise to read every message without the teen knowing. Before you go that route, think about what happens to trust when they find out — and they usually do. Monitoring tools are meant for parents of minor children; installing one secretly on another adult's phone may be against the law.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A teen who helped set the rules is far more likely to follow them, and far more likely to tell you when something feels wrong.

CHAPTER 5

The Words You'll See

Teen apps use their own vocabulary. Here it is in plain English. Come back here whenever a word puzzles you.

Word	What it means
DM	Direct message: a private message between two people, or a small group, inside the app.
Story	A photo or video that disappears after 24 hours.
Snap	A photo or video sent on Snapchat, usually set to disappear after it's opened.
Feed / For You / Explore / Reels	The endless scroll of posts the app picks for you.
Follower / Friend	Someone connected to your teen's account. On a private account, your teen has to approve them.
Private account	Only approved followers see posts. Strangers see little or nothing.
Supervision / Family Center / Family Pairing	The parent dashboards — a link between your account and your teen's.
Sleep mode / Wind-down / Time Away	Quiet hours when notifications stop or the app is blocked.
Snap Map / Instagram Map	Maps inside the app that can show where friends are.
Ghost Mode	Snapchat's setting that hides your teen from Snap Map.
Server	On Discord, a group chat space — some small and private, some huge and public.
Sextortion	Blackmail using sexual images, often by scammers posing as a teen. See Chapter 19.

TIP

Ask your teen

If you hear a word that isn't here, ask your teen to explain it. Being the student for a minute is a great way to start a conversation.

PART 2

Instagram, Facebook & Messenger

Meta's Teen Accounts, the PG-13 content setting, supervision through Meta Family Center, and the Instagram map.

CHAPTER 6

Instagram Teen Accounts: What's On by Default

Since late 2024, anyone on Instagram the app believes is 13 to 17 is placed in a **Teen Account** automatically. You don't need to switch anything on. Here's what your teen gets.

Protection	What it does
Private account	Only followers your teen approves can see their posts.
Messaging limits	The strictest message settings: teens can only be messaged by people they follow or have already messaged.
Sleep mode	From 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. every day, notifications are muted, people who send a message get an automatic reply, and your teen sees a reminder to close the app.
Time reminder	A reminder to leave Instagram after 60 minutes of use in a day.
Content filters	Grown-up content is limited in the feed, Reels and Explore (Chapter 7).

Meta has added more limits for younger teens since then, such as on going Live and on images in messages that may contain nudity, which are blurred. Ask your teen to show you these settings, because the details change from time to time.

Who can change these settings

- **Under 16:** your teen needs a parent's permission to make any of these settings less strict. To ask, they have to set up supervision with you (Chapter 8).
- **16 and 17:** the same protections start switched on, but teens can loosen them on their own.
- **Anyone:** can make settings *stricter* at any time.

HEADS UP

Sleep mode is a nudge, not a lock

Sleep mode mutes notifications and shows a reminder, but it doesn't stop a determined teen from scrolling at midnight. If late-night use is the worry, the phone's own Downtime setting (Chapter 18) or a phones-out-of-the-bedroom rule works better.

TIP

Check it's really a Teen Account

Ask your teen to open their profile, then the menu. If the account is a Teen Account, the settings screen will say so. If not, check the birthday (Chapter 3).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Without lifting a finger, a strange adult can't message your teen out of the blue, and the app goes quiet overnight. That's a big improvement on how Instagram used to work.

CHAPTER 7

The PG-13 Setting and Limited Content

In October 2025, Meta announced that Instagram's Teen Accounts would be guided by **PG-13** movie ratings — the idea being that teens should see roughly what they'd see in a PG-13 film. Posts with strong language, risky stunts, or content that could encourage harmful behavior are hidden or not recommended to teens.

Two levels

Setting	What it does
13+ (the default)	The PG-13 standard. Teens can't switch it off without a parent's consent.
Limited Content	A stricter level a parent can choose. It filters out even more, and turns off the ability to see or leave comments on posts.

Choosing Limited Content

1. Set up supervision first (Chapter 8).
2. In Family Center, choose your teen's Instagram account.
3. Look for your teen's **content** setting. Menus move around, so look for the words "content" or "what you see."
4. Choose **Limited Content**, and confirm.

