

How to set up parental control on Android: restrict Android app permissions

Kids are increasingly tech-savvy these days, and even a toddler will manage to use your Android smartphone or tablet in ways you didn't know were possible. Apart from running up a heavy bill in app and game purchases, this means your children may also be at risk from online predators and adult content. Here we show you how to set up sensible parental controls.

Set up parental controls on an Android phone or tablet

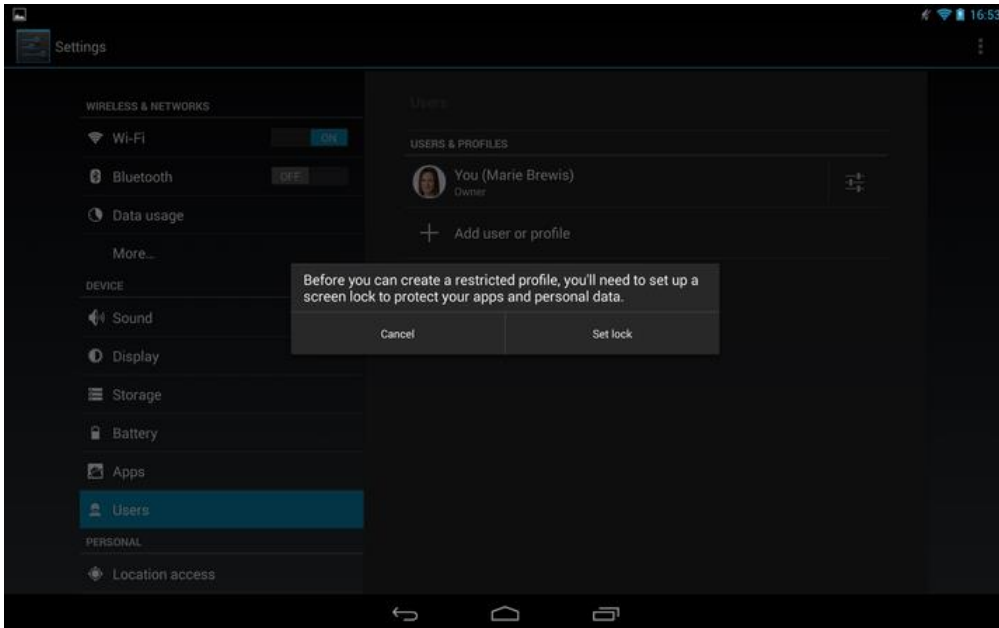
Kids are increasingly tech-savvy these days, and even a toddler will manage to use your Android smartphone or tablet in ways you didn't know were possible. Apart from running up a heavy bill in app and game purchases, this means your children may also be at risk from online predators and adult content. Here we show you how to set up sensible parental controls, and explain the restricted profiles feature (for tablets) added to Android Jelly Bean 4.3. You can create a restricted profile on an Android smartphone, but you can only have multiple user profiles on phones running Lollipop or later.

Android 4.3 saw the introduction of restricted profiles adding a new dimension to the user profiles feature that appeared in version 4.2. Tablets (but not smartphones) running Android 4.2, 4.3 or 4.4 can be configured with multiple user accounts, allowing you to turn your Jelly Bean tablet into a family PC with unique environments for every member of the household. In Android 4.3, restricted profiles lets the device administrator control the app permissions of each user profile, which could help you to keep your child safe.

