THE BROWNING SCHOOL

Reclaiming Focus: · Digital Life Discussions

Monthly family conversations on technology, media, and what protects attention.

focus.browning.edu

Tuesday, October 20, 2026 · 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. · 64th Street Commons

WHY WE ARE HERE

You are co-authors, not an audience.

What you try at home is what revises this guide.

focus.browning.edu

How the hour runs

TIME	MOVE	WHAT HAPPENS
20 min	Tips and hot topics	Three settings that protect attention at home.
30 min	Workshops by grade	Five rooms, each on its own Family Media Agreement.
10 min	Report back	One change per group, into the revision file.

Blocking is not the first action

Screens meet real needs

He is not on it for no reason. Gaming is where he is good at something, the group chat is where his friends are. Block it and he still needs both.

A setting is only half of it

Monitoring without conversation tends not to help, and can work against you. Monitoring with conversation is what the research supports.

The older he is, the more it matters that he agreed

A rule handed down stops working somewhere in the teenage years, and can push the other way by sixteen. The same rule, arrived at together, holds. That is what the next thirty minutes are for.

Sources: Scientific Reports, 2025 · Journal of Medical Internet Research, 2025

That is what the agreement is for

Give the reason, and let him argue

Rules with reasons, that a boy can accept, avoid the backlash. Rules handed down invite it. The Family Media Agreement in your son's section is where that gets written down.

In gaming, blocking costs you information

Restriction tends to reduce what he tells you and raise conflict. Being near it, even just watching, raises cohesion instead.

Read all of this carefully

Families often add rules because a problem already exists, so some of this runs backward. The direction is useful. The cause is not proven.

Sources: Valkenburg et al., 2013 · New Media and Society, 2025

Three layers, one house

The house

Your home wifi. Set up a profile for your son and schedule a pause. Every router app does this: eero, Verizon, Xfinity, Spectrum.

The Browning account

Schoolwork on browning.edu. GoGuardian Parent.

The personal device

The phone or iPad in his pocket. Screen Time.

Each one has a gap the next one fills. Set one and you have a hole. Set all three and you still have one, which is where we end.

eero profiles and scheduled pauses

1. Home tab, tap the plus sign, then Add a Profile.
2. Name it, then pick the devices that belong to that person.
3. Tap the profile, then Add a Scheduled Pause.
4. Set a start time, an end time, and the days, then save.

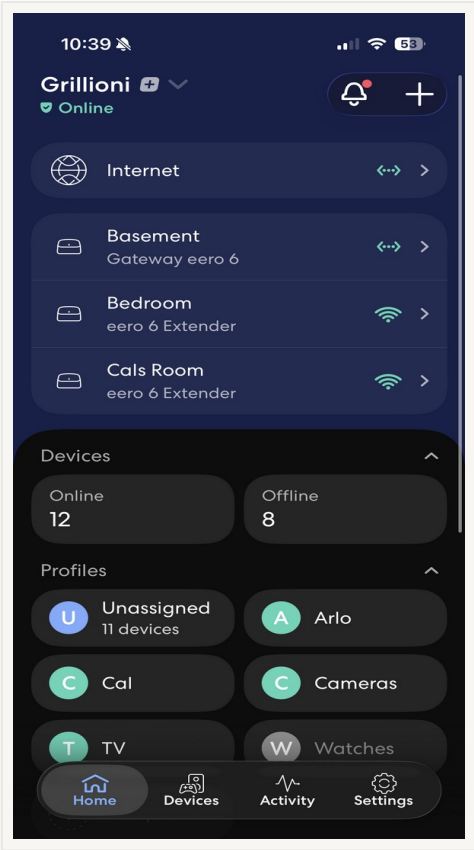
Covers

Every device on your wifi, consoles and televisions included.

