

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about AMAZON FIRE TABLETS

The Amazon Fire Tablet is a popular choice: not only are Amazon's own-brand devices more affordable than most other tablets on the market, but some models are designed specifically for youngsters (the Fire 7 Kids, Fire 8 HD and Fire HD 10 are aimed at ages 3–7, for example, while the 'Pro' range is geared toward 6 to 12-year-olds). Fires come with access to a wealth of entertaining content, from child-friendly TV shows and videos to age-appropriate games and ebooks.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

STORAGE ISSUES

Many parents have bemoaned the Amazon Fire's relative lack of storage space. Fires ship with either 16GB or 32GB of memory, so if your child gets busy downloading books, games and videos, they'll quickly run out of room. You could invest in an SD card for extra storage (especially if multiple youngsters are sharing the device), so it's worth factoring in this possible additional expense.

GETTING LOCKED OUT

If your child unsuccessfully attempts to bypass your security PIN code (to access the Fire's parental controls settings, for instance) too many times, this could easily result in them being locked out of their device – and, arguably even worse, you being locked out of your Amazon or Kindle account. If this happens, the Amazon support team will be able to help you regain access.

POTENTIAL ADDICTION

Like most digital technology, Amazon Fires and their child-friendly content tend to be highly engrossing to young users. You might find your child often spending hours staring at their tablet, leading to irritability when asked to put it down. It may be a wise move to adjust the built-in screen time settings so you can control exactly how long they're able to spend on the device each day.

'ASSISTANCE' FROM ALEXA

Though the Amazon Fire's parental controls are comprehensive and allow you to limit access to age-inappropriate content, your child could still potentially bypass those restrictions using Alexa, Amazon's built-in AI assistant. We recommend that you switch off this functionality altogether by toggling Alexa to 'off' in the Settings menu.

FAULTY OLDER MODELS

Back in 2016, Amazon announced a product recall of the Amazon Fire 7 and Kids' Edition power adapters, due to a fault which caused an increased risk of electrical shock. This is no longer an issue on newer models of the Fire tablet, but it's unquestionably worth remembering if you're thinking about picking up a second-hand device for your child.

Advice for Parents & Carers

REGISTER ON YOUR ACCOUNT

Before your child uses their Fire, you'll need to register it to an Amazon account. Rather than having to set up a dedicated Amazon account for them, Amazon's 'Household' feature simply lets you add a separate profile to your own account. In-app purchases and Amazon store access are set to 'off' by default on child accounts, so young ones can't buy anything on their Fire without the password.

CONSIDER A CODENAME

When you add a child profile on a Fire, you can select an image to represent your child and then enter their name, gender and date of birth. To keep things extra secure, you might want to consider using a codename for your child's profile – keeping their real name private from Amazon or anyone else who might ever get access to the account.

FILTER SHARED CONTENT

You'll also be asked during the set-up process whether you want the Amazon Fire to be able to share any digital content that you've already purchased. We advise selecting 'For Kids' at this point, as this will only show the family-friendly books or videos in your content library, as opposed to any movies, shows or audiobooks you might have downloaded that aren't suitable for little ones.

SET A PASSWORD OR PIN

You'll also be prompted to set a lock screen password or PIN. This is recommended to prevent your child from accessing device settings, browsing the Internet, trawling social media or making in-app purchases. If more than one child will be sharing the tablet, you can create a lock screen PIN for each of their profiles, so that each child can only access content that's appropriate for their individual age.

USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

The Fire's parental controls are very thorough and worth utilising. They let you choose, for example, to restrict access to additional settings such as location-based services, the built-in camera, and specific content types (such as apps). You can also set daily goals and time limits to specify when – or, crucially, for how long – your child can use their Fire tablet.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.



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