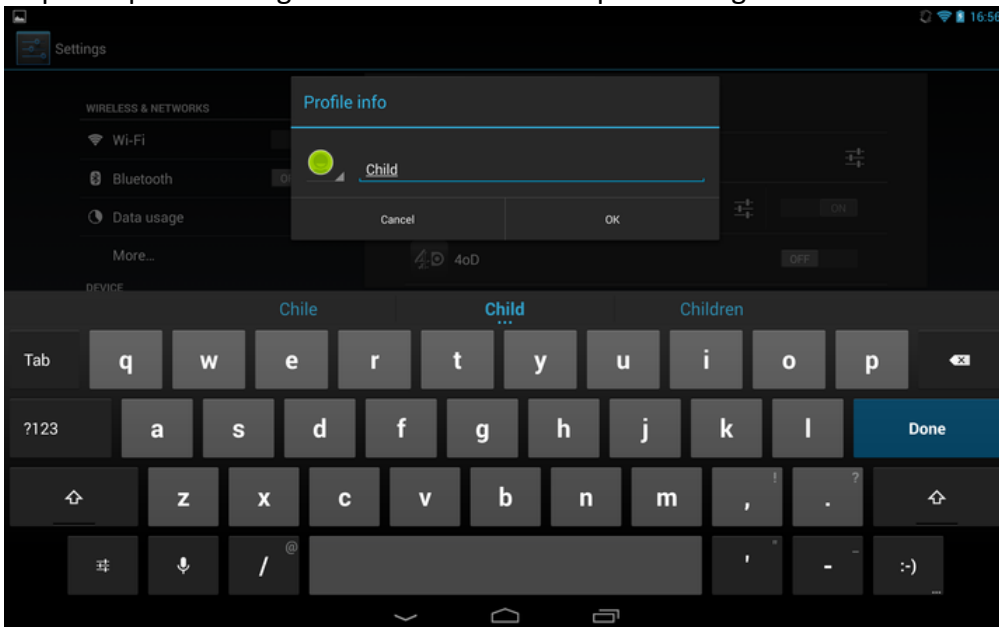
If you have an Android smartphone running Jelly Bean or KitKat, these controls are not available. Check if there's an update to Lollipop by going to Settings > About Phone > System Updates (or similar).

Step 1. First, from the Android home screen, pull down from the top right and tap on Settings. Scroll down to and select Users, then tap 'Add user or profile'. You can create either a normal User profile, or a Restricted profile. Tap on the latter.

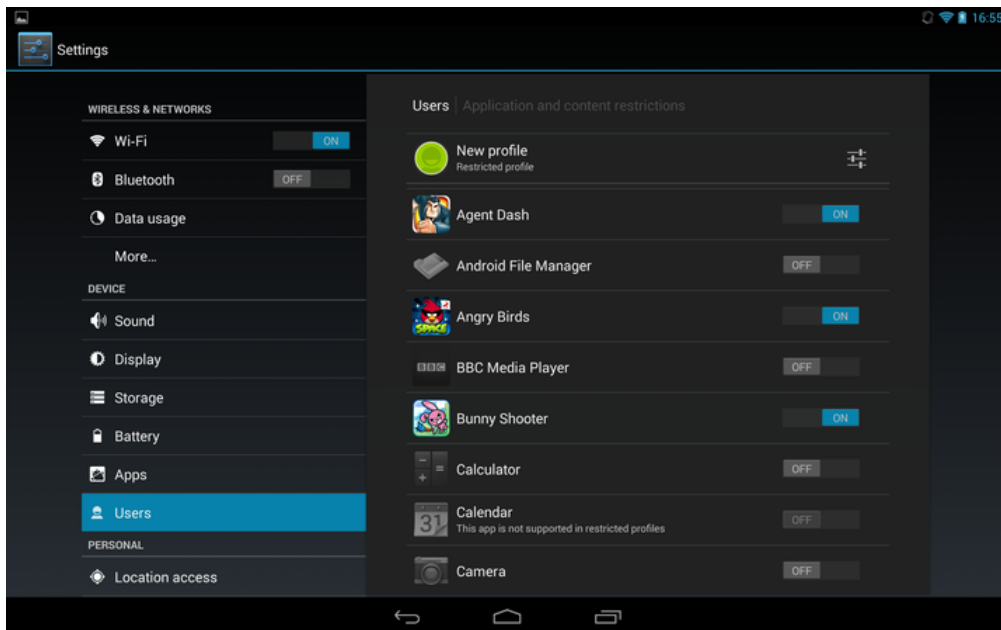
Step 2. If you haven't done so already, you'll be prompted to set up a screen lock for your device. Tap Set lock, then choose to use either a pattern, PIN or password lock and follow the instructions.