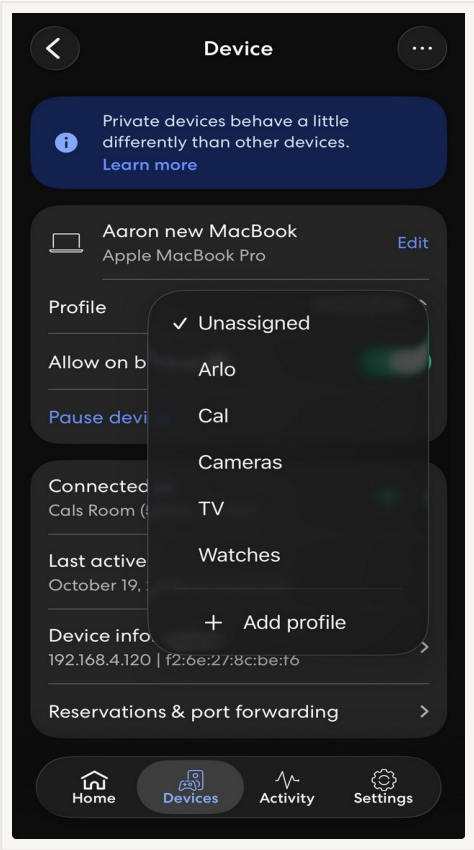
Misses

Anything on cellular data. A phone with a data plan walks around it.

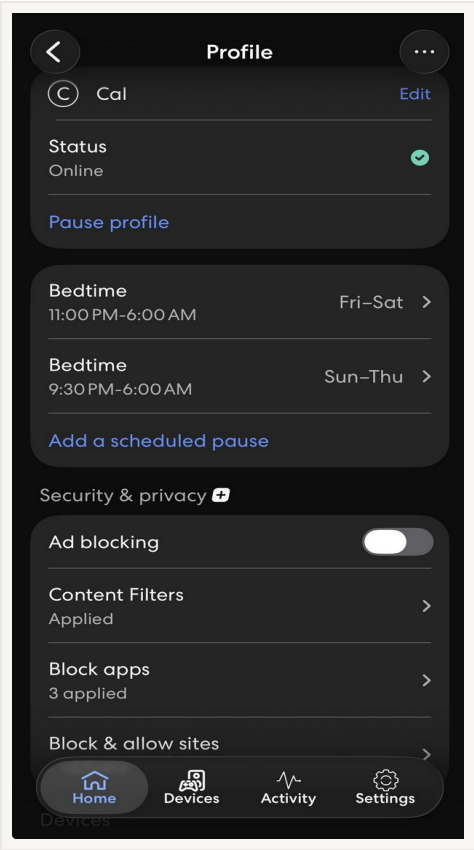
eero, step by step



Where profiles start.



Rename devices first.



Inside the profile: schedules.

The hour before bed sets up the hour after midnight

What the research says

- On nights when teens used a phone more than their own usual before bed, they used it longer later that same night.
- Interactive use, gaming above all, delays bedtime and fragments sleep more than passive viewing.
- Sleep timing that swings across the week carries its own risk, separate from total hours.

So

- Start the pause 30 to 50 minutes before lights out, not at bedtime.
- Put the console in its own profile with an earlier stop than the homework laptop.
- Shift the weekend schedule by an hour, not by four.

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine, SLEEP 2026

Every home network does this. The names differ.

YOUR PROVIDER	WHERE THE CONTROLS LIVE
Verizon Fios	Verizon Home app. Profiles, pause, School and Bedtime schedules.
Xfinity	Xfinity app, Family Settings. Profiles, scheduled pause, limits.
Spectrum	My Spectrum app. Block sites and schedule access.
Your own router	Google Home, Netgear, Asus. Same idea, different labels.

All of them stop at your front door. None reaches cellular data.

GoGuardian Parent

1. Download GoGuardian Parent from the App Store or Google Play.
2. Sign in with the email address Browning has on file for you.
3. Review the sites, apps, and documents used on the browning.edu account.
4. Block a site, pause the internet, or schedule a pause for outside school hours.

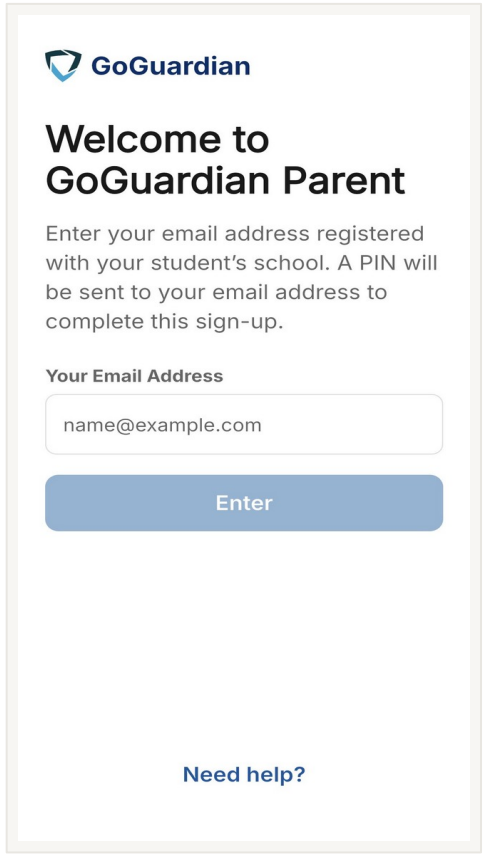
Covers

Schoolwork on the Browning account, on a school Chromebook or your own.

