



Dollars and Sense

A Parent's Guide to Streaming Media

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When the United States went into lockdown in response to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, most family entertainment options outside the home were immediately foreclosed. School-age children were forced to substitute in-classroom instruction with online-only learning. This global phenomenon happened to coincide with dramatically shifting patterns in how Americans – and especially children – engage with media.

By May 2020, screen time had already doubled as compared with the same period the year before, a phenomenon *The New York Times* called “The Covid Effect.” The global pandemic spawned a screen-time epidemic. Between the enforced lockdowns and the spike in screen time usage, streaming video exploded in growth and became the primary means of video entertainment consumption.

With so many families increasing their reliance on streaming media for their entertainment programming, the Parents Television Council shifted its corporate strategy, and has recently changed its name to the Parents Television and Media Council. The PTC has also shifted the majority of its research, public education and grassroots advocacy resources towards digital and streaming media.

This research report, which is the first report to be produced by the PTC subsequent to announcing its new name, is intended to provide a resource for parents and families who are considering whether to “cut the cord” and switch to streaming media. Specifically, this report seeks to evaluate and compare both the economic and non-economic impacts associated with the myriad and most popular streaming media platforms.



Key Findings:

We found that although families can realize (sometimes significant) cost-savings now by switching to streaming services, there are associated risks. Streaming content can be far more explicit than what most families are used to from broadcast and cable, and often the parental controls are inadequate to protect children from explicit material. And given the push from media conglomerates to rebundle content, these cost savings may not last long, leaving many families worse-off financially than they were before.

Other Findings:

- From a cost perspective alone, advertiser-supported streaming services like Paramount+, Peacock and Hulu are the most cost-effective, and have the added advantage of giving you access to live TV.
- Disney+ provides the best economic value for families with young children who are looking primarily or exclusively to stream family-friendly content.
- Amazon Prime Video has many hidden costs, including additional “channels” and options to rent or buy that make Amazon’s program inventory appear deceptively large, as many titles will appear in a search that cannot be viewed without the addition of a channel.



- Ranked on a relative scale, right now Netflix has the best parental controls of the major streaming services; Hulu, the worst. The parental controls available on Peacock, Paramount+ and HBO Max are similar enough to be virtually undistinguishable. Disney scores slightly higher because of the “kid-proof exit” feature, which requires users to answer a security question to switch profiles; AppleTV+ also scores slightly higher because it also provides parents with data about screen usage.
- Although most streaming services are still not using content descriptors (S, D, L, V to indicate elevated levels of sexual content, adult dialogue, foul language or violence); most have adopted some variation of content controls based on age-rating – most often these involve creating one or more separate user profiles, choosing an age or rating threshold (most often using a combination of TV Parental Guidelines and Motion Picture Association ratings), and PIN-restricted access to content above that age or rating threshold.

Families urgently need basic protections from the vast amount of graphic, explicit, adult-themed programming that tends to saturate these streaming services; and they need the confidence and ease of functionality to use those protections, especially given how much families are increasingly relying on streaming. The same media conglomerates that stonewalled efforts to reform a faulty ratings system, block content filtering and challenge FCC indecency enforcement are all at work in the streaming universe.

The Parents Television and Media Council calls on the entertainment industry to produce an Industry Best Practices guideline which all players would commit to adopting. The Best Practices guidelines specifically should include, though not be limited to, the following:

- Reliable gating/blocking technology measures.
- Consistent application of age-based ratings.

Our elected and appointed government officials in Washington, D.C. also have a vital role to play:

- Congress must update the Family Movie Act of 2005 to include streaming media platforms.
- The Federal Communications Commission must revisit and renew the promises Congress made to parents when it passed the Child Safe Viewing Act.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

COVID-Fueled Media Consumption

One year ago, the U.S. went into lockdown in response to the threat of a global pandemic caused by a virulent new strain of Coronavirus known as COVID-19. Employees were encouraged to work from home. Stores and businesses shuttered, some never to open again. Schools were closed, and many remain closed to this day. Sports arenas, concert auditoriums, movie theaters, museums, amusement parks and other entertainment venues were closed to the public indefinitely, leaving most Americans with more time on their hands and few entertainment options outside of their own homes.

