

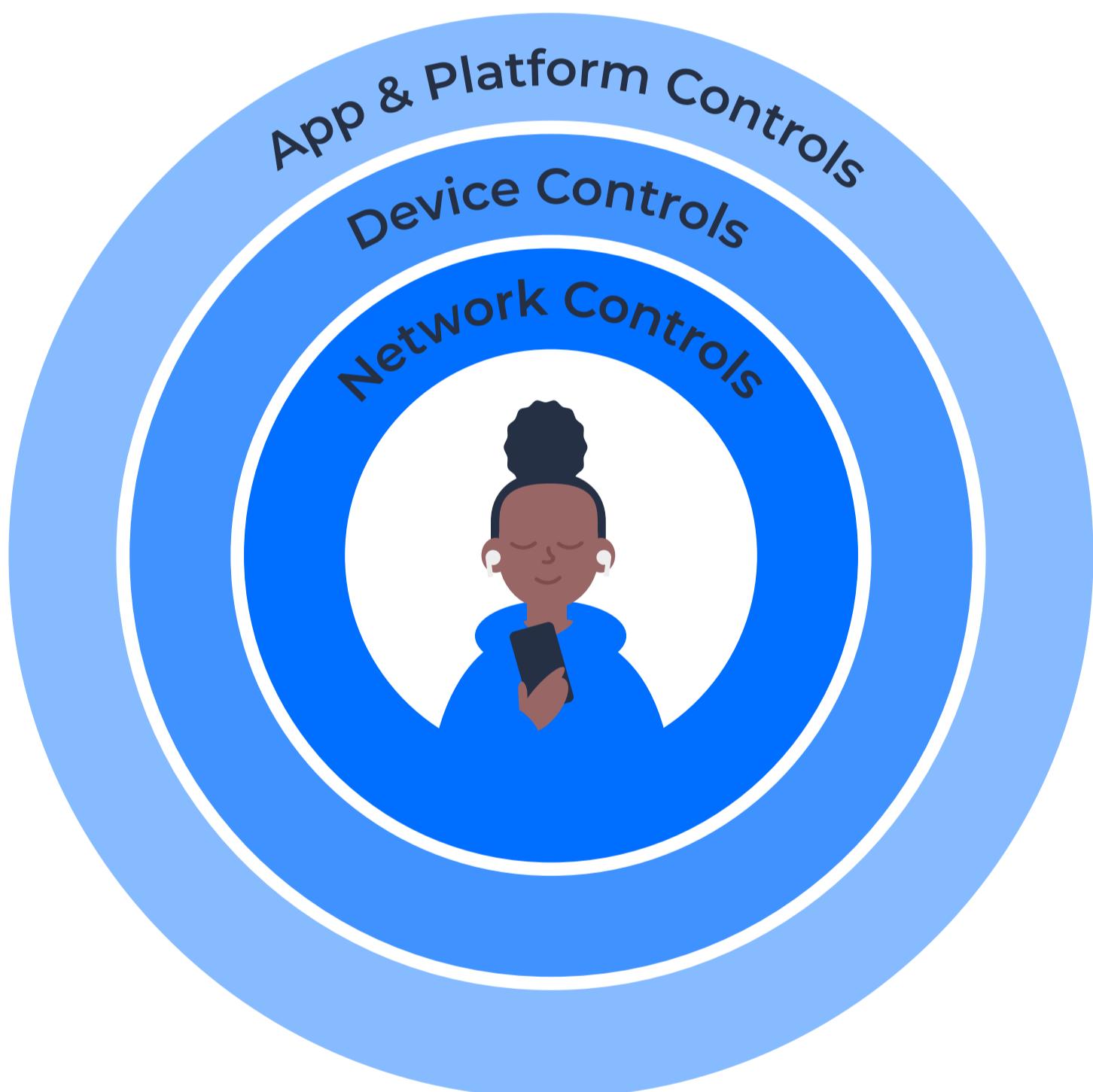
Layer up for online safety

internet
matters.org

A simple way to use safety settings to support children online.

Instead of thinking about parental controls as one big switch, it can help to think in **layers**, adding the right support around your child as they grow.

You don't need to do everything at once. Start with the basics, add more when it feels right, and change things as your child becomes more confident online. **Even one layer makes a difference.**



At the centre: your child

Every child is different. Their age, confidence and curiosity all play a part in how they use the internet.

Parental controls aren't about stopping children exploring. They're there to support them, help reduce risk and give you space for ongoing conversations as they grow.



Layer 1

Network controls – the basics

This is often the easiest place to start.

Network controls can cover multiple devices at the same time, helping keep children safe online at home and on the go.