GOOD TO KNOW

No filter is perfect

Meta's own description is that teens will see content "similar to" a PG-13 movie, and filters are automatic. Some things will slip through, and some harmless posts will be hidden. Meta has said it is testing a way for supervising parents to flag posts they think shouldn't be shown to teens.

TIP

Limited Content can cause friction

Losing comments is a big change for many teens, because comments are how friends talk on Instagram. Consider it for a younger teen, or for a while after a bad experience, and explain why.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A rating you already understand from the movies — and a stricter button if you want one — instead of guessing what the app's algorithm considers acceptable.

CHAPTER 8

Supervision with Meta Family Center

Meta Family Center is the parent dashboard for Instagram, and also for Facebook, Messenger and Meta's virtual-reality headsets. You reach it inside the Instagram app, or on the web at **familycenter.meta.com**.

Before you start

- You need your **own** Instagram account, and you must be 18 or older.
- Your teen must be 13 to 17.
- It's easiest if you follow each other. If you don't, you can send an invitation link by text or email.

Sending the invitation

1. On your phone, open Instagram and go to your profile.
2. Tap the menu (three lines) and find **Family Center** in the settings list.
3. Tap **Get started**.
4. Choose your teen's account and tap **Invite** — or share a link if you don't follow each other.
5. On your teen's phone, open the invitation and tap to **allow** supervision.

Teens can also send the request themselves — for example, when they ask to loosen a setting.

What you can see and do

- See who your teen follows and who follows them.
- See who they've been chatting with — but **not** the messages themselves.
- See how much time they spend on Instagram, and set a daily time limit (your teen is told when you set or change it).
- Approve or decline requests to make their settings less strict, including the content setting (Chapter 7).
- Get an alert if your teen repeatedly searches for terms linked to suicide or self-harm in a short time, so you can check in.

GOOD TO KNOW

Either of you can end it

Supervision only works while you both agree to it, and either of you can remove it. If the dashboard suddenly shows nothing, that's the first thing to check (Chapter 24).

HEADS UP

Invitation not accepted?

If your teen hasn't accepted an invitation after a few days, it may no longer work. Send a new one while you're sitting together.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One place to see who your teen is connected to and how much time they spend — and you'll be asked before any safety setting gets switched off.

CHAPTER 9

Instagram Map and Location

In 2025, Instagram added a **map**, found in the messages area, that can show friends where you are and where friends have posted from. Many people were surprised by it, so here's what to know.

- Sharing your **live** location on the map is something your teen has to choose, and they choose with whom.
- Meta has described parent tools for the map in supervision, so look in Family Center to see what it shows for your teen's account today.
- Posts tagged with a place can still show where they were taken, even when live sharing is off.
- Menus change, so the surest check is to open the map on your teen's phone together.

Checking it together

1. Open Instagram on your teen's phone and go to messages.
2. Open the map at the top of the messages list.
3. Look at the location-sharing setting and make sure it's set the way you both agreed — for most teens, off, or only close friends you know in person.
4. Talk about place tags on posts: tagging "home" or the school tells strangers more than you'd think.

STAY SAFE

Live location is for people you've met

A good family rule: never share live location with anyone your teen hasn't met in person. Scammers and predators use location to make threats feel real.

CHAPTER 10

Facebook & Messenger Teen Accounts

Fewer teens use Facebook than Instagram, but many still have Messenger for family chats. Meta brought **Teen Accounts** to Facebook and Messenger during 2025, starting in the U.S. and a few other countries and then expanding.

What's the same as Instagram

- Teens are placed into Teen Accounts automatically.
- Messages only come from people they follow or have messaged before.
- Content and contact are limited, and there are time reminders and overnight quiet hours.
- Teens under 16 need a parent's permission to make settings less strict.

Supervising Facebook and Messenger

Facebook and Messenger supervision runs through the same **Meta Family Center**. Open **familycenter.meta.com**, or look for Family Center or Supervision in Facebook's **Settings & privacy** menu, and send your teen an invitation in the same way as Chapter 8.

TIP

One dashboard for all three

If your teen uses Instagram and Messenger, link both. They show up side by side in Family Center.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Family chats on Messenger stay easy, while strangers find it much harder to slip into your teen's inbox.

PART 3

Snapchat

Snapchat Family Center — what parents can and can't see — how to set it up, and Snap Map, Ghost Mode and family location sharing.

