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# Online Safety News

## FEBRUARY 2026

## YouTube Shorts Can Now Be Blocked or Restricted

As of January 2026, YouTube now allows parents and carers to block Shorts by setting the daily limit to zero minutes within the **Family Link app** under "YouTube Kids Settings" or supervised account controls.
This new control enables the blocking of Shorts entirely, or temporarily during study/bedtime, on accounts for users under 18, specifically on supervised accounts.

### Steps to Block YouTube Shorts (New Parental Controls)

- **Open Family Link:** Use the app on your parent device.

- **Select Child Profile:** Choose the account you wish to restrict.

- **Go to Controls:** Tap "Controls" > "YouTube".

- **Set Time Limit to Zero:** Under the new "Shorts" settings, adjust the timer to zero minutes to effectively disable the feed.

- **Alternatively, Use Restricted Mode:** For broader, less precise filtering, turn on **Restricted Mode** in the YouTube app settings to filter out potentially mature content.

## Key Risks of YouTube Shorts for Children

- **Addictive Behavior:** The infinite, fast-paced, vertical-scrolling nature of Shorts is designed to be highly engaging, leading easily to excessive screen time.

- **Inappropriate Content:** Despite filters, inappropriate or mature content can appear in the rapid-fire, user-generated Shorts feed.

- **Short Attention Span:** Constant consumption of 15-60 second videos may affect concentration and focus.

- **Bypassing Controls:** Tech-savvy children may find ways to create new accounts or disable parental settings,or just watch YouTube as a guest on a different device or browser.

- **Privacy Issues:** Similar to TikTok, Shorts can expose children to privacy risks and unwanted interactions.

For the most effective protection, it is recommended to combine these technical controls with open conversations about online safety and, for younger children, relying on the YouTube Kids app or use **Safe Vision** to filter and monitor your child's access on YouTube.

## Understanding Location Sharing

Many apps and games allow children to share their location without realising.

### Apps That May Share Location

- Snapchat (Snap Map)
- TikTok
- Instagram
- Find My Friends / Find My Device
- Some games and messaging apps

### Steps You Can Take

- Check location settings on your child's device and apps
- Turn off location sharing unless absolutely necessary
- Explain to your child why sharing their location can be risky
- Set clear boundaries about who can see their location

### Why This Matters

Location sharing can allow others to see:

- where your child lives
- their school
- places they visit regularly

This can be seen by:

- friends
- friends of friends
- sometimes the public

## AI, Fake Images and Online Blackmail — A Quick Guide for Parents

You may have seen recent news stories about artificial intelligence (AI) being used to create fake images, videos or messages as part of online blackmail attempts or online abuse.

While this can sound worrying, the most important protective factor for children is knowing they can talk to a trusted adult. Open, calm conversations make a real difference.

**Here are three simple steps parents and carers can take:**

### 🧠 Talk about AI and fake content

Explain, in an age-appropriate way, that not everything online is real. Images, voices and messages can be created using technology to trick or pressure people. If something feels wrong, it probably is and they should always check with a trusted adult.

### 💬 Keep the conversation open

Let your child know they can come to you if something online makes them feel uncomfortable or confused. Reassure them they won't be in trouble for telling you.

### ⏸ Encourage "STOP not SEND"

Messages that threaten to share images, ask for money, or create urgency are red flags. Children should stop responding, take screenshots if possible, and tell a trusted adult straight away and always remind them it is not their fault.

If you are worried about an online situation involving your child, you can seek help or make a report here:

**CEOP Safety Centre:** CEOP Safety Centre
**NSPCC Helpline:** Reporting child abuse and neglect