

Apple will let parents share their kids' ages to limit app access

Apple announced in a whitepaper that it plans to introduce a bunch of new child safety features, including letting parents share their kids' age ranges with apps, refreshing the App Store's age ratings system, and making it easier for parents to set up Child Accounts for their kids. The company says it will introduce the features "this year."

Companies like Meta, Snap, and X have called for platforms to be responsible for verifying the ages of users at the OS or app store level. Apple also reportedly lobbied against a proposed bill in Louisiana that would have required the company to enforce age restrictions.

In the whitepaper, Apple argues that age verification "at the app marketplace level" wouldn't be ideal, as it would require users to hand over "sensitive personally identifying information" to the company. "That's not in the interest of user safety or privacy," Apple says.

The age sharing system gestures in that direction without going so far as to fully verify each user's age. With the age range feature, "parents can allow their kids to share the age range associated with their Child Accounts with app developers," Apple says.

The age range will "be shared with developers if and only if parents decide to allow this information to be shared," and parents will be able to disable sharing. The feature also won't "provide kids' actual birthdates." Developers will be

able to request the age ranges with a new API that Apple says is a “narrowly tailored, data-minimizing, privacy-protecting tool to assist app developers who can benefit from it.”

“Today’s announcement is a positive first step, however, developers can only apply these age-appropriate protections with a teen’s approval,” Meta spokesperson Jamie Radice says in a statement to *The Verge*. “Parents tell us they want to have the final say over the apps their teens use, and that’s why we support legislation that requires app stores to verify a child’s age and get a parent’s approval before their child downloads an app.”

As for App Store ratings will expand from four thresholds to five; the new categories will be Age 4 plus, 9 plus, 13 plus, 16 plus, and 18 plus. In their app listings, developers will be asked to highlight “whether apps contain user-generated content or advertising capabilities that can impact the presence of age-inappropriate content” and if apps have their own content controls.

Apple says that the App Store won’t show kids apps with age ratings “in the places where we feature apps on our storefront” that are higher than what their parents set on their accounts.

As for Child Accounts, Apple says that it will introduce a new setup process and let parents fix the age associated with the account if it wasn’t set up correctly.

Update, February 27th: Added Meta statement.

<https://www.theverge.com/news/621195/apple-parents-kids-accounts-share-age-ranges>