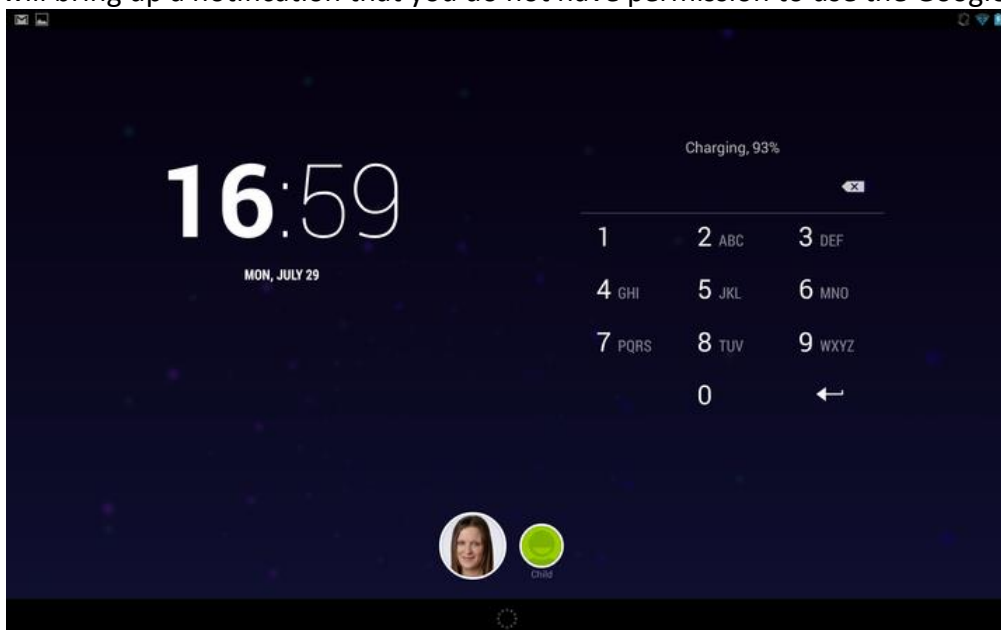
Step 3. Tap the settings icon next to the 'New profile' to give it a name.



Step 4. You'll now see a list of apps installed on your device, with on/off toggles to the side. By default, the restricted profile is unable to access any of these. Go through the list and toggle on only the apps you are comfortable with your child accessing. The list includes any web browsers installed on your tablet, so leave these switched to off if you're worried about what harm your child may come to online. You can also click on the Settings icon next to Settings to allow apps to use location information, which is switched off by default.



Step 5. From the lock screen, you'll now find your own account is protected with a pattern, password or PIN, while your child can instantly access their own account - but only the apps you deem appropriate. Although the Google Play Store icon appears, trying to access this will bring up a notification that you do not have permission to use the Google Play Store.