CHAPTER 11

Snapchat Family Center: What Parents Can and Can't See

Snapchat is built around messaging friends, and photos that disappear. Its parent dashboard, **Family Center**, is designed to work like real life: you can know who your teen's friends are, without listening in on their conversations.

What you can see and do

Feature	What it does
Friends list	Your teen's full list of Snapchat friends.
Recent contacts	Who your teen has been messaging recently.
New friends, with context	Since January 2026, when your teen adds someone, you can see whether they have friends in common, whether that person is saved in your teen's phone contacts, and which communities (such as a school) they belong to.
Time spent	Since January 2026, the average time your teen spent on Snapchat each day over the past week, broken down by the features they use most — chatting, the camera, Snap Map, Stories and so on.
Some settings	View your teen's key privacy and safety settings, including their location-sharing choices.
Content controls	Limit sensitive content in Stories and Spotlight.
My AI	Turn off your teen's access to Snapchat's AI chatbot.
Report	Report a worrying account to Snapchat on your teen's behalf.

What you can't see or do

- Read your teen's chats, or see the Snaps they send and receive.
- Stop them adding a friend, or approve friends in advance.
- Set a daily time limit inside Snapchat. For that, use the phone's own controls (Chapter 18).
- Supervise without them knowing. Your teen accepts the invitation, and can leave Family Center at any time — you're notified if they do.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why the "context" matters

A new friend with no mutual friends, who isn't in your teen's phone contacts and isn't from their school, is exactly the pattern scammers use. Family Center now shows you that at a glance. It's a good prompt for a gentle question: "Who's this? How do you know them?"

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You'll spot a stranger in your teen's friends list early — without reading a single private message.

CHAPTER 12

Setting Up Snapchat Family Center

You'll need a Snapchat account of your own. You don't have to use it for anything else.

Before you start

- Download Snapchat on your phone and create your own account.
- Add your teen as a friend, and have them add you back. Family Center only works between friends.

Sending the invitation

1. On your phone, open Snapchat and tap your profile picture.
2. Tap the **gear** (Settings).
3. Scroll to **Family Center** — it's in the privacy section of Settings — and tap it.
4. Follow the prompts, choose your teen from your friends list, and send the invitation.
5. On your teen's phone, the invitation arrives as a chat message. They open it and tap **Accept**.

HEADS UP

The invitation can vanish

Like other Snapchat messages, the invitation may disappear once it's been viewed. Sit together while your teen opens it, so it doesn't get lost.

Once you're linked

1. Open Family Center from Settings whenever you want to check in.
2. Look through the friends list together the first time, and ask about anyone unfamiliar.
3. Turn on the content controls if your teen is younger.
4. Decide together whether My AI stays on.

TIP

Check in, don't hover

Looking once a week is plenty for most families. Checking every hour sends the message that you don't trust them.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Five minutes of setup gives you a steady, low-key view of who your teen is talking to.

CHAPTER 13

Snap Map, Ghost Mode & Family Location Sharing

Snap Map is a map inside Snapchat showing where friends are, if they've chosen to share. Of everything in Snapchat, it's the setting parents ask about most.

The facts

- Sharing a location on Snap Map is a choice your teen makes, and it's only ever shared with people who are already their Snapchat friends.
- When sharing is on, friends can see your teen's location on the map in close to real time.
- **Ghost Mode** hides your teen from Snap Map completely.
- A teen can share with all friends, or only with a short list they pick.
- Family Center shows parents the teen's location-sharing choices.

Checking the setting together

1. On your teen's phone, open Snapchat and swipe to the map (or tap the map pin at the bottom).
2. Tap the **gear** on the map screen.
3. Look at **Ghost Mode** and the list of who can see their location.
4. Choose what you agreed: Ghost Mode on, or sharing with only a few friends you both know in person.

Sharing location as a family

Family Center includes location tools for families alongside the other parent features. Like everything else in Family Center, location sharing between you and your teen works only if both of you agree to it.

TIP

You may already have a family map

If your family uses Find My on iPhone, Google's Find Hub or Life360, you may not need Snapchat's version too. One family map is easier than three.

STAY SAFE

Location and strangers

A teen's live location shared with a "friend" they've never met tells that person where they live and go to school. Make this a firm family rule: location only with people you know in real life.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One quick look tells you whether your teen's whereabouts are visible to their whole friends list — and one tap fixes it.

