

Securing your iOS device for your children

Part 1: Setting up a kid-friendly iTunes account



There has been a string of [high-profile cases](#) where children [have racked up thousands of dollars in credit card charges](#) through [in-app purchases](#). In these cases and others like them, the iOS devices used by the children [have not been properly locked down](#) by the parents.

In this three-part series, we will show you how to set up a kid-friendly iTunes account, [lock down your device to prevent in-app purchases](#) and [perform some maintenance](#) that'll prevent your tot from sending emails or tweeting on your behalf. In this first post, we start at the beginning and show you how to set up an iTunes account that you can safely use on your child's iOS device.

Set up an iTunes account without a payment method

Before handing over an iOS device to your child, you should set up an iTunes account for him or her. This account should be separate from your personal iTunes account and should only have access to a limited amount of funds. As noted [by Macworld](#), you can easily create a new Apple ID account that does not have a credit card or any other payment option attached to it. No payment method means there will be no errant charges. Here are the steps to follow when setting up a credit card-free account:

1. Open iTunes on your desktop and find a free app in the App Store.
2. Click on the buy button and select "Create Apple ID" in the pop-up dialog box.
3. Enter in the email address information (the Apple ID), password and security questions required to establish a new Apple ID. Choose a password that your child cannot guess and do not give the password to them.
4. In the payment screen, make sure "None" is selected and enter in your address information.

5. Verify the Apple ID by following the verification instructions sent to the email address used to set up the account.

Re-purpose an old iTunes account

If you have an old iTunes account kicking around, you can also re-purpose that account for your child. To make it kid-safe, you'll have to remove any payment information from the account first. To [remove a payment option](#), open iTunes on your desktop and click on "Store" and then "View My Apple ID" in the menu bar at the top. You will see your current payment information in the Apple ID Summary section, along with a link to edit that payment choice. Click this "edit" link and then select "None" for the payment method.

You can also remove payment information on an iOS device by going to Settings > iTunes & App Stores > Apple ID > View Apple ID > Payment Information > None. This latter on-device method does not work with iTunes accounts that use PayPal as a payment source.

Add Money using a Gift Card or Allowance

If your child only wants to download free apps, then you don't have to do anything else with their iTunes account. Most likely, though, your child will encounter a paid app they want to download, and you will need to add a funding source to their iTunes account. Don't add a credit card or a link to your PayPal account. Instead, use a gift card or set up an allowance to add a limited amount of money to their account. Gift cards are available to purchase [within iTunes](#), from [Apple's online store](#) or at major retail stores like [Best Buy](#), [Target](#) and [Walmart](#). You can also turn in loose change at [a Coinstar machine](#) and put that balance on an iTunes gift card. You can redeem a gift card in iTunes or on your child's iOS device using [these instructions](#) provided by Apple.

If you don't want to bother with gift cards, Apple has an allowance option that uses the parent's iTunes account to add money (in amounts from \$10 to \$50) to the child's account each month. You can read [how to set up an allowance](#) on Apple's support website.

Once the iTunes account is created and set up with a safe funding source, you are now ready for [a deep dive into the settings](#) where you will learn how to set up a passcode, restrict in-app purchases and hide apps from the home screen. We cover these security measures in part two of our three-part series.

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Part 2: Setup parental controls to prevent in-app purchases and more



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In this three-part series, we will show you how to [set up a kid-friendly iTunes account](#), lock down your device to prevent in-app purchases and [perform some maintenance](#) that'll prevent your tot from sending emails or tweeting on your behalf. You can jump into part two below, where we take a deep dive into the settings and show you how to lockdown your iOS device.

Set up a Passcode

The easiest way to lockdown an iOS device is to [add a passcode](#), which will appear when you turn on or wake up the device. The passcode will prevent your child from turning on the device and going to town when you are busy doing dishes, driving or otherwise occupied. Using a passcode is a first-line defense and won't prevent errant purchases. It'll merely give you control over the iOS device and let you determine when your child uses the iPad or iPhone.

To set a passcode, go to Settings > General > Passcode Lock. Change the setting so that the Passcode is on, the Require Passcode is set to immediately and the Simple Passcode option is off. A simple passcode is a four-digit number that can be quickly learned by any tech-savvy child who watches their parent tap in the code. Select a longer alphanumeric code that'll be difficult for your child to enter, but easy for you to remember.

Enable Restrictions (Parental Controls)

Once you have a passcode on your device, you will want to dive into the Restrictions, aka Parental Controls. This is the one area you don't want to ignore. If you have a device that you are using with your child on a regular basis, be sure to configure the parental controls.