This global phenomenon happened to coincide with shifting patterns in how we engage with media; and the lockdowns accelerated the adoption of streaming video as a primary means of consuming entertainment. Distance learning replaced classroom instruction, forcing kids to be online all day, every day. As a result, *The New York Times* reports children's screen time has soared. By May 2020, screen time had already doubled as compared with the same period the year before, a phenomenon they called "The Covid Effect." The global pandemic spawned a screen-time epidemic.

According to the *Times*, "Nearly a year into the coronavirus pandemic, parents across the country – and the world – are watching their children slide down an increasingly slippery path into an all-consuming digital life. When the outbreak hit, many parents relaxed restrictions on screens as a stopgap way to keep frustrated, restless children entertained and engaged. But, often, remaining limits have vaporized as computers, tablets and phones became the centerpiece of school and social life, and weeks of stay-at-home rules bled into nearly a year."

As of January 2021, according to The Trade Desk, [streaming consumption now accounts for 68% of TV viewing, versus 28% for traditional TV viewing](#). In the early 2000s, 7 in 10 households subscribed to cable TV; today, fewer than 5 in 10 subscribe – and that number is likely to continue shrinking. *Fast Company* reports that "Cord cutting was so bad last year that pay-TV penetration is down to 1994 levels." Even viewing of live sports has proven to be small incentive for consumers to keep their cable subscriptions, as many live events have moved to streaming and social platforms.

For parents who are working tirelessly to protect their children from age-inappropriate content, the challenge has never been greater. It is no longer a matter of knowing what is on a handful of broadcast or cable networks during a given time of day. Launching Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, or any one of dozens of streaming apps gives a child instantaneous access to a virtually unlimited catalogue of programming. It is not feasible or realistic to expect any parent to be familiar with all of the available titles on any ONE streaming service, let alone the content on each of those titles.

Streaming Raises Economic Concerns

The economic impact of lockdowns may also have played a role in the surging rush to cut the cord. Over the past decade, cable subscription costs have grown at almost twice the rate of inflation. [The average U.S. household now spends more on cable than on all other utilities combined](#): In 2020, the average household cable package was \$217.42; the average combined monthly cost for electricity, water, sewer, gas and garbage was only \$205.50 per month. Contrast that with the \$107 *per year* cost of a Netflix subscription and \$119 annual cost for an Amazon Prime subscription (which also includes free shipping).

Those costs matter – significantly -- for most consumers. A poll by *Hollywood Reporter/Morning Consult* found that 90% of Americans say cost is the most important factor when deciding to subscribe to a TV or streaming service; more than half (56%) of respondents said cable is "unaffordable," and 47% said the same about satellite. Only 17% of adults surveyed said streaming was unaffordable.

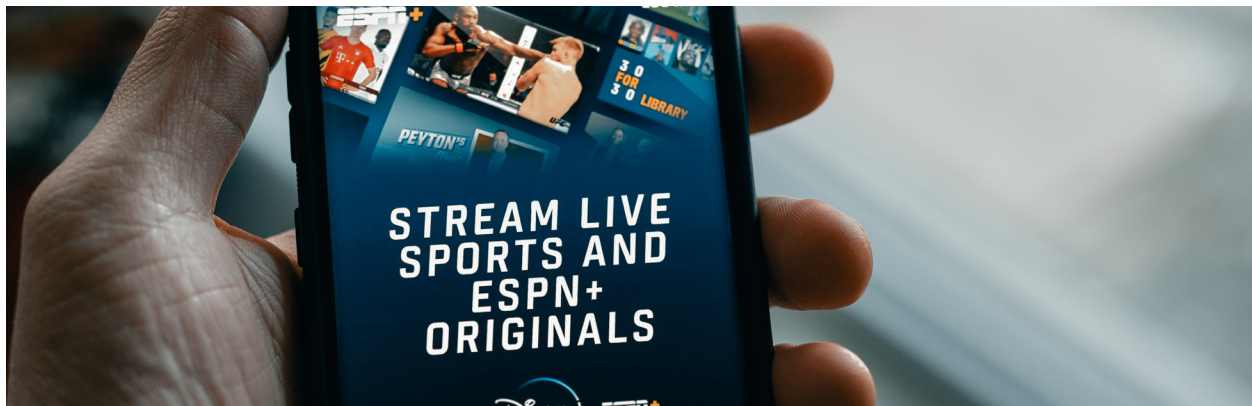
Consumers are drawn to the budgetary flexibility streaming video provides. A recent Future of TV survey found that 51% percent of U.S. consumers are unwilling to spend more than \$20 in total per month on streaming subscriptions and are five times more likely to prefer less-expensive advertiser-supported streaming packages over more expensive ad-free packages, given the choice.