At home (your broadband / Wi-Fi)

Most broadband providers offer tools that can:

- filter out adult content
- apply age-based content filters
- cover all devices on your Wi-Fi (including smart TVs and games consoles)
- sometimes include extra features like virus protection or Wi-Fi schedules to help manage screen time

Explore this

What is available can vary by provider, so it's worth checking what your broadband provider already offers.



On the go (mobile network / data)

- Adds filtering when children use 4G or 5G
- Helps when they're not on home WiFi



Remember

- What's available can vary by network provider
- If children use public or shared Wi-Fi, your network safety filters may not work, so online safety conversations still matter.

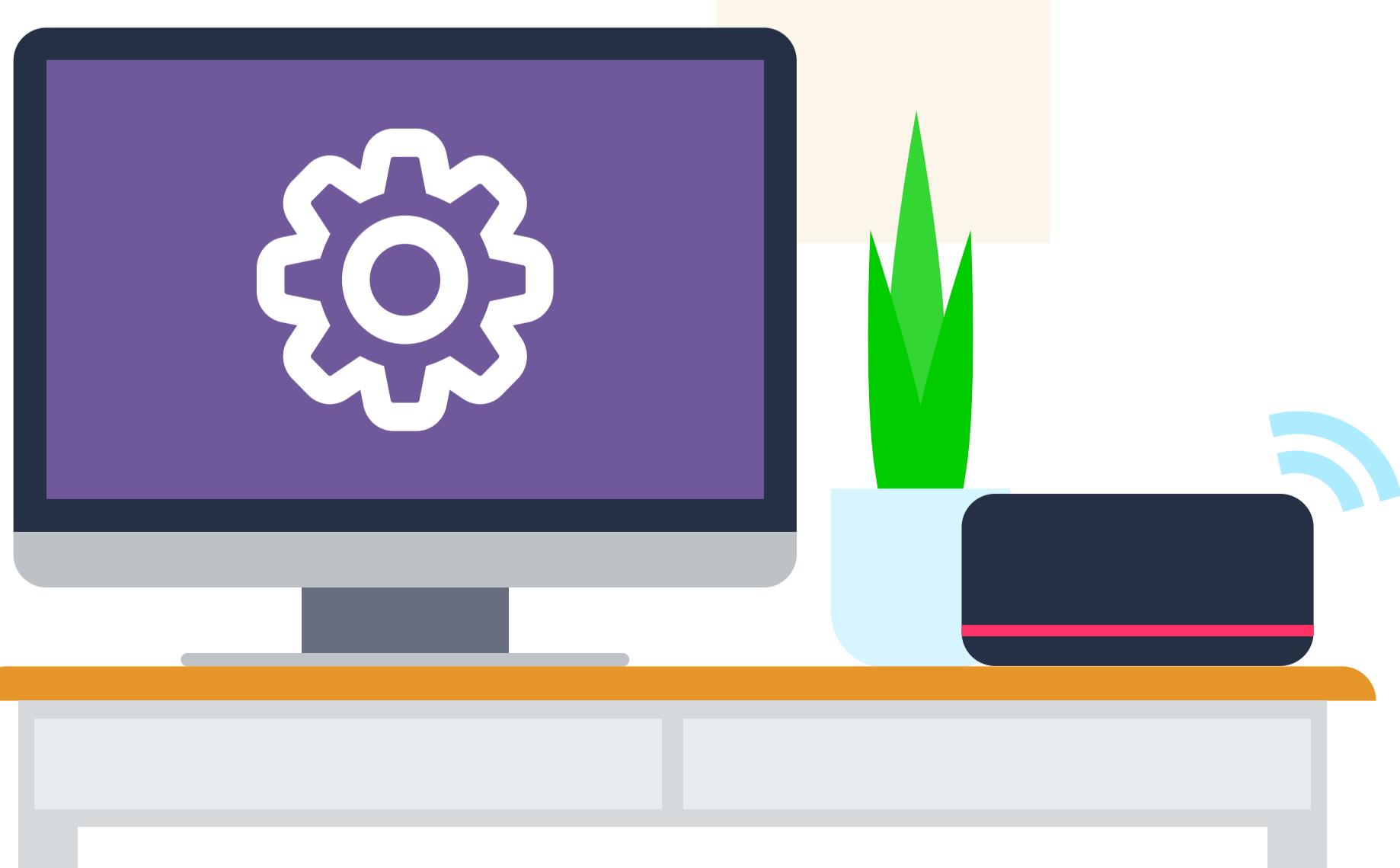
Getting started

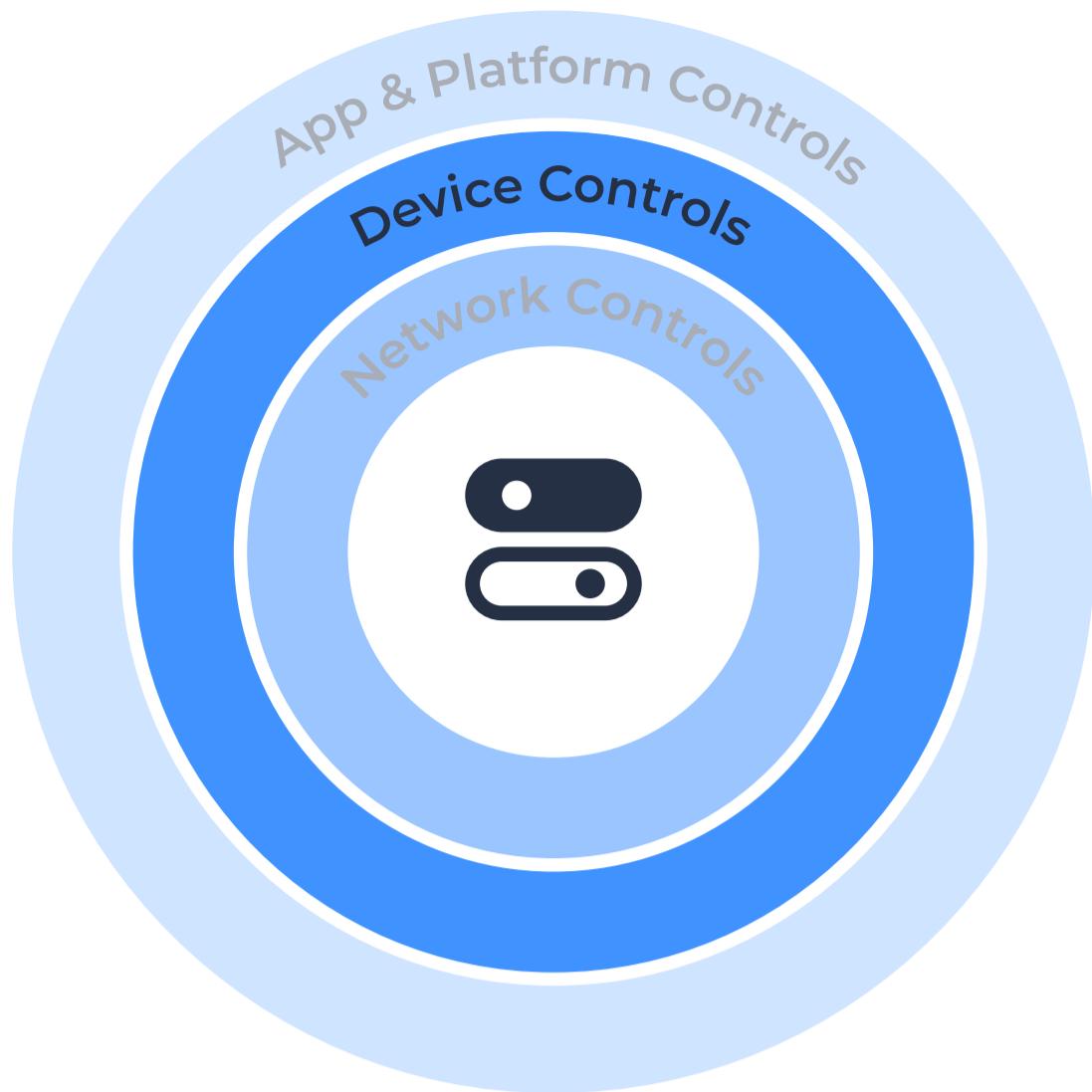
Check your broadband or mobile account online or via the provider's app, or contact your provider for support.

Visit our guides for step-by-step instructions.

Why it helps

This layer gives you a solid safety baseline, without needing to change lots of settings.





Layer 2

Device controls – finding the balance

This is support that fits your child and their device.

Most phones, tablets and consoles already have built-in tools to help manage how they're used.

These settings can help with:

- Screen time and downtime
- Privacy and location sharing
- In-app spending
- Age-appropriate content

Explore this

Some devices offer **extra controls**. For example:

- limiting who children can contact on iPhones using [Screen Time / Family Sharing](#)
- managing communication or sharing settings on consoles and tablets

It's often worth taking a bit of time to see what your child's specific device can do.





Extra support with monitoring and parental control apps

Alongside built-in controls, some families choose to use **parental control or monitoring apps**, like **Qustodio**, to:

- manage safety settings across multiple devices
- see patterns in screen time or app use
- support conversations with better insight

These tools sit **on top of device controls**, offering more options, but they're always optional.

Getting started

Check the settings menu on your child's device, look for "parental controls" or "family settings", and explore what's available.