To find the Restrictions, tap Settings > General > Restrictions. Tap "Enable Restrictions" and enter a four-digit password that your child won't guess. At the top of the Restrictions' screen is a list of apps that is allowed on your device. If you don't want your child accessing the camera, Safari, iTunes and other apps, you can turn them off here. When they are off, they no longer appear on your home screen.

Directly underneath the allowed apps is the "Allowed Content" section. This section lets you set the ratings for Podcasts, Music, Movies and other media on the iOS device. You can restrict access to explicit content by adjusting these settings to an age-appropriate level. Also in this section is the In-App Purchases slider which should be set to off, if you want to block all in-app purchases. If you want to allow IAPs, you can leave them on and control purchases by changing the "Require Password" setting to "Immediately" and not the default 15 minutes. This will force your child to enter a password every time they try to make a purchase. Speaking of passwords, don't give your child the password to his or her iTunes account. It will give them unfettered access to their device and will undo all your security settings.

Other settings in the Restrictions allow you to control what apps have access to your contacts, calendars and other personal information. You can read more about each of these settings in [this support document](#) on Apple's website.

Enable Guided Access

Guided Access is [an accessibility option](#) that was added in iOS 6. [This feature](#) limits your device to a single app and lets you control which app features are available. You turn on Guided Access by going to Settings > General > Accessibility > Guided Access. When you turn Guided Access on, you will need to select a passcode to turn it off and adjust the settings. Once again, choose a password that your child won't guess and you won't forget.

Once Guided Access is enabled, you can launch the app you want your child to use and then triple-click the home button to turn the accessibility feature on. You can adjust the settings to disable motion input, touch input and hardware button control. You can also select the part of the screen that you want to disable. Once you are ready, click start to turn on Guided Access and your child will be limited to using this one app.

You may not use Guided Access all the time, especially with older children, but I would recommend setting it up on each device that you hand over to your kids. You never know when you may need it. I also set it up on my personal devices for those moments when I hand over my iPhone to my children. It's easy to enable and it lets me give my phone to my child and not worry about them getting into my email or Twitter account.

Restrict WiFi Usage

One nifty way to limit your child's online consumption is to block their access to the internet using the WiFi access timers available on your AirPort wireless router. Macworld's Christopher Breen [describes how to block iOS devices](#) in an article from earlier this year. You will need to know the MAC address of the iOS device (Settings > General > About) and must have a Mac with [the AirPort Utility software](#) installed on it. You can follow his step-by-step procedure on [Macworld's website](#).

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Part 3: removing apps, limiting social features and other safety options



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In the first post of the series, we walked you through [setting up a child-safe iTunes account](#) and in part two we took [a tour of parental controls \(restrictions\)](#). In part three below, we put the finishing touches on your iOS device by removing stray accounts, deleting apps and turning off social features. Before you hand over an iOS device to your child, use this final checklist to clean up any leftover adult settings.

- 1. Remove all [email accounts](#) from your device.** Go to Settings > Mail, Contacts, Calendars. Tap the name of your email account and then tap "Delete Account" at the bottom.
- 2. Remove all [Facebook and Twitter accounts](#).** Go to Settings > Facebook then "Delete Account." For Twitter, go to Settings > Twitter. Tap on each Twitter account and then select "Delete Account."
- 3. Turn off PhotoStream and other iCloud features, but leave on Find My iPhone.** Go to Settings > iCloud and turn off all settings except for Find My iPhone. [Find My iPhone](#) will let you find the device or lock it if it is lost or stolen.
- 4. Remove all non-children apps, especially shopping apps like Amazon, PayPal and eBay.** To remove an app, touch and hold any application icon on the Home Screen until the icons start to wiggle. Tap the "x" in the corner of the application you want to delete. Tap Delete to remove the application and all of its data from your device.
- 5. Set a Volume Limit for headphone use.** Go to Settings > Music > Volume Limit and use the slider to adjust the maximum volume.

6. Turn off Game Center social features. Open Game Center and tap on the "Me" icon at the bottom. Then tap on your Account: name > View Account to access your Game Center settings. Turn off "Game Invites" and "Nearby Players" to prevent game invitations from strangers. Be sure the Game Center profile is set to private. Also remove all the email addresses from your email list by tapping "Remove Email from Account." Lastly, turn off Facebook Friend Recommendations at the bottom.

7. Get an Appropriate case to protect your iOS device. We recommend an [Otterbox](#), [Griffin Survivor](#) or [LifeProof](#) case. For younger kids, there is also [the iBuku Pets](#) for the iPhone and iPod touch.

Once you have completed these final touches, your iOS device should be extremely child-safe. If you have any other suggestions that'll help secure an iOS device from the tap-happy hands of a child, please share them in the comments.