PART 4

TikTok

The protections TikTok switches on for teens by itself, and Family Pairing: screen time, Time Away, messages and content filters from your own phone.

CHAPTER 14

TikTok's Teen Defaults

TikTok sets up teen accounts differently from adult ones, as long as the birthday is right. Here's what happens automatically.

Who	What happens
Under 18: 60 minutes	A 60-minute daily screen time limit. When it runs out, the teen has to enter a passcode to keep watching.
Under 16: wind-down	If a teen under 16 is on TikTok after 10 p.m., their For You feed is interrupted with a wind-down prompt.

TikTok has also long set stricter privacy for younger teens: accounts for 13- to 15-year-olds start out private, and direct messaging is meant for older teens and adults. Check both settings together in **Settings and privacy** > **Privacy**.

HEADS UP

The 60-minute limit is easy to skip

Without Family Pairing, a teen can choose their own passcode and keep scrolling. If you link up (Chapter 15), *you* set the passcode instead.

GOOD TO KNOW

16 and 17

Older teens can turn on messaging and loosen other settings. Sources differ on exactly which settings start switched off at 16 and 17, so open the app together and check **Settings and privacy** > **Privacy**.

TIP

Under 13

In the U.S., TikTok offers a separate, limited experience for younger users that's view-only, with no posting or messaging. If your child is under 13 and has a regular TikTok account, the birthday is wrong.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Younger teens can't be messaged by strangers on TikTok at all, and there's a daily limit built in — a good starting point before you change anything.

CHAPTER 15

TikTok Family Pairing

Family Pairing links your TikTok account to your teen's so you can manage their settings from your own phone. TikTok added several new tools to it in March 2025.

Setting it up

1. If you don't have one, create a TikTok account on your phone.
2. Open TikTok, go to your profile, tap the menu, and choose **Settings and privacy**, then **Family Pairing**.
3. Choose **Parent**. TikTok shows a QR code.
4. On your teen's phone, go to **Settings and privacy** > **Family Pairing**, choose **Teen**, and scan the code.
5. Confirm the link on both phones, then choose the settings together.

What you can control

Setting	What it does
Daily screen time	Set your teen's limit — even a different one for each day of the week — and see how much time they spent.
Time Away	Block TikTok during times you choose, such as school, family dinner, bedtime or a weekend trip.
Mute notifications	Choose hours when your teen gets no TikTok notifications.
Who they follow	See who your teen follows and who follows them.
Content filters	Turn on Restricted Mode, which limits videos that may not be suitable for everyone.
Privacy & messages	Decide whether the account is private, and for teens 16 and older, who can send them messages.

GOOD TO KNOW

What Family Pairing can't do

It doesn't let you read your teen's messages or watch what they watched. It manages settings and shows time spent and connections.

TIP

Time Away for dinner

Time Away is the tool many families like best: a TikTok-free hour at the dinner table that doesn't depend on anyone remembering.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

The settings that matter most — time, followers and messages — run from your phone, and your teen can't quietly undo them.

HEADS UP

TikTok in 2026

In January 2026, TikTok's U.S. business moved to a new American-led joint venture. The same app kept working, and Family Pairing didn't change. Ignore texts or emails saying you must download a "new TikTok" or re-enter your password.

PART 5

Discord, YouTube & the Phone Itself

Discord's Family Center and teen settings, supervising a teen on YouTube, and the phone's own controls that cover every app at once.

CHAPTER 16

Discord: Teen Settings and Family Center

Discord is a chat app that started with gamers and is now used for everything from school clubs to fan groups. People talk by text, voice and video in group spaces called **servers**. Some servers are a handful of friends; others are huge and open to anyone. Discord's minimum age in the U.S. is 13.

Teen settings by default

In 2026 Discord announced that it would make teen-appropriate settings the starting point for **everyone**, worldwide — stricter content filters, limits on age-restricted spaces, and tighter controls on who can message — with adults asked to confirm their age to change them. Reports differ on how quickly this reached every account, so check your teen's settings together rather than assuming.