It is not clear how much longer families will enjoy the cost-savings benefit of cord cutting, as media conglomerates move to recapture their licensed properties to make them available exclusively on their own streaming services, pushing families to adopt multiple streaming subscriptions to access their favorite content.

Streaming Raises Non-Economic Concerns

These rapid changes in the entertainment marketplace also pose significant challenges for families who are concerned about explicit or age-inappropriate programming.

Unlike broadcast television networks, streamers are not subject to broadcast decency laws, nor are they formally regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), meaning there are effectively no restraints on content other than rarely enforced obscenity laws. So adult content can be very adult on



streamers that no longer have to worry about driving away advertisers or incurring hefty indecency fines.

At the same time, the ability to view streaming content from virtually any device poses significant challenges for parents who are now tasked with monitoring their child's media consumption across a plethora of wireless and mobile devices, rather than on one or two stationary, hard-wired, household TVs.

The Parents Television and Media Council (PTC) has been monitoring streaming video, and the challenges it presents for parents, for more than a decade. In 2008, the PTC released its [first report on streaming media](#), an examination of YouTube to assess children's ability to access adult video content and to evaluate the parental controls available on that platform. The PTC found that despite the company's assertion that YouTube isn't a place for porn, comments, links, and InVideo advertisements put users, even children, just one click away from pornographic content. Comments on kid-friendly videos were often explicit or sexually graphic.

[In 2017, the PTC examined](#) the top SVOD (Streaming Video on Demand) services (Amazon Prime, Hulu, and Netflix) as well as the top OTT (Over-the-Top) streaming devices (Apple TV, Amazon FireTV, Google Chromecast, and Roku), to assess the robustness of the parental controls and the availability of child- or family-appropriate programming on these systems and devices.

Increasingly, SVOD services are banking on family subscribers for stability and growth. Indeed, about half of Netflix's 75 million members regularly watch kids' movies or TV shows. Meanwhile streaming services like HBO, Hulu and Amazon Prime have been beefing-up their inventory of children's programming; and in 2019, Disney launched its own streaming service. Nonetheless, PTC research shows that families are not well-served in the current streaming video marketplace because the content ratings are not applied consistently and there is a lack of robust parental controls.

Families are clearly a boon to streaming video services, though what is less clear, is how much of a boon streaming services are to families.

This report, then, seeks to evaluate and compare both the [economic](#) and [non-economic](#) impact on families who cut the cord and switch to streaming.

METHODOLOGY

For this report's economic analysis, we looked at both the up-front and hidden costs a family would pay by "cutting the cord" and switching to a streaming-only solution consisting of the most popular streaming services currently on the market. For the report's non-economic analysis, we reviewed the parental controls available on those most popular services.

We included the most popular streaming services by subscriber count, according to the best available published data. They are: Netflix (73.94 million US subscribers at the end of 2020, 204 million world-wide); Disney+ (94.9 million); Amazon Prime Video (56 million US subscribers, 150 million globally); Hulu (39.4 million); HBO Max (37.7 million); and Apple TV+ (33.6 million US subscribers).

Although not yet as popular as the services listed above, we also included Peacock and Paramount+ in this analysis for two reasons: first, because they are broadcast TV's answer to streaming video; second, because they represent the likely future direction for streaming video as media conglomerates look for ways to monetize their vast video libraries and rebundle content. Media conglomerates are pooling content from their film studios, cable properties and broadcast networks, and adding original content and access to live broadcast feed from local affiliates to draw subscribers to their streaming channels. Paramount+ and Peacock are aiming to close the gap between what audiences had received from broadcast and cable TV (an array of options designed to appeal to the broadest possible audience) and what they seek on streaming platforms (flexibility, mobility, customizability).