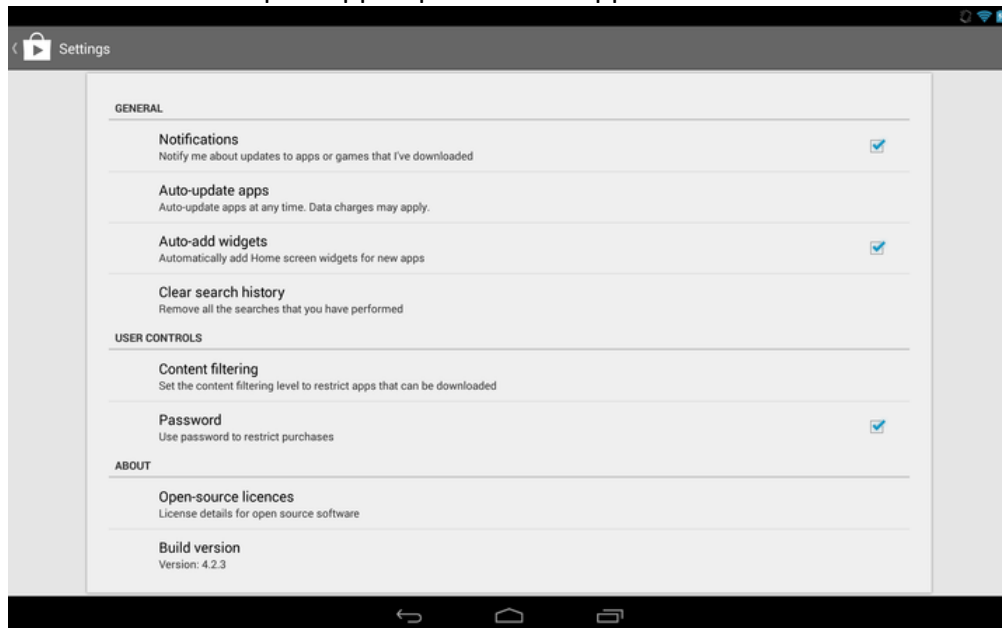
How to set up parental controls on Android: Restrict in-app purchases in Google Play

If you have a smartphone running an Android version prior to Lollipop, there are other things you can do to protect your child and set up parental controls.

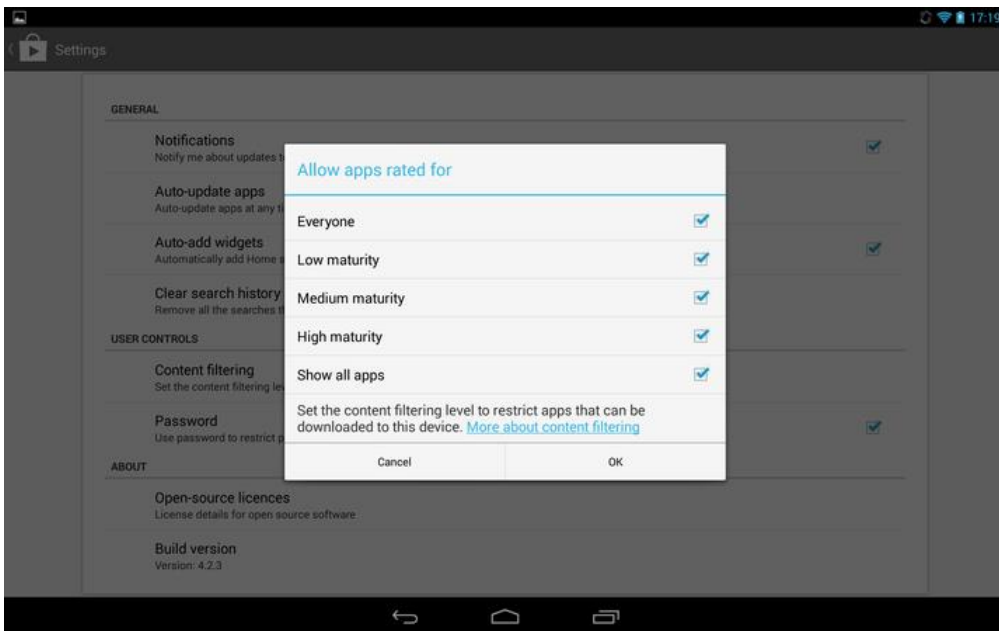
Kids love games, and Google Play is brimming with casual titles aimed directly at them. It can be all too easy for busy parents to leave their child unsupervised with what would

appear to be a harmless game while they get on with things. But, as you'll no doubt have seen in the news, some parents have unwittingly found themselves with outrageous credit-card bills as their blissfully ignorant child purchases all manner of expensive in-app extras.