Settings to look at together

1. On your teen's phone or computer, open Discord and tap their profile picture, then the **gear** (User Settings).
2. Find the privacy and safety section. Depending on the version, it may be called **Privacy & Safety** or **Content & Social**.
3. Make sure sensitive images in messages are filtered or blurred.
4. Look at who can send direct messages and friend requests. For most teens, limit these to friends, or to friends of friends.
5. Look at the list of servers your teen belongs to, and ask about any you don't recognize.

Family Center

Discord's **Family Center** links a parent's Discord account to a teen's (13 to 17). You need a Discord account of your own. The teen opens Family Center in their settings and shows a **QR code**; you scan it with the Discord app on your phone, and the teen confirms.

- You see summaries of activity, such as new friends and the servers your teen joins or takes part in, and who they've been talking with.
- You **don't** see the content of messages.
- Either of you can unlink at any time.

HEADS UP

Big public servers

The risk on Discord is usually not a friend group — it's large public servers where strangers can strike up a conversation and then move to private messages. If your teen joins one, talk about who they're actually chatting with.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You'll know which communities your teen belongs to and when a new friend appears, without reading a single conversation.

CHAPTER 17

YouTube: Supervising a Teen Account

Most teens watch YouTube every day. Many also comment, and some post their own videos. YouTube offers a light-touch option called a **supervised teen account**, managed in **Family Center** on YouTube.

How it works

- It's for teens, generally 13 to 17 (the age varies by country).
- Either the parent or the teen can start it, but **both** must agree before it switches on. Either of you can turn it off.
- The invitation is accepted by scanning a QR code or opening a shared link.
- You see insights such as how many videos your teen has uploaded, how many channels they subscribe to, and how many comments they've posted.
- Your teen's recommendations stay their own, and so do yours. Linking doesn't mix them.
- Supervision doesn't end by itself when your teen turns 18.

Setting it up

1. Make sure you each have your own Google account, signed in to YouTube.
2. On your phone, open YouTube, tap your profile picture and look for **Family Center** in the settings.
3. Choose to invite your teen, and follow the prompts to show a QR code or share a link.
4. On your teen's phone, they scan the code or open the link and agree.

Other YouTube tools for your teen

- **Take a break** and **bedtime** reminders, in YouTube's settings.
- **Restricted Mode**, which hides some mature videos. No filter is perfect.
- For younger children, YouTube has separate supervised experiences set up through Google Family Link — more limited than a teen account.

GOOD TO KNOW

Insights, not a watch list

Supervision shows counts and activity on your teen's own channel. It isn't a list of every video they watched.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You'll know if your teen starts posting videos or commenting a lot — a good moment to talk about what they share publicly.

CHAPTER 18

The Phone's Own Controls

Every app in this guide has its own dashboard. The phone itself has one too, and it covers every app at once. It's the best tool for **bedtime** and **total time**, because it works even in apps with no parent controls.

iPhone: Screen Time

- Managed from your own iPhone through Family Sharing: **Settings** > **Family** > your teen's name > **Screen Time**.
- **Downtime** blocks apps and notifications during the hours you choose, except the apps and calls you allow.
- **App Limits** set a daily time for one app or a whole category, such as social media.
- Since iOS 26, teens 13 to 17 get web filtering and Communication Safety, which warns about nude images, on by default.
- With iOS 27, Screen Time adds Time Allowances for categories such as Social Media, and all family devices need to be on version 27 to use the new controls.

Android: Google Family Link

- Managed in the **Google Family Link** app on your phone (which can be an iPhone or Android).
- Set a daily limit for each day of the week, a downtime period, and limits on individual apps.
- Add **Bonus time** for today from your own phone when there's a good reason.
- Family Link can't supervise an iPhone; it's for Android phones and Chromebooks.

TIP

Use both layers

Let the phone handle the clock (bedtime and total time), and let each app's dashboard handle the people (who can message, who's a friend, location). Our guides to Apple Screen Time and to a kid's first phone or watch go step by step.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

One bedtime rule that covers Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord and YouTube at once — and keeps working when your teen downloads a new app you haven't heard of yet.

PART 6

Sextortion, Scams & Reporting

The blackmail scheme aimed at teenagers, the everyday scams teens run into, how to get images taken down, and how to report and block in every app.

CHAPTER 19

Sextortion: What Every Parent Should Know

Sextortion is blackmail. Someone gets a teen to send a nude or sexual photo or video — or makes a fake one — and then threatens to share it with the teen's friends and family unless they pay or send more. The FBI has warned repeatedly about these schemes, especially ones aimed at **teenage boys**.