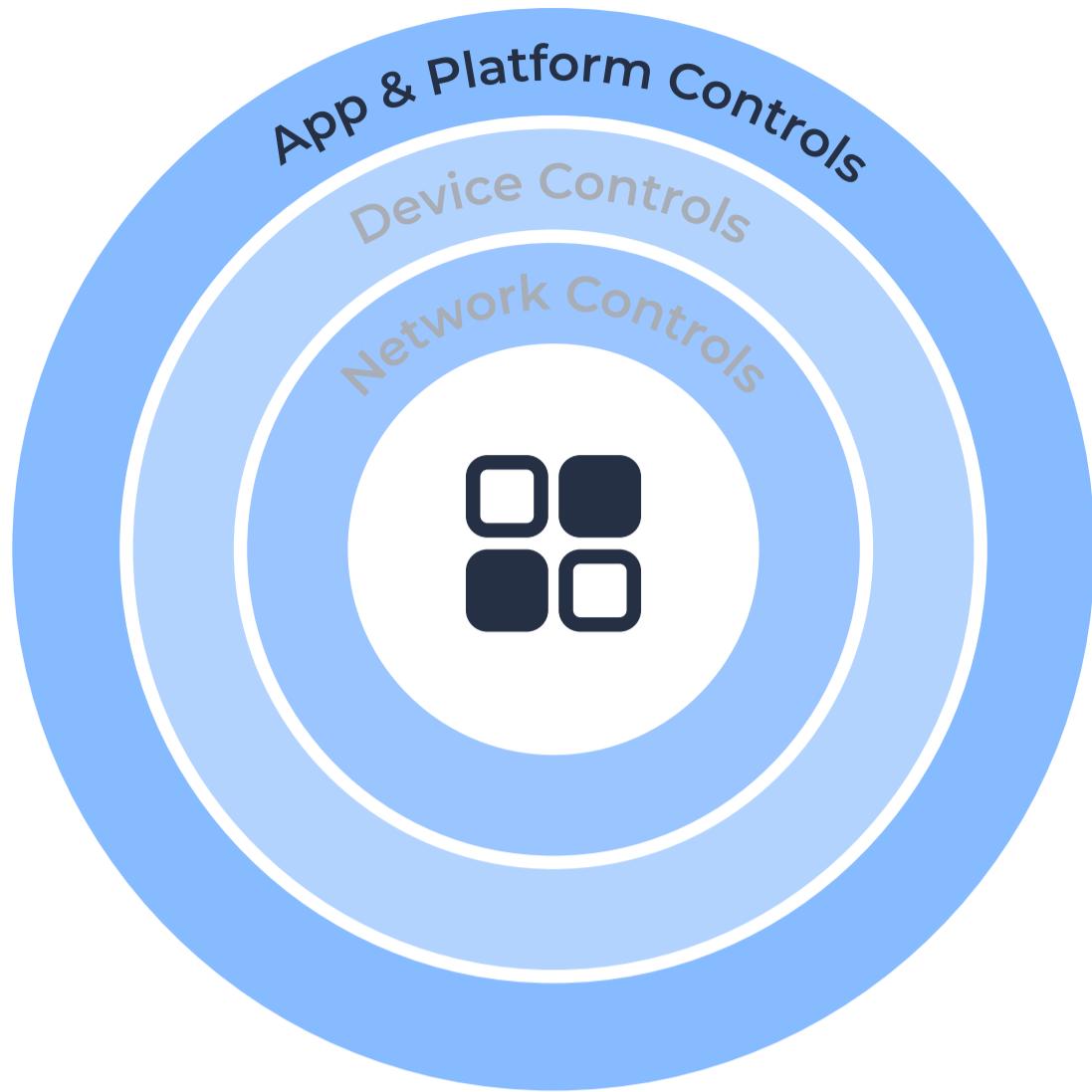
See our device step by step guide for more support.

Why it helps

Device controls are flexible.

You can loosen or tighten them over time as your child grows and shows they're ready for more independence.





Layer 3

Apps & platforms controls – shaping the experience

This is where you get more specific.

Each app, game or platform has its own set of safety settings, and they can vary quite a lot.

They can help you:

- Filter what children see within features specific to the app
- Manage messaging and who can contact your child
- Set boundaries around comments, followers and friends
- Support more positive online experiences
- Block or report harmful behaviour

Explore this

- It can really help to look at these together with your child
- Many platforms also include tools children can use themselves to protect their experience



Getting started

Go into the app's settings or safety centre and explore what's available, ideally with your child, so they understand the choices too.

For more support visit our step-by-step guides.

Why it helps

This layer helps you shape safer experiences in the apps your child uses every day.



**Layer up for online safety.
Start simple. Add support where it helps.
Adjust as your child grows.**