Findings

Economic Considerations:

Costs can quickly add up, especially since these streaming channels are purchased on top of or in addition to high-speed internet access, which usually comes through a phone or cable provider. A "streaming bundle" combining two or more of the most popular services will still cost substantially less than a cable subscription.

SERVICE	COST
AppleTV+	\$4.99/month; \$49.99/year (1 year free with purchase of new iPhone, iPad or other Apple device)
Peacock	\$4.99/month (ad supported); \$9.99/month (no ads)
Paramount+	\$4.99/month with ads; \$9.99/month without ads + live feed of local CBS affiliate
Hulu	\$5.99/month or \$59.99/year (ad-supported), \$11.99/month (no ads), \$64.99/month (+live TV), \$70.99/month (no ads +live TV)
Disney+	\$6.99/month or \$69.99/year \$12.99/month (bundled with ESPN+ and Hulu)
Netflix	\$8.99/month (one screen at a time, SD) \$13.99/month (two screens at once, HD) \$17.99/month (up to four screens at once, ultra HD)
Prime Video	\$12.99/month or \$119/year* \$59.00/year with valid student e-mail address
HBO Max	Cost: \$14.99/month

* See Appendix

Combining two or more services, hypothetical streaming bundles could look like this:

STREAMING BUNDLE	PRICE
Disney Plus + Hulu + ESPN	\$12.99/month
Netflix + Hulu (with ads)	\$19.98/month
Netflix + Hulu + Prime Video	\$32.97/month
Netflix + Prime Video + Disney+	\$33.97/month
Netflix + HBO Max + Disney +	\$35.97/month
Hulu (+live TV) + Peacock + Paramount+	\$74.97/month
Prime Video + Peacock + Paramount+	\$22.97/month
Netflix + Hulu + Prime Video + Disney+ + Peacock + Paramount+ + HBO Max + Apple TV+	\$69.92/month

From a cost perspective alone, advertiser-supported streaming services like Paramount+, Peacock and Hulu are the most cost-effective, and have the added advantage of giving you access to live TV. Disney+ provides the best economic value for families with young children who are looking primarily or exclusively to stream family-friendly content.

Access to more targeted content will often involve subscribing to additional “channels,” though which additional channels you add may be limited by your OTT device. For example, older AppleTV models do not support Disney+ or Paramount+. If your OTT device does not support the additional channels you want to subscribe to, many can still be accessed as channels through Amazon’s Prime Video. It is worth noting here that there is no apparent way to access subscriptions purchased outside of Amazon from your Prime Video account. For example, if you subscribed to HBO Max through an app on your smartphone but your OTT device doesn’t support HBO Max (but it does support Amazon Prime Video), you can stream the content through your Prime Video app, but that requires adding and paying for HBO Max through your prime video account. At this time it appears that Amazon does not recognize existing or separate accounts. That means you would either have to drop the account created on your smartphone and resubscribe from your Amazon account, and thereafter only stream content through Prime Video; or pay for the same service twice.

Hidden Costs on Prime Video

Amazon launched “channels” in 2015 as an add-on to Amazon Prime Video streaming service, bringing powerhouse content providers “Starz” and “Showtime” -- along with about 30 other niche streaming services – under the Amazon umbrella. That number has since grown to nearly 150 streaming channels. Most of these channels also exist as stand-alone subscriptions and can be purchased without Amazon Prime at the same cost, though Amazon Prime will not recognize an existing subscription purchased separately from your Amazon account, as noted above.

These prime channels offer subscribers something akin to a pure à la carte system; with prices ranging from \$.99/month to \$14.99/month (for HBO) and averaging around \$5.30. Subscribers can add as few or as many channels as they want, or none at all, and can add or drop them at will. These costs are on top of the baseline monthly (\$12.99) or annual (\$119/year) Prime membership cost, and each channel comes with a one-time-only 7-day free trial. [See Appendix for complete list of streaming channels offered through Amazon Prime Video.]

