



A Parent's Guide to TikTok Safety Settings

Set up TikTok safely in about 20 minutes. No tech skills needed.

TikTok is one of the most popular apps with teens, and one of the most engaging by design. The good news is that it has real safety tools built in, and you do not need to be techy to use them. This guide covers what TikTok already does, how to set up parental controls, and the exact settings worth changing.

One thing first. The most effective protection is not a setting, it is a conversation. Do not lock down your teen's TikTok in secret. Kids who feel ambushed often make a second account you cannot see. Tell them what you are turning on and why, and make it a shared decision wherever you can.

What TikTok already does for teen accounts

TikTok applies some protections automatically, based on the birthdate entered at signup. Here is the catch: if your child entered a fake older age, these protections do not apply. So check the birthdate on the account first.

- All teens 13 to 17: accounts are private by default, and they cannot host LIVE video.
- Ages 13 to 15: direct messages are turned off completely, and others cannot download their videos.
- Ages 16 to 17: accounts start private but can be switched to public, and direct messages are available.
- Daily screen time is set to 60 minutes by default, though a teen can dismiss this unless you lock it.
- Night-time push notifications are off by default, from 9pm for ages 13 to 15 and from 10pm for 16 to 17.

Set up Family Pairing, your main tool

Family Pairing links your TikTok account to your teen's, so you can manage their safety settings from your own phone any time, without needing their device each time. Once linked, your teen cannot loosen the settings you set, though they can choose stricter ones.

1. Install TikTok and sign in on both phones. You each need your own account.
2. On each phone, tap Profile (bottom right), then the menu (three lines, top right), then Settings and privacy, then Family Pairing.
3. On your phone choose Parent. On your teen's phone choose Teen.
4. A QR code appears on your phone. Scan it with your teen's phone to link the two accounts.
5. You are connected. From now on you can adjust the settings below from your own phone.

The settings worth changing

Once paired, go through these. Each takes only a few seconds.

- ✓ **Private account:** turn it on, and turn off "Suggest your account to others" so the profile stays truly private. Note that the username, photo, and bio are always public, so keep personal details out of them.
- ✓ **Direct messages:** set to No one for under 16, or Friends only for older teens. DMs are the most common way strangers make contact.

- ✓ **Restricted Mode:** turn it on through Family Pairing. Set this way, your teen cannot switch it off. It filters mature and suggestive content.
- ✓ **Screen time limit:** set a daily limit, customizable by day. Done through Family Pairing, your teen must ask you for a passcode to keep scrolling past it.
- ✓ **Comments, mentions, Duet and Stitch:** set these to Friends or No one to limit interaction from strangers.
- ✓ **Content keywords:** filter your teen's feed by blocking keywords you do not want recommended.
- ✓ **Block accounts:** you can block specific accounts from your teen's experience, a newer Family Pairing tool.

What parental controls do not cover

Settings reduce risk, but they are not a force field. Know the gaps.

- They rely on the birthdate at signup. A fake older age removes the automatic protections, so verify it.
- They only work inside the TikTok app. A teen can open [tiktok.com](https://www.tiktok.com) in a browser and bypass app limits, so back this up with device-level or home-network controls.
- A determined teen can create a second account you do not know about. This is why the conversation matters more than the controls.
- Restricted Mode catches a lot, but no automated filter is perfect.

The setting that matters most

None of these replace talking with your teen. Watch some TikTok together. Ask what they are seeing. Talk about how filters and “perfect” lives are not real. And make the promise that matters most: if anything online ever feels scary or wrong, they can come to you, and they will not be in trouble for telling. A teen who believes that is safer than any setting can make them.

If you only do five things

1. Set up Family Pairing.
2. Lock the account to private and hide it from suggestions.
3. Set messages to No one, or Friends only for older teens.
4. Turn on Restricted Mode through Family Pairing.
5. Have the no-blame talk, and keep having it.

For more plain-language guides on keeping kids safe online, visit clickkind.org/guides.

Be kind, stay safe.

Sources (current as of June 2026): TikTok Guardian's Guide (tiktok.com/safety/en/guardians-guide); TikTok Newsroom, Family Pairing features (newsroom.tiktok.com); Internet Matters, TikTok privacy and safety settings (internetmatters.org). Settings and menu names can change as TikTok updates the app.