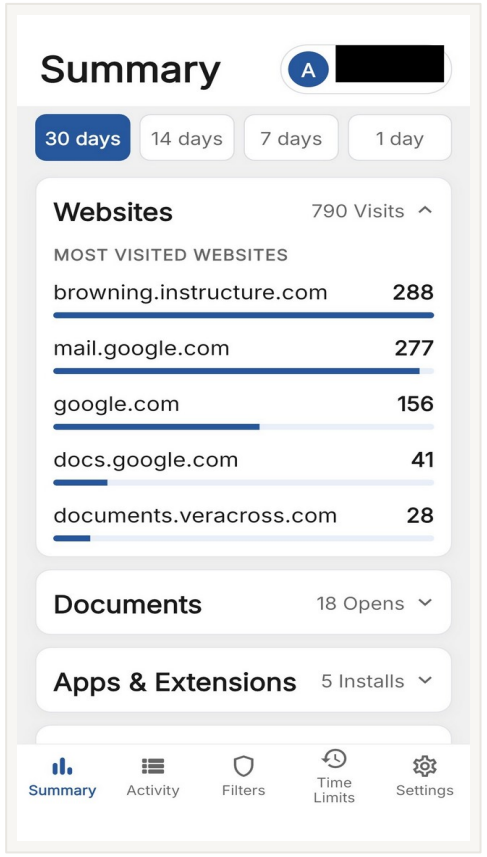
Misses

The machine itself. This follows the account, so a personal login sits outside it.

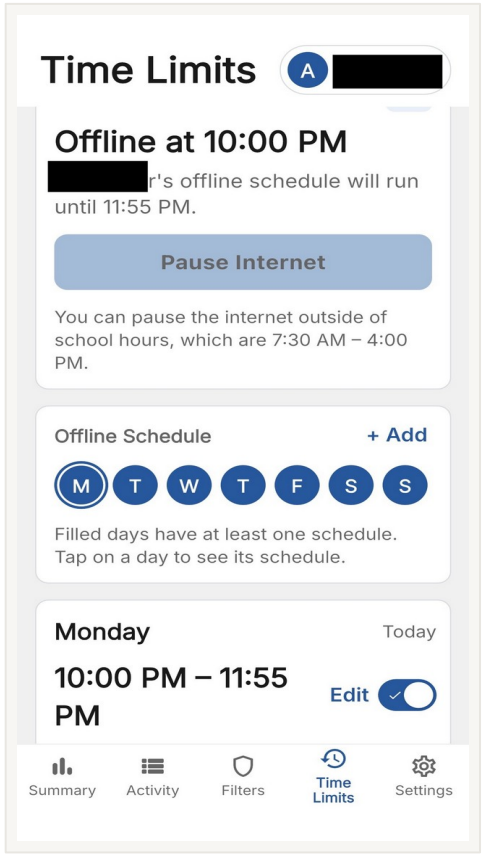
GoGuardian Parent, step by step



Show the verification code option.



The 30-day activity summary.



The controls in one view.

Seeing more is not the same as knowing more

What the research says

- Parental control apps raise what parents feel they know while lowering what they actually know, a false sense of security.
- Restrictive monitoring is associated with more problematic internet use, not less.
- Boys disclose more, including being bullied, to parents who talk with them about their online life.

Try this

- Open the app with him, on a Sunday, rather than quietly and then at dinner.
- Read for patterns, such as homework starting at 9:40, rather than for incidents.
- Treat the tool as the start of a conversation, never as a substitute for one.

Sources: Computers in Human Behavior, 2022 · Journal of Child and Family Studies, 2024

Screen Time on iOS

1. Set up Family Sharing on your phone first, then add your son.
2. Settings, Screen Time, his name. Set a passcode he does not know.
3. Downtime: set the hours, then turn on Block at Downtime.
4. App Limits: set the cap, then turn on Block at End of Limit.
5. Check Always Allowed, and keep that list short.