The addition of these channels makes Amazon’s program inventory appear deceptively large, as many titles will appear in a search that cannot be viewed without the addition of a channel. For instance, if you went to Amazon Prime and searched for “All Creatures Great and Small,” you would find the original 1978 BBC production in the search results, but if you click on the title, you would see a message saying, “How do I watch this?” with instructions to view on BritBox, which requires the addition of a BritBox channel subscription. You would also see the new 2021 production available for purchase, but not free as part of your Prime subscription.

Prior to the launch of Amazon channels, individual episodes of programs were available for rent or purchase for anywhere from \$.99 - \$2.99 per episode. Assuming a typical season of a series runs 10-22 episodes, in most cases, you're saving money with a channel subscription – though you don't get to own the content, and your ability to access it expires when you drop your subscription.

In some cases, individual titles and seasons are available for rent or purchase from a Prime channel without a subscription, though this is not usually true for the most popular titles offered by that channel. Moreover, subscriptions (usually) do not grant access to entire season of series that are currently airing. So “binge-watching” an entire season of a series that is currently airing is not possible until the season has concluded. Users typically must wait for new episodes to air on the channel’s cable TV or broadcast counterpart to stream the episode. Without the addition of channels, Amazon’s content offerings are far less impressive compared to other streaming services.

However, as of now, many channel offerings are so narrow, and inventory so sparse, you would need to subscribe to many channels to get enough content to satisfy the whole family. Assuming the average Prime customer adds an additional 5 streaming channels, their total monthly bill would still come out to less than \$100/month – far less than the average monthly cable bill unless taken in combination with other streaming services. These channels and titles for rent or purchase mean that Amazon Prime Video has more hidden costs than other streaming services.



Non-Economic (Parental Control) Considerations:

In our 2017 report, [*Over-the-Top or a Race to the Bottom*](#), the PTC made several recommendations for improving the family viewing experience across several streaming video platforms and services, to wit: we recommended a uniform ratings system, giving parents more control over content, and giving parents the option to block explicit titles.

In looking again at these streaming services four years later, it appears that many streaming services heeded our call for more uniformity in the application of age-based ratings.

Although most streaming services are still not using content descriptors (S,D, L, V to indicate elevated levels of sexual content, adult dialogue, foul language or violence); most have adopted some variation of content controls based on age-rating – most often these involve creating one or more separate user profiles, choosing an age or rating threshold (most often using a combination of TV Parental Guidelines and Motion Picture Association ratings), and PIN-restricted access to content above that age or rating threshold.

Today Hulu (owned by Disney) has the least-robust parental controls of the major streaming services. Although Hulu does allow you to set-up a separate “kid” profile, there is no way to distinguish between younger children and older children, meaning a seven-year-old child navigating the “kid” profile can access PG-13 and TV-14-rated content. Moreover, Hulu still has not added PIN-restrictions or other barriers to prevent a child from switching profiles to view adult content on a parent’s profile.

In early March, CBS All Access became Paramount+. Interestingly, the parental controls on Paramount+ are worse than what it replaced. Under Paramount+, parental controls are limited to the ability to create a “kids” profile, which can be set to “Younger Kids,” which limits content to programs rated TV-Y; or “Older Kids,” which restricts content to programs rated TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-Y7-FV, TV-G, G, TV-PG, and PG. There are no options that allow for content rated TV-14 or PG-13 while also restricting access to R-rated or TV-MA-rated content. And, as with Hulu, there are no barriers to stop a child from switching over to an adult profile.

Hulu’s chief deficiency is that it does not distinguish between content that would be suitable for a 7-year-old and a 13-year-old. Paramount+’s chief deficiency is that it does not recognize that content that might be suitable for an 18-year-old might not be suitable for a 13-year-old.