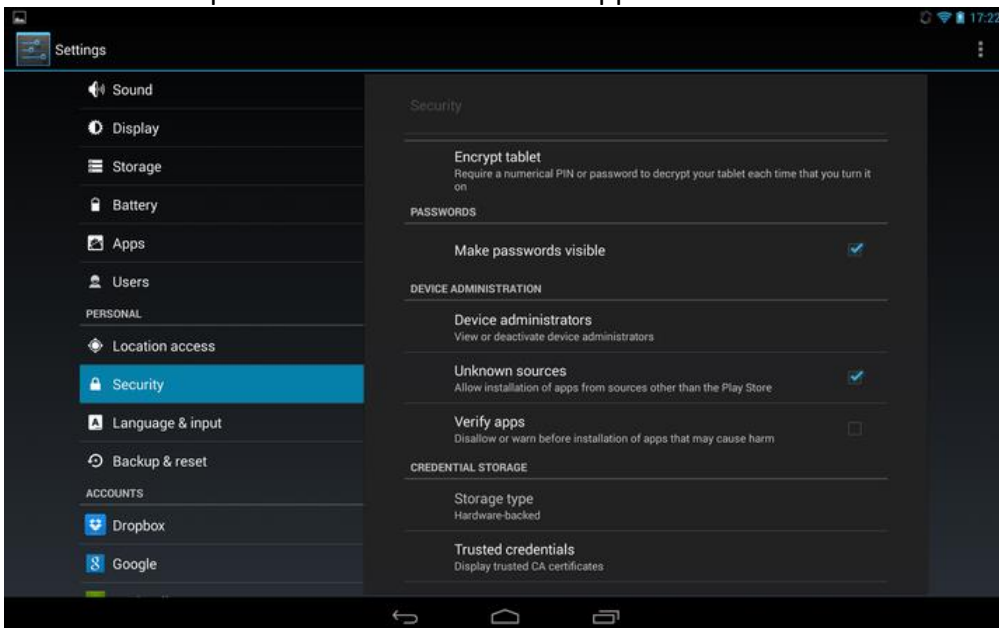
Protecting your wallet is incredibly simple: open the Google Play Store app on your Android phone or tablet, then open the Settings menu and scroll down to User controls. Tick the box next to Password, which will request your Google account password whenever someone tries to download a paid app or purchase in-app extras.



In this same menu is an option to set up Content filtering. Within this you can allow all apps, or only those rated as low, medium or high maturity, or for everyone. Tick the appropriate boxes and click Ok. Note that you'll need to create a password to stop a tech-savvy child from altering this setting.



Restricting app purchases in Google Play is worthwhile only if you ensure that apps can't be downloaded from other app stores. Open the Settings menu, scroll down to Security, and make sure the option to allow installation of apps from other sources is disabled.



How to set up parental controls on Android: Restrict only certain apps

If your child is slightly older then you might trust them to use your device unsupervised, but aren't keen on the idea of letting them loose on your Facebook or email account. Or perhaps you want to let your toddler run riot with games, but not get online or into your messages. We like AppLock, a third-party app that lets you password-protect certain apps without locking down access to the entire device.

A quick solution for restricting access to the web, call and messaging features on the fly is to enable Flight mode. If there isn't an option to do this from the power-off menu, you should find this in Settings, More Networks, Flight mode. Be warned that it's just as easy for your child to disable Flight mode, however.

You will also find in Google Play several apps that allow you to restrict access. Consider the free Kid Mode app. This provides something similar to Windows Phone 8's Kid's Corner. It lets kids play their favourite Android games, read stories and paint pictures, but there's no way to accidentally buy anything, delete your emails or access another app.

There are also lots of parental-control apps in Google Play, many of which are free. We recommend those from Kaspersky, Norton and the popular Funamo.