How it usually goes

1. A friendly stranger, often posing as a teen girl or boy, follows or messages your teen on Instagram, Snapchat or a game.
2. They chat, flirt and move fast — often suggesting a switch to another app.
3. They send a photo and ask for one back.
4. The moment a photo arrives, the tone changes: pay now, or everyone sees it. They may show a list of your teen's followers to prove they can do it.
5. Demands come with a countdown, by gift card, payment app or cryptocurrency.

SCAM ALERT

"Pay now or I send it to everyone"

This is the sextortion script. Paying almost never ends it — it usually leads to more demands. The advice from NCMEC and law enforcement is the same: stop responding, don't pay, and keep the messages.

If it happens: what to do, in order

1. Stay calm and tell your teen clearly: **you are not in trouble, and we'll handle this together**.
2. **Stop all contact** with the person. Don't reply, argue or negotiate.
3. **Don't pay**, and don't send anything more.
4. **Save the evidence**: take screenshots of the profile, username and messages. Don't delete the account or the conversation yet — investigators may need it.
5. Report to the FBI at **tips.fbi.gov** or **1-800-CALL-FBI** (1-800-225-5324), and to NCMEC's CyberTipline at **report.cybertip.org**. You can also call your local police.
6. Report and block the account in the app (Chapter 22).
7. Use **Take It Down** to help stop the image spreading (Chapter 21).

GOOD TO KNOW

Your teen is the victim

The FBI has said it does not treat a child who was coerced this way as an offender. Make sure your teen hears that from you, early and often.

STAY SAFE

If your teen is in crisis

Sextortion is frightening, and the shame is the scammer's weapon. If your teen talks about hurting themselves, call or text **988** (the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or 911. NCMEC can also connect families with support at **1-800-THE-LOST** (1-800-843-5678).

Prevention that actually helps

- Only accept friends and followers your teen knows in real life.
- Keep accounts private, with messages limited to friends (the teen defaults in Chapters 6, 11 and 14).
- Talk about it before it happens: "If anyone ever threatens you with a picture, come to me. You won't lose your phone."
- Know that fakes exist: scammers can now make a fake nude from an ordinary photo using AI. Your teen doesn't have to have sent anything to be targeted.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Knowing the script — and having the reporting steps ready — turns a terrifying night into a plan.

CHAPTER 20

Other Scams Aimed at Teens

Sextortion gets the headlines, but teens also run into everyday scams. They're the same tricks adults see, dressed up for a younger crowd.

SCAM ALERT

"Send me the code I just texted you"

A "friend" (whose account has been taken over) asks your teen to send them a code from a text message. That code is the key to your teen's account. Never share a login code with anyone, ever.

SCAM ALERT

Free gaming money and giveaways

Offers of free Robux, V-Bucks, gift cards or phones in exchange for a login, a small "fee" or personal details. Real giveaways don't ask for passwords or payment.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "your account will be deleted" messages

A message or email claiming to be from Instagram, TikTok or Snapchat says the account broke a rule and will be removed unless your teen logs in through a link. Open the app itself instead — real warnings show up in the app's own settings or support area.

SCAM ALERT

Brand deals and "become a model" offers

A stranger promises sponsorships, modeling or influencer money, but first needs photos, personal information or a payment. Any opportunity that starts in a DM and asks for money first is a scam.

Habits that stop most of them

- Turn on two-step verification on each account, and keep the password to themselves.
- Never move a conversation with a stranger to another app.
- Never pay anyone they've only met online.
- When in doubt, show you — no lecture, just a second look.

Report money scams to the FTC at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**, and online fraud to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at **ic3.gov**.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

A family rule as simple as "never share a code, never pay a stranger" stops the great majority of account takeovers and money scams.

CHAPTER 21

Getting Images Taken Down

If a nude or sexual image of your teen — real or faked — is being shared, or might be, there are two powerful tools on your side.

Take It Down, from NCMEC

Take It Down (**takeitdown.ncmec.org**) is a free service from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children for images or videos taken before the person was 18.