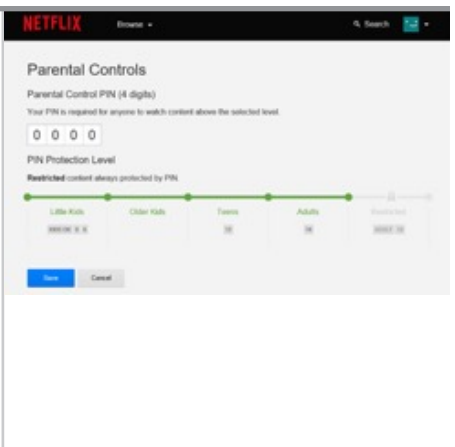

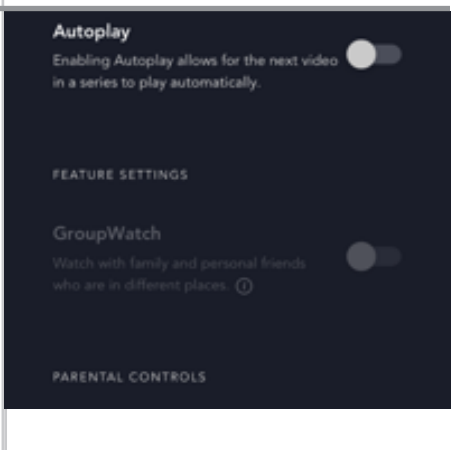

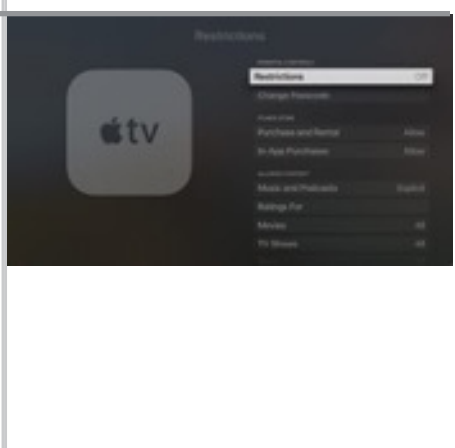

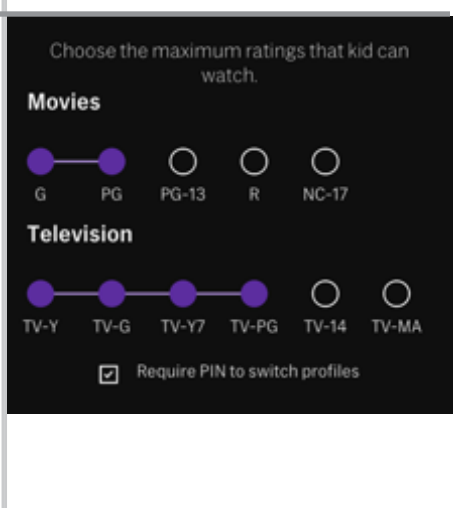
Further improvements can be made to ensure an even higher degree of consistency across platforms. Amazon Prime, for example, bases restricted content on age, not on content rating – leaving some ambiguity as to what Amazon considers appropriate for a 16-year-old, for example, that would be too mature for a 13-year-old, but not explicit enough to be restricted to viewers 18 and over.

None of the streaming platforms we looked at have taken the additional step of adding a family tier or family-friendly package; though Disney+ was built chiefly with family audiences in view (more adult content is to be found on its sister platform, Hulu).

Netflix alone among the major streaming services also allows blocking specific programs, as the PTC recommended in its 2017 research report.

Ranked on a relative scale, right now Netflix has the best parental controls of the major streaming services; Hulu, the worst. The parental controls available on Peacock, Paramount+ and HBO Max are similar enough to be virtually undistinguishable. Disney scores slightly higher because of the “kid-proof exit” feature, which requires users to answer a security question to switch profiles; AppleTV+ also scores slightly higher because it also provides parents with data about screen usage.

