



## PARENT'S GUIDE TO

# Meta Virtual Reality Parental Supervision Tools

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- How the new tools work
- Helping your teen use VR safely
- Talking to your teen about parental supervision tools



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**If Meta's Quest 2 virtual reality (VR) headset has become a go-to gaming and entertainment device in your household, there's a new reason to cheer: Meta has launched VR parental supervision tools.**

The parental supervision tools will work with Meta Quest 2 (formerly Oculus Quest 2). Later updates will add the Quest 1 and the Rift. The parental supervision tools are tied to specific teen accounts.

The use of these parental supervision tools is essentially a partnership between the teen and their parent. Both parties have to opt-in, and both parties can opt-out at any time.

All of Meta's VR headsets—and the games and apps you'll run on them—are designed for people 13 and older. Some apps could be rated for older teens or adults.

## **What is the Meta Quest 2?**

For the uninitiated, Meta Quest 2 is a virtual reality headset. Like other VR headsets from Meta, it covers your eyes completely to immerse you into a three-dimensional "virtual world," which can be highly immersive, though as a safety feature, you can see objects around you when you first put them on (or by selecting Pass Through Home in the quick settings menu).

Although you may be at home in a room, the technology can make you feel as if you're floating in space, riding a roller coaster, or playing a game of tennis. That level of immersion can greatly enhance your experience.

The best way to understand how the Meta Quest 2 works is to try it on. You may or may not get hooked, but you will know how it works and why it's so compelling for many people. Like anything else that's new, it takes some getting used to, so give it some time.

## Teen initiated

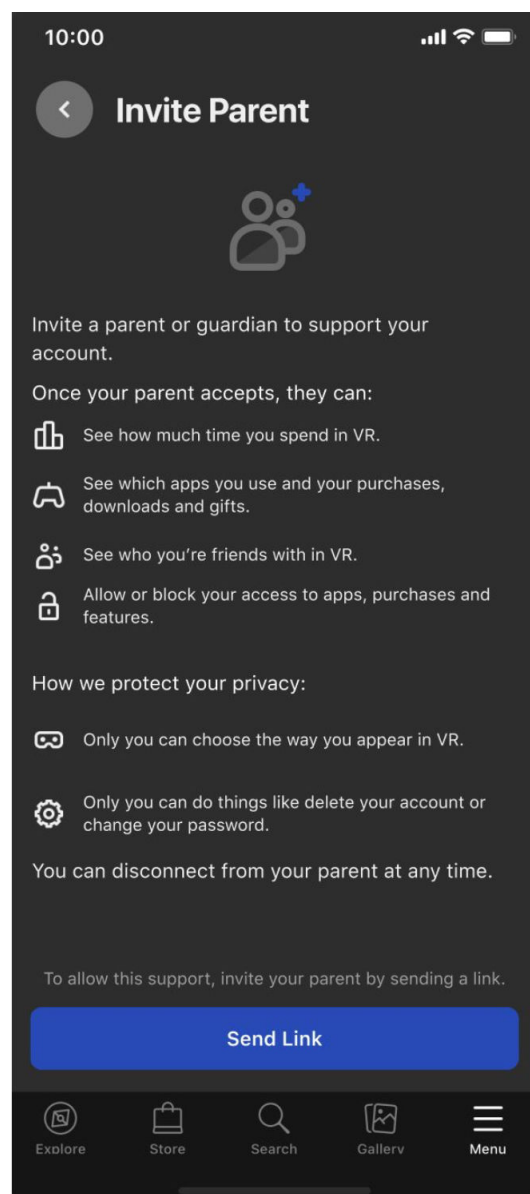
To take advantage of the Meta VR parental supervision tools, teens begin by initiating a link from their account to their parent's or guardian's account in the Oculus mobile app. Once the connection is established, parents will be able to:

- View all of the apps their teen owns
- Block or approve the downloading, purchase, or usage to specific apps
- View their teen's list of Meta Quest Friends
- Prevent their teens from accessing content from a PC via the Quest headset
- View time spent in VR
- Receive notifications of any apps downloaded/purchased/gifted to the teen

Teens can disconnect their account from their parent's account anytime (the parent or guardian will be notified that the supervision relationship has been terminated). By default, and regardless of whether parental supervision tools are in place, teens will not be able to purchase or download content that is deemed inappropriate for their age based on International Age Rating Coalition (IARC).

## Some important context about parental supervision tools and why to use them

Just about all parents agree that it's our responsibility to keep our kids safe while at the same time encouraging them to explore their world, grow, thrive, and develop their own sense of self-control. And that's true in just about every setting as they learn to navigate



**It's up to the teen to initiate the parental supervision tool to enable a parent or guardian to see how much time they are spending using the headset, who their VR friends are, and allow or block access to apps, features, and purchases.**



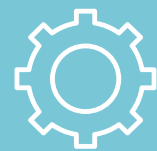
both the physical and virtual worlds. Although the virtual reality experience is different from both the physical and two-dimension online worlds, the principles of parenting are the same. You want to encourage and empower your teen, but you also want some visibility into their activities, so you can help them stay safe and protect their privacy and security.

Meta's VR parental supervision tools are designed to help you guide your teen in their exploration of the vast virtual worlds afforded by this new technology. The goal is not to "control" your teen's use of the technology or necessarily get a full report on everything they do but to strike a balance by providing parents a window into the apps their teens use and the amount of time they spend in VR. And, just like when your kids go out with friends in the physical world, Meta's parental supervision tools will let you know who their friends are without eavesdropping on their conversations.