- It makes a digital fingerprint, called a **hash**, of the image **on your own device**. The image itself is never uploaded.
- Participating platforms use that fingerprint to find and remove matching images.
- It only works on platforms that have agreed to take part, and not on encrypted services.
- Your teen can use it themselves, without giving a name.

1. On the device that has the image, go to **takeitdown.ncmec.org**.
2. Follow the steps to select the image. It stays on the device.
3. Submit the fingerprint, and keep any case number it gives you.

The TAKE IT DOWN Act

A federal law, the **TAKE IT DOWN Act**, now requires covered websites and apps to offer a way to request removal of intimate images shared without consent — including AI-made fakes — and to remove them, and identical copies, within **48 hours** of a valid request. The FTC began enforcing it in May 2026. If a platform doesn't act, you can report that to the FTC at **TakeItDown.ftc.gov**.

GOOD TO KNOW

Report the person too

Taking an image down doesn't stop the person who shared it. Report them to the FBI at **tips.fbi.gov** and to NCMEC's CyberTipline (Chapter 19).

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

You don't have to hunt down every copy by hand. One fingerprint, and the major platforms do the searching.

CHAPTER 22

Reporting and Blocking in Each App

Every app in this guide lets you report a person, a message or a post, and block someone so they can't reach your teen. Teach your teen these moves, the way you'd teach them where the fire extinguisher is.

The same three moves everywhere

1. **Screenshot first.** Capture the profile, the username and the messages before anything else.
2. **Report.** Press and hold the message or post, or tap the three dots on the profile, and choose **Report**. Pick the reason that fits best.
3. **Block.** From the same menu, choose **Block**. The person can no longer message or find your teen.

App	Where to find Report and Block
Instagram	Three dots on the profile, or press and hold a message
Facebook & Messenger	Three dots on the profile or in the chat
Snapchat	Press and hold the friend's name or chat; parents can also report from Family Center
TikTok	Share arrow or three dots on the profile; press and hold a comment or message
Discord	Tap the person's name or press and hold the message
YouTube	Three dots next to a video, comment or channel

TIP

Restrict and mute are gentler

If blocking a classmate would cause drama, some apps offer **Restrict** or **Mute**, which quietly limit what that person sees or can do. Instagram's Restrict, for example, hides their comments from everyone else until your teen approves them.

GOOD TO KNOW

Reports are private

Apps generally don't tell the person who reported them. Your teen won't be named.

STAY SAFE

When to skip straight to the police

If anyone threatens your teen's safety, asks to meet in person, or makes sexual requests of a minor, save everything and call your local police or the FBI. Use 911 if anyone is in danger right now.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Three steps — screenshot, report, block — that work in every app and keep the evidence you might need later.

PART 7

Keeping It Going

A ten-minute monthly check-up you can do together, and what to do when supervision stops working or something goes wrong.

CHAPTER 23

A Ten-Minute Monthly Check-Up

Apps change their settings, add features and sometimes switch things back on after an update. A short check once a month, done *with* your teen, keeps everything where you agreed.

The checklist

1. **Birthdays.** Is the birthday on each account still right (Chapter 3)?
2. **Dashboards.** Open each parent dashboard. Is supervision still connected?
3. **New friends.** Scroll through recent friends and followers together. Any strangers?
4. **Location.** Check Snap Map and the Instagram map. Who can see your teen's location?
5. **Messages.** Are messages still limited to friends or people they follow?
6. **Time.** Look at time spent. Do the limits still fit school, sports and sleep?
7. **New apps.** Has your teen started using an app this guide doesn't cover? Look for its safety or family settings together.
8. **Ask one open question.** "Anything weird happen online this month?"

TIP

Pick a regular day

The first Sunday of the month, or the day the phone bill arrives — anything that makes it a routine, not an inspection.

GOOD TO KNOW

As they get older

Use the check-up to hand over control. At 16 or 17, your teen might run the checklist and simply tell you what they found.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Problems get caught while they're small, and your teen gets used to talking about their online life as a normal part of family life.

CHAPTER 24

When Something's Not Working

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

"My teen removed supervision" or "the dashboard shows nothing"

Supervision on every app in this guide depends on both of you agreeing, and your teen can end it. Don't treat it as a crime. Ask what happened — sometimes it's an accident, an app reinstall or a new phone. Then send a new invitation together.

