

iPhone or Android?

Choosing the Right Device for Family Safety

Both platforms can be safe — if they're set up properly. Here's what parents need to know before buying or handing down a phone.

The Big Picture

Whether you choose Apple or Android, the most important factor isn't the brand — it's how it's configured. Both systems offer strong parental tools, but they work in slightly different ways.

iPhone (Apple)

- Screen Time: built-in controls for app limits, downtime, and content filters.
- Family Sharing: lets parents approve downloads and purchases.
- App Store only: no third-party app stores (reduces risk of malware).
- Automatic updates: devices receive regular security patches for years.
- Best for: Families who want tighter control, fewer settings to manage, and a simpler learning curve.
- Limitation: Less customisation — and iPhones tend to cost more upfront.

Android (Google)

- Family Link: Google's free parental control app (time limits, app approval, location).
- Multiple app stores: can be helpful or risky — restrict downloads to Google Play only.
- Device variety: lots of affordable models, but not all receive regular updates.
- Customisation: more freedom, but easier to bypass if unsupervised.
- Best for: Tech-savvy parents or teens who need flexibility with oversight.
- Limitation: Requires more checking — cheaper Androids often stop getting updates after 2–3 years.

Feature Comparison at a Glance

Feature	iPhone	Android
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App approvals	Yes, via Family Sharing	Yes, via Family Link
Web filtering	In Screen Time → Content Restrictions	via Family Link → SafeSearch & site filters
App store control	Apple App Store only	Google Play + third-party stores (can disable)
Screen time scheduling	Built into settings	Managed through Family Link app
Security updates	5+ years on most devices	Varies by brand (2–5 years typical)

Practical Advice Before You Buy

- Choose a device you understand — setup confidence matters more than specs.
- Always start with a child profile under your family account.
- Turn off “Add new users” or “Guest mode” to stop bypassing controls.
- Set clear rules: no downloads without discussion, and devices stay out of bedrooms overnight.

Tips for Hand-Me-Down Phones

- Factory reset before setup — removes old data and hidden profiles.
- Update to the latest software immediately.
- Set your own parental controls before giving it over.

The Bottom Line

No phone is perfectly “safe” by default — safety comes from settings, conversation, and routine. Whether it’s Apple or Android, your child’s best protection is still your ongoing involvement.

Family Guideline

“The right phone is the one that fits your family’s values, your budget, and your level of comfort with technology.”

Where to Get Help

- NSPCC Online Safety — nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/
- Internet Matters — internetmatters.org/
- CEOP Safety Centre — ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/