



## AI Assistants for Children and Teens

### *a quick guide for parents and educators*

Conversational AI assistants, also known as AI chatbots, are programs that can talk with you or your child using text or voice to answer questions, create documents and images, and much more. While these tools are highly useful, they are not designed for children and come with a number of risks. This guide provides an overview of the five most popular AI assistants: ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, and Meta AI, along with information about safety options and best practices.

### The power of AI assistants

AI assistants work by using a type of artificial intelligence called a *large language model* (LLM), which has been trained on vast amounts of information to recognize patterns in language and uses those patterns to predict what words or image elements will come next. AI doesn't actually think or know things, which means the predictions AI makes can sometimes be wrong or inappropriate. Even with these limitations, AI assistants are extraordinarily powerful and have many practical uses. They can create images based on the text you enter, provide a summary of an article or an entire book, help explain complex math problems, provide help learning a language, or write an essay. So it's no surprise that in 2024 [44% of U.S. teens say](#) they are likely to use AI to help with their schoolwork.

### Risks of AI assistants pose a dilemma for parents

The educational benefits of AI assistants must be balanced against the risk. The AI companies in this guide do provide safeguards, but because AI can be unpredictable, these safeguards sometimes fail. AI assistants are not designed for children, and offer little or no parental controls. Documented risks from the AI assistants in this guide include:

- All of the AI assistants in this guide can also be used as "AI companions" —AI generated friends used by [72% of teens](#). Nearly 34% of teens reported [feeling uncomfortable](#) with something an AI companion has said or done.
- AI assistants have been [manipulated into offering dangerous advice](#) on self-harm and substance abuse.
- Despite safeguards, AI assistants have been shown to produce [sexually explicit chats](#) and [sexually explicit images](#).
- AI assistants can provide answers that are inaccurate, biased, incomplete and misleading.
- AI assistants can easily facilitate academic cheating by solving hard math problems or writing entire papers.

### Rules and Tools for the use of AI assistants

- Talk with your kids about using AI appropriately. Point out that AI assistants can provide false or misleading information, and surface sensitive content. Make sure they know that an AI companion is not a substitute for a real friend or a mental health professional, and that attempting to create a trusting relationship with AI can be harmful.
- Be clear with kids that while AI is useful, it is not a substitute for actual schoolwork, and having an AI assistant do things like writing an essay for you is unethical and will prevent you from learning vital skills on your own.
- Monitor the use of AI, and consider limiting the use of AI assistants to only when a parent is present.
- Use device-wide parental controls, such as the free tools provided by Microsoft and Apple or a separate parental control app to monitor use, limit use to certain times, or block access to AI assistants entirely.
- Investigate kid-friendly AI assistants, such as [Pinwheel's restricted version](#) of ChatGPT.



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Below are summary descriptions of the five most popular conversational AI assistants, along with age policies, content policies, and any existing parental control mechanisms.



ChatGPT

**ChatGPT** is a popular AI assistant. A 2024 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 26% of US teens [use ChatGPT for schoolwork](#). ChatGPT blocks the dissemination or creation of harmful or inappropriate content. However, a 2025 study by the Center for Countering Digital Hate found that ChatGPT [can be manipulated](#) into “generating dangerous advice about self-harm.” ChatGPT is restricted to users over 13, but does not enforce age verification. ChatGPT does not offer parental controls, but [Pinwheel offers a more restricted version](#) of ChatGPT with parental monitoring. Learn more: <https://openai.com/safety/>



Claude

**Claude** is a popular AI assistant with over 300 million monthly users. The Claude [usage policy](#) prohibits a wide range of content, including misinformation, sexually explicit content, and harmful content. Like other AI assistants, Claude has been shown to deliver misleading or inappropriate information at times. Claude officially does not allow users under 13, but does not enforce age verification. Claude does not offer parental controls or monitoring for consumers, but does offer a more restricted version available to schools [called RileyBot](#). Learn more: <https://www.anthropic.com/for/parents>



CoPilot

**Microsoft Copilot** is an AI assistant that is both a stand-alone chatbot as well as an integration into Microsoft applications such as Windows and Microsoft 365. Microsoft Copilot [policy prohibits](#) a wide range of harmful content. However, in 2024 media outlets [reported](#) that CoPilot was being used to create explicit images, though Microsoft later [took steps](#) to address the problem. Microsoft officially does not allow users under 13, but does not require age verification. Microsoft offers a free parental control app, Microsoft Family Safety, that can [restrict access to CoPilot](#) or set time limits. Learn more: <https://www.microsoft.com/microsoft-365/family-safety>



Gemini

**Google Gemini** is an AI assistant that is both a stand-alone chatbot as well as an integration into applications such as Google Search and Google Docs. Google Gemini [policy](#) prohibits a wide range of inappropriate content. However, in 2025 a journalist from the Atlantic was able to have a [sexually explicit chat](#) with Gemini. Google officially does not allow users under 13, but does not require age verification. If Google is aware the user is a minor, Gemini has stricter content policies. Google offers a free parental control app, Google Family Link, that can [restrict access](#) to Gemini. Learn more: <https://safety.google/gemini/>



Meta AI

**Meta AI** is an AI assistant that is both a stand-alone chatbot as well as an integration into WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Messenger. Meta AI [policy](#) prohibits a wide range of inappropriate content. However, [media outlets reported](#) in 2025 that Meta’s internal rules for Meta AI allow inappropriate conversations between the chatbot and minors. Meta officially does not allow users under 13, but does not require age verification. Meta has free parental controls in [Family Center](#) that can restrict access to Meta AI in Facebook and Instagram, but not the stand-alone app. Learn more: <https://familycenter.meta.com/resources/parents-guide-to-generative-ai/>

For more information, visit [internetsafety101.org](https://internetsafety101.org).

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