"The invitation never arrived" or "it disappeared"

- Check that you're friends or following each other where the app requires it (Snapchat, for example).
- On Snapchat, the invite arrives as a chat and can vanish once viewed. Send a fresh one while you're sitting together.
- Make sure both phones have the latest version of the app from the App Store or Google Play.

"I can't find Family Center"

Apps move their menus. Open the app's settings and look for the words **Family Center**, **Supervision** or **Family Pairing**, or use the search box at the top of the settings screen if there is one.

"My teen lied about their age" or "set up a second account"

This is very common. Talk first, then fix the birthday together (Chapter 3). Some apps will ask for proof to change an age. Supervision only covers the account you've linked, so ask which accounts they actually use.

"Someone hacked my teen's account" or "they got locked out"

1. Use the app's own **Forgot password** or account-recovery option — never a link in a message.
2. Once back in, change the password and turn on two-step verification.
3. Warn friends that messages from the account in the meantime weren't real.

"The time limit isn't working"

In-app reminders are easy to dismiss. For a real limit, use the phone's own controls (Chapter 18), and on TikTok, let Family Pairing set the passcode (Chapter 15).

HEADS UP

Don't take the phone in a panic

If you discover something worrying, resist grabbing the phone and deleting everything. Evidence may matter, and a teen who loses their phone for telling you won't tell you next time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this does for you

Most "it stopped working" moments have a two-minute fix, and none of them mean you've broken anything.

PART 8

Getting Help & Your Cheat-Sheet

An honest word about when a hand is worth it, and a one-page summary of every app's parent dashboard.

CHAPTER 25

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 up every dashboard in one sitting** — Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord and YouTube — with you and your teen at the table, so everyone understands what's on.
- **Creating your own accounts** on apps you've never used, just so you can supervise.
- **Pairing the app dashboards with the phone's own controls** (Screen Time or Family Link) so bedtime and limits actually stick.
- **Something has gone wrong** — a hacked account, a lost invitation, a dashboard that shows nothing.
- **Grandparents helping out**, who'd like it all explained before the grandkids visit.

STAY SAFE

Some things are for the police, not a tech helper

If your teen is being threatened, blackmailed or contacted by an adult sexually, report it to the FBI (tips.fbi.gov) and NCMEC (report.cybertip.org) first, as in Chapter 19. I'm glad to help with the settings afterward.

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 — teens included. I'll tell you honestly when something isn't worth your money, and I don't sell monitoring 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 out for the teenagers in your life. The settings help, but the best protection is still a teen who knows they can come to you.

— Bill

CHAPTER 26

Your Teens & Social Media Cheat-Sheet

The whole guide, boiled down. Keep it handy.

The essentials

Topic	Remember
Minimum age	13 on every app in this guide. Check the birthday on each account.
Instagram, Facebook, Messenger	Teen Accounts on by default. Supervision in Meta Family Center (familycenter.meta.com). Content: 13+ (PG-13) or Limited Content.
Snapchat	Settings > Family Center. See friends and who they message, not the chats. Snap Map: Ghost Mode or a short list.
TikTok	Settings and privacy > Family Pairing. You set the screen time passcode and Time Away.
Discord	Family Center with a QR code. See new friends and servers, not messages.
YouTube	Supervised teen account in Family Center. Both of you agree.
The phone itself	Screen Time (iPhone) or Family Link (Android) for bedtime and total time.
Sextortion	Stop contact, don't pay, save evidence. tips.fbi.gov, report.cybertip.org.
Images shared	takeitdown.ncmec.org. Platforms must act within 48 hours of a valid request.

Write it down once

Keep handy	
Apps my teen uses	_____
My teen's usernames	_____
Apps where supervision is set up	_____
Screen Time or Family Link passcode (keep private)	_____
TikTok Family Pairing passcode	_____
Family rules we agreed on	_____
Monthly check-up day	_____

When something's wrong, in order

1. Stay calm, and tell your teen they're not in trouble.
2. Screenshot the profile, username and messages.
3. Don't pay, don't reply, don't delete yet.
4. Report and block in the app.
5. For threats or sexual images: tips.fbi.gov or 1-800-CALL-FBI, and report.cybertip.org.
6. For images being shared: takeitdown.ncmec.org.
7. For settings and setup help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

STAY SAFE

If a child may be in danger

Call 911. If your teen talks about hurting themselves, call or text 988.