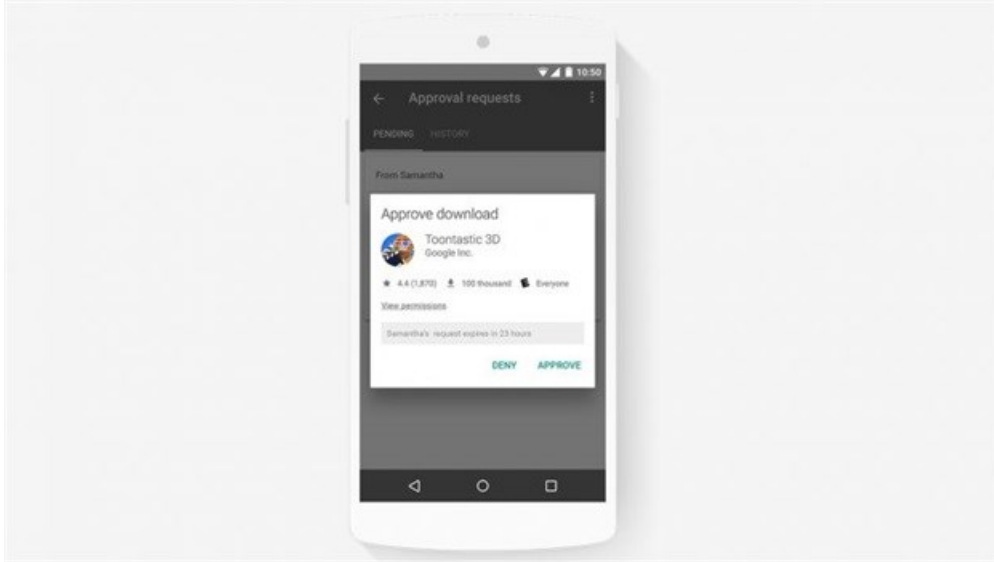


Google Family Link lets you monitor kids' mobile usage

By  Hadlee Simons

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Apple's Family Sharing functionality has been one of the better features for parents, allowing them to approve family members' purchases and more. Now, Google has stepped things up in a big way thanks to the Family Link app.



Picture: Memeburn.com

The app, targeted at children under the age of 13, allows you to monitor their app usage (which apps they're using most and for how long), create an app whitelist and lock the phone at specific times (e.g. sleep or study time). Google does note however that certain background apps, such as music and messaging apps, won't be fully tracked.

The Family Link app also lets you approve or reject app download requests from your child. But it's unclear whether this feature is only for free apps or whether you can authorise/reject paid downloads/in-app purchases too. The latter option would be a life-saver for many parents, owing to the numerous cases of kids racking up charges via in-app purchases.

"Here's how it works: First, your kid will need a new device that runs Android Nougat (7.0) or higher. Then, download Family Link onto your Android device [Android 4.4 or higher – ed] and create a Google Account for them through the app," Google explains in the app FAQ. The child then signs in to their device, using the newly created Google Account.

So what happens to the account when the child turns 13? Google has an answer.

“When your kid turns 13, they have the option to graduate to a normal Google Account. Before a kid turns 13, parents will get an email letting them know their kid will be eligible to take charge of their account on their birthday, so you can no longer manage their account.”

Unfortunately, the app is only limited to the USA for now and requires users to register for early access.

ABOUT HADLEE SIMONS

Hadlee Simons is an editor at Menemba. Terrible puns make Hadlee difficult to work with, but he brings almost seven years of tech journalism experience to the table. When he's not at work or watching motorsport, he's in the foetal position on a jiu jitsu mat.

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