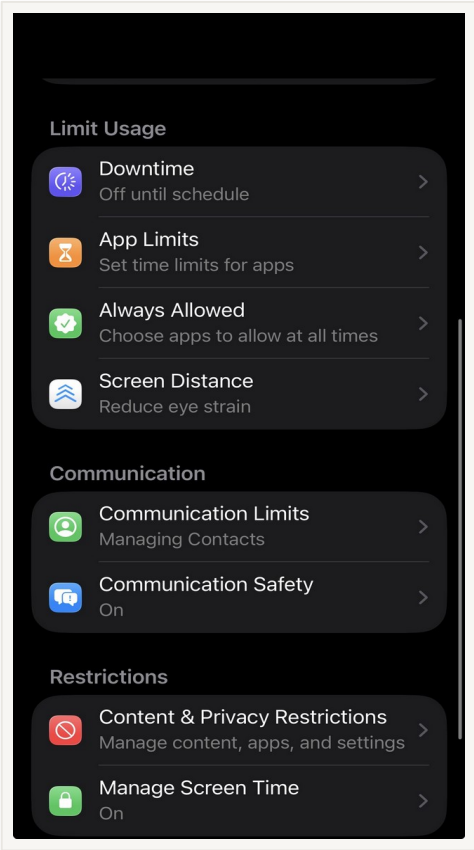
Covers

The device in his pocket, on wifi or on cellular.

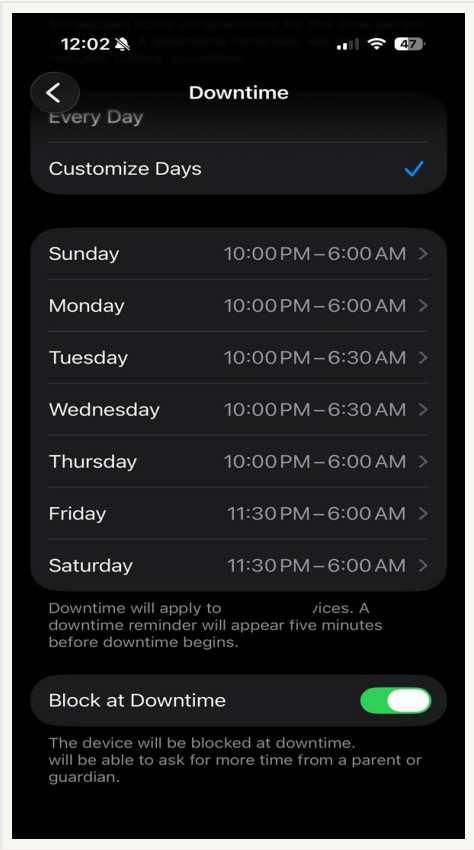
Misses

Anything that is not an Apple device, and any setting a shared passcode opens.

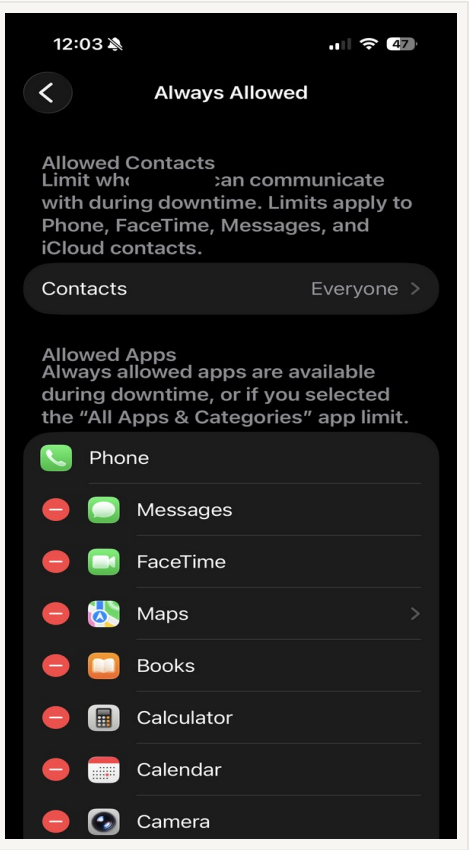
Screen Time, step by step



Where it all lives.



Block at Downtime, on.



The quiet failure: Always Allowed.

It is not how long. It is how often.

What the research says

- A median of 237 notifications a day, nearly a quarter of them during school hours. One in five students get more than 500.
- Most come from the apps boys use to talk to friends, not from social feeds.
- Fifty-nine percent use a phone between midnight and 5 a.m. on school nights.