## Communicating with your teen about their VR use

Virtual Reality headsets like those from Meta are relatively new, and many parents may not be familiar with them. Even if you don't initially "get" VR, keep an open mind and use your lack of familiarization as an opportunity to ask your teen what they like about VR, how they use it, and their favorite apps. Give them the opportunity to share their excitement and be the "teacher" when it comes to helping you understand this emerging technology.

In addition to talking about VR with your teen, we recommend trying it out. You can also [cast the VR video](#) from the headset to a smart TV, phone, or tablet with the Oculus app so you can watch along. But the best method is to put the headset on yourself and see what all the excitement is about.



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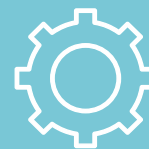
## Talking with your teen about parental supervision tools

One of the things we at ConnectSafely like about Meta's VR parental supervision tools is that they are designed to empower teens to initiate the process, which makes them different from some of the parental "control" tools available on other platforms. But getting the teen to initiate the process might require some parental encouragement.

In some cases, especially for young teens, parents might decide to require the teen to opt-in to supervision as a condition of their use of the headset. In other cases, there may just have to be an initial conversation between parent and teen, with parents explaining why it's important for them to have some visibility into their teen's use of the headset and their desire to empower their teen to explore the world of virtual reality while helping keep them safe.

## How we teach our kids to be safe

Both parents and teens need to understand that how families use parental supervision tools like the ones from Meta can evolve over time. What's appropriate for your 13-year-old may not be so necessary by the time they're 15 or 16. As teens mature, it's common for parents to give them more autonomy, with the goal of helping them ensure their own safety, privacy, and security in any environment. Just as children turn into teens before you know it, teens turn into adults, and our goal—as parents—should be to empower them with the skills to make good decisions their entire lives. Right now, we're talking about the use of a VR headset, but the same skills of time management, self-control, and making sound judgments about who they hang out with, how they respond to peer pressure, and how they approach safety can apply to all aspects of their life for their entire life.



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## Parents as advisors and role models

Even though some teens don't admit it, parents do have an important role in helping to shape their teen's attitudes and behavior. In an [article](#) published by UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center, neuroscientist Ron Dahl commented that "People think that for adolescents, it's all about peers and peer groups; but it's not only that. They care and value being admired by adults, too—caring teachers, coaches, and parents."

And, of course, it's not just what we tell our children. It's how they observe us as role models. Putting time limits on your teen's use of their VR headset is appropriate, but you also need to model that behavior in how you manage your own time and devices. If they see you using your phone during dinner or spending excessive time on your computer (even for work), watching TV, or using your phone, they're getting a message that may be a lot stronger than what you are telling them with your words.

And as much as you want your teen to step away from their devices and talk with you, teens have similar attitudes toward parental distractions. A 2018 [Pew Research survey](#) found that 51% of teens say they "often or sometimes find their parent or caregiver to be distracted by their own cellphone when they are trying to have a conversation with them." The phrase "do as I say, not as I do" has been [traced back to 1654](#). Maybe it's time to retire it.

## Fun Games to Check Out



Games are a great way to experience VR and enjoy the technology as a family. We suggest casting the VR video to a nearby device, so everyone feels in on the action.

For families with younger teens

**Beat Saber** Rock out using lightsabers to strike and slice flying squares to the beat. Bonus: Players get a heart- and arm-pumping workout. (\$29.99 in the Oculus Quest Store)

**Down the Rabbit Hole** Set in Wonderland before the arrival of Alice of the classic Lewis Carroll story, this visually pleasing puzzle game follows an unnamed main character on a quest to find her lost pet Patches. (\$19.99 in the Oculus Quest Store)

For families with older teens

**The Room VR: Dark Matter** Virtual world version of popular real-life escape rooms filled with puzzles—and intrigue. (\$29.99 in the Oculus Quest Store)

**Superhot VR** Battle bright-red enemies that shatter and slice apart like glass when you shoot, punch or throw things at them. (\$19.99 in the Oculus Quest Store)

## The limits of parental supervision tools

While parental management and supervision tools can help teens more safely use technology, they do have their limits. Meta's tools are opt-in—they are not designed to force teens to use them. But even tools that are imposed by parents have their limitations. Teens can often find ways around them, and even if they work on one device or app, there are always going to be devices or apps teens use that don't have these controls, which is why it's so important to teach teens to protect themselves—a skill that will last a lifetime. And it's not just about blocking specific content or certain types of behavior. It's about helping teens learn to make good decisions with everything they do, even when there are no parental supervision tools in place. Regardless of what tools you are using, the most important filter remains the one between the teen's ears and not the one that runs on a device.

## Closing thoughts for parents

Parental supervision tools can be helpful, but they're no substitute for parental involvement, including having regular conversations with your kids and teens. They don't have to be long and formal—just talks you have, perhaps in the car or over dinner. And be sure they truly are conversations—not lectures or inquisitions.

You might start by asking your teen about the apps and services they use and why they like them and transition to how they are protecting their safety, privacy, and security on those apps. If it feels right, you can ask them how others are treating them online and how they are treating others and avoiding people who are mean to them or make them feel uncomfortable.

This isn't just about your teen's use of technology, but about how they learn to conduct themselves now and as they mature. Meta's headsets may be about virtual reality—but learning to manage risk, treat people nicely, and protect yourself are real word skills.

## About ConnectSafely

*ConnectSafely is a Silicon Valley, California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy and security. We publish research-based safety tips, parents' guidebooks, advice, news and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.*