Streaming Services Ranked From Best to Worst for Parental Controls

 <p>Cost: \$8.99/month (one screen at a time, SD) \$13.99/month (two screens at once, HD) \$17.99/month (up to four screens at once, ultra HD)</p>	<p>Parental Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Create profiles with specific maturity ratings –Choose maturity rating or block shows –Lock profiles –Turn autoplay on/off –Access viewing history for profiles 	 <p>The screenshot shows the Netflix 'Parental Controls' settings. It includes a 'Parental Control PIN (4 digits)' field with '0000' entered, a 'PIN Protection Level' slider set to 'Restricted', and a 'Restricted content always protected by PIN' checkbox checked. The bottom of the screen shows 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.</p>
 <p>Cost: \$6.99/month or \$69.99/year \$12.99/month (bundled with ESPN+ and Hulu)</p>	<p>Parental Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Separate profiles for children, promising a “kid friendly interface with only content suitable for children” –“Kid-Proof Exit” makes it harder for kids to switch profiles by asking an “exit question” (Not PIN or password-controlled) –Option of limiting access to your profile with a PIN or password. 	 <p>The screenshot shows the Disney+ settings menu. The 'Autoplay' toggle is turned on. Under 'FEATURE SETTINGS', the 'GroupWatch' toggle is turned on. At the bottom, the 'PARENTAL CONTROLS' option is visible.</p>
 <p>Cost: \$4.99/month; \$49.99/year(1 year free with purchase of new iPhone, iPad or other Apple device)</p>	<p>Parental Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –PIN-controlled age-restricted access by rating –“Screen Time” settings on iOS devices to access real-time reports about how much time you spend on your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch, and set limits for what you want to manage, including content restrictions 	 <p>The screenshot shows the 'Restrictions' settings on an Apple TV. The 'Restrictions' toggle is turned on. Below it, various content restrictions are listed, including 'Allowed Content', 'Allowed Apps', 'Allowed Websites & Features', 'Screen Time', 'TV Shows', and 'TV Movies'.</p>
 <p>Cost: \$14.99/month</p>	<p>Parental Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –PIN-controlled age-restricted settings –PIN required to switch profiles 	 <p>The screenshot shows the HBO Max 'Parental Controls' settings. It asks to 'Choose the maximum ratings that kid can watch.' Under 'Movies', the 'G' rating is selected. Under 'Television', the 'TV-Y' rating is selected. At the bottom, the 'Require PIN to switch profiles' checkbox is checked.</p>



Cost: \$4.99/month (ad supported);
\$9.99/month (no ads)

Parental Controls

–PIN-controlled age-restricted settings

You will be prompted to enter a PIN to watch anything with your selected rating or higher.

☐ Little Kids

TVY

Programming is designed to be appropriate for all children.

☐ Older Kids

TVY7, TVY7-FV, TVG, G

Programming is designed for children ages 7+. May contain some fantasy violence.

☐ Family

TVPG, PG

Programming may contain material that parents



Cost: \$12.99/month or \$119/
year*\$59.00/year with valid student
e-mail address * See Appendix

Parental Controls

- Separate user profiles
- Pin-controlled access to age-restricted content
- Restrictions set by age-range, not rating

All videos can be watched without a PIN
Tap age to set restrictions

G	Videos suitable for General Audiences are available.
7	Videos suitable for General Audiences and older children are available.
13	Videos suitable for general audiences, older children and



Cost: \$4.99/month with ads; \$9.99/
month without ads + live feed of
local CBS affiliate

Parental Controls

- Ability to create separate profile for kids.
- Does not require PIN or password to switch profiles

Profile Name
kid1

Kids Mode OFF ☒ ON

Turn on to discover kid-friendly content

☒ **Older Kids**
TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-Y7-FV, TV-G, G, TV-PG, PG

☐ Younger Kids
TV-Y



Parental Controls

N.B. CBS All Access became Paramount+ in early March, 2021. Parental Controls are less robust now on Paramount+ than they were on CBS All Access.

Teens
PG-13 TV-14

Older Kids
TV-Y7 TV-Y7-FV TV-G G TV-PG PG

All Kids
TV-Y

Live TV **Unlocked** ☐

When Live TV is locked, you must enter your PIN to watch all live streams: CBS Local, CBSN, CBS Sports



Cost: \$5.99/month or \$59.99/
year (ad-supported), \$11.99/month
(no ads), \$64.99/month (+live TV),
\$70.99/month (no ads +live TV)

Parental Controls

- Least robust of major streamers.
- Cannot block specific shows or movies
- No way to set age-range preferences under “kid” profile (PG-13 and TV-14 rated is not separated from TV-PG or Y content)
- No way to password-protect Hulu profiles, which means kids can view all content by simply switching profiles.
- No way to restrict adult content across all profiles.

Hulu Kids Lock

When Hulu Kids is locked you can only watch kid-friendly videos within Hulu. To access other areas outside of Hulu