Try this

- Ask him which pings he actually wants. Turn the rest off together, before you touch a time limit.
- Use Downtime with Block at Downtime, and charge the phone outside the bedroom.
- Two thirds of teens say they struggle to stop on their own. Limits are scaffolding, not punishment.

Source: Common Sense Media, Constant Companion, 2023

Family Link does what Screen Time does

Google Family Link

- Bedtime locks the device.
- Daily and weekly limits.
- App limits and approvals.
- School time, off at school.

On the phone itself

- Digital Wellbeing timers.
- Notifications, app by app.
- Filters in Play and Chrome.

Settings are the easy part. These are the habits.

The house

- Pause the wifi and Screen Time 30 to 60 minutes before bed, not at bedtime.
- Give the console its own profile and an earlier stop.
- Shift the weekend an hour, not four.

The account

- Read the pattern, not the incident.
- Open it with him, not about him.
- Pair its pause with the network pause.

The device

- Turn off social and chat notifications first.
- Charge it outside the bedroom.
- Set the limits together, and let him set one for you.

The goal is to give the settings away

GRADES	THE HOUSE · WHO SETS THE SCHEDULE	THE ACCOUNT · HOW IT GETS DISCUSSED	THE DEVICE · WHO SETS THE LIMITS
K to 2	You set it	Not yet	No device of his own
3 to 5	You set it	You check, he knows	You set them
6 to 8	He helps pick it	You look together	You set them, he knows why
9 to 10	He proposes, you approve	He walks you through the week	Set together, reviewed each term
11 to 12	Earned, then his to set	He tells you unprompted	Earned, then his to manage

From Grade 6 on, each step up in apps, hours, and schedule comes after the last one has held. Managed at seventeen as at seven teaches compliance, not judgment.

WHAT NONE OF THIS SOLVES

Settings buy you a structure. They do not have the conversation.

The families who tell us this held are the ones who said what was changing and why before the schedule turned on, and who agreed in advance on what happens when he wants an exception.

The Family Media Agreement in your son's grade section is where that gets written down. That is the next 30 minutes.

Three sentences, so you are not improvising at nine o'clock

Turning it on

"The wifi goes off at nine thirty on school nights. Not because I caught you at something. Because I want you to sleep."

When he pushes back

"Tell me what you would set instead, and why. If it is reasonable, we will use yours."

When he wants an exception

"Ask me before, not after."

What families are asking us

Group chats

The chat starts before the phone rules do.

When to give a phone

Access earned step by step, setup together, not handed over on a birthday. We recommend waiting until 8th Grade or later.

Gaming

The question is not how many hours. It is who he is playing with.

Into your workshop

K to 2	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 10	11 to 12
Commons	Commons stairs	Cafeteria	Cafeteria	Cafeteria

Scan to give feedback on the Family Media Agreement

focus.browning.edu

Connect, Extend, Challenge

Connect

What in this agreement already describes your household.

Extend

What would stretch it further, or make it work on a weeknight.

Challenge

What does not work, and what is missing entirely.

Mark up the printed agreement as you go. The marked-up page is what the group hands in.

Scan to give feedback on the Family Media Agreement

focus.browning.edu

One change per group

Before you go

Take the handout. Set one of the three layers this week, not all three.

Next session

Tuesday, November 17, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., on Zoom.

Each room names one change it would make to the guide. Every line goes into a running file for your grade band, and those files become the summer revision of focus.browning.edu.

Scan to give feedback on the Family Media Agreement

focus.browning.edu

Sources and setup guides

SETUP GUIDES

eero, profiles and schedules · support.eero.com

GoGuardian Parent, overview · docs.goguardian.com

Apple, Screen Time · support.apple.com

Google Family Link · support.google.com/families

Verizon Fios parental controls · verizon.com

Xfinity Family Settings · xfinity.com

RESEARCH

Common Sense Media, Constant Companion, 2023 · commonsensemedia.org

American Academy of Sleep Medicine, SLEEP 2026 · sleepmeeting.org

Parental mediation and what parents know, 2022 · Computers in Human Behavior

Parental mediation and basic needs, 2025 · Scientific Reports

Internet rules and problematic use, 2025 · Journal of Medical Internet Research

Mediation, autonomy and mental health, 2025 · New Media and Society

Drafted with AI assistance, then reviewed and edited by Browning faculty and staff. Developed and revised with our community over the past year.

Everything above, plus research on boys and digital life, lives on focus.browning.edu.