iMessage Guide
monitoring your kid's & teen's Apple iMessages
updated for iOS 10.X - 2017
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Learn how you can see every iMessage for free

So your kids and teens have their shiny Apple mobile devices. Maybe it’s an iPod touch for the young ones, a fancy iPad Mini, or the ultra-hot iPhone 7 Plus! Regardless, every new toy brings its set of challenges for parents. One of the most favorite features is of course, Apple’s proprietary texting tool iMessage.

It allows kids and teens to text one another over WiFi or traditional carriers, as long as each of them both have Apple iOS devices. It is almost impossible to filter out, so parents everywhere are trying to figure out how to control it, or at least, have a way to monitor kids using the app. Below, we will show you just how easy and for free, any parent can take steps to monitor and police their children’s texting habits.

First we suggest that you have a conversation with your kids and teens to set the ground rules, expectations, and consequences. Studies have shown that being up front typically ends up being more productive than to spy clandestinely.

Okay, so what do you need to get started?

1. First, this only works if you, the parent or guardian, has an Apple mobile device as well. If your child has an iPhone and you have an Android, this will not work. At least one parent must have an Apple mobile device. You must be running iOS 7, 8, 9, or 10+.

2. You must have an iCloud account setup as you will be using this later, and without iCloud installed on each device, this will not work. Also, and this is critical, you and your targeted children must be on the same iCloud account. This is typically preferable anyway as you can approve their purchases, share music, and use Family Share (if on iOS 8 or higher).
3. Next, make sure that you have some time. It’s not a long process, but you need to make sure you test everything and that you are not interrupted. For the novice, 20 to 30 minutes should be more than enough to do everything and test. If you are a tech guru, you will be up and running in 5 minutes!

4. You need to have all your Apple mobile devices with you. Make sure that all devices have WiFi or access to the internet, as having access will be key in setting it up and testing.

5. You are now ready!

*Before we get started, please note: Apple makes changes to its iOS very often. Features that work today may not work tomorrow. It is for this reason, everything below may not work exactly the way we outline as Apple may have made modifications. We offer this only as a free benefit to our readers so don’t blame the messenger if it does not work for you! Also, we don’t offer support for this blog so please don’t ask us to help you set it up for you! As much as we would love to, we can’t support 30,000 people that attempt this each month!

Ok, so let’s continue...for our example we are going to assume the following scenario. Your combination may be different but it should all work similarly. Just replicate each step on each child’s device, and you will be in business. For our demo case, we are going to monitor one teens iPhone 5S running iOS 8. The parent will monitor and setup their iPhone 6.

Setting up the child’s iPhone 5S: (phone number is 555-555-1111)

- Go to settings, iCloud make sure that you have an active account and you are logged in as you or the same account you will be using on your parent device. If the child has their iCloud already setup, you will need to log out and log back in as your account.
• Go back to Settings and now select Messages

- Make sure iMessage is turned on
- Make sure that under Apple ID you have your iCloud account listed and logged in
- For iOS 9, first click “Send & Receive” to see Apple ID that is logged in
- Under “YOU CAN BE REACHED BY iMESSAGE AT”: – make sure that ONLY the child’s phone number (555-555-1111) and/or their email is checked. Their default phone will already be checked and will be greyed out. (For a WiFi only devices, there will be just an email.)
- Below this look under “START NEW CONVERSATIONS FROM” – there make sure ONLY the child’s default phone number/email is listed. (If you are doing an iPad WiFi only or an iPod touch, you will have no phone numbers. Just make sure that they originate the conversations from their email address but you will receive iMessages to both their email and your phone number/email

• That’s it! Your child’s device is now set up. Later, you will come back a to secure these settings so they cannot change them.
Setting up the parent device, iPhone 6: (phone number is 555-555-2222)

• Go to settings, iCloud make sure that you have an active account and you are logged in as you

• Go back to Settings and now select Messages
  - Make sure iMessage is turned on
  - Make sure that under Apple ID you have your iCloud account listed and logged in
  - Under “YOU CAN BE REACHED BY IMESSAGE AT”: – make sure that BOTH the child’s phone number (555-555-1111) AND your phone number (555-555-2222) are checked and their email is checked. Your default phone (2222) will already be checked and will be greyed out
  - Below this look under “START NEW CONVERSATIONS FROM” and make sure ONLY your default phone number is listed

• That’s it! Your device is set up and you are ready for a simple test.

Testing...

Have someone text or send an iMessage to YOUR phone (2222). Have both devices with you and online so you can see observe the behavior. If you did everything correctly, you should get a text/iMessage on your phone but not on the child’s device.

Now, have the same person send an iMessage to your child’s phone (1111) and/or email address. Your child will get that iMessage, and you should also get a copy on your device. If not, go back and check all steps to make sure that each step was followed exactly.
Setting up their account restriction

Once everything is tested, you need to go back to their device and add a device restriction. This will prevent your child/teen from seeing or changing the iMessage settings you have implemented. Do this as follows:

1. On the child/teens device, go to [Settings>General]

2. Select [Restrictions]

3. If you have not yet enabled Restrictions, click [Enable Restrictions] and put in a new passcode that only you know. If you already have them enabled, just put in your passcode here

4. Scroll down to the bottom until you see a section labelled: “ALLOW CHANGES:”

5. Select [Accounts]

6. Now select [Don’t Allow Changes]

7. That’s it – go back until you are back at the Settings screen

8. Scroll down to and click [Messages]

9. Scroll down to “Send & Receive”

10. You will see it is grayed out and you cannot select it to see what you have set

11. If you need to make changes in the future, you will need to go back to step (6) above and re-enable account changes so you can make them

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Keep in mind that if you do NOT tell your child, you will run into some interesting situations. If you and your teen are cuddled up watching a movie on Sunday night and their friends iMessage them, your iPhone will also go off and you may be caught! You may want to silence your teens contact info on your iPhone, so when they get an iMessage/text, your iPhone does not ding every time. To do that on iOS 9, for example, perform the following:

Let’s say your teen’s name is Lisa. Of course you have her in your contacts with her phone number and email, etc.

1. Open up your contacts application and find her in the contacts
2. Once you have her on the main screen, click the “Edit” link in the top right to edit her contact info
3. Scroll down until you see the label called “Text Tone”
4. Change the Default one or whatever you have in there to “None”
5. Now when Lisa gets iMessaged (texted) to, her device will ding but yours will not as her contact going to your device will not alert you

Also, when you enable this, each phone will initially get a push notification from Apple letting you know which device is using which phone number or email so make sure you wait for that and clear it before handing back to your child. Beware of the process!

There are bugs and it does take some care and feeding to get it right. Between iOS 7 – 10.x, there are nuances and the combination of different devices and iCloud settings also impact the viability of this “hack”.

We hope this will allow you to have some additional oversight. iMessage can be a great tool that kids & teens love. It can also be abused, so if you find your child or teen is in need of more oversight, use the above trick to be more involved and aware. If you need additional features that allow you to remote screen lock, hide 3rd party apps, filter website content, and more, you may want to try a service like Netsanity. They have premium features that can make keeping your kids safe on Apple Mobile Devices easier with less stress. Sign up for your 14-day free trial here!

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Thank you for reading!

Learn more and get premium features to protect your kids and teens by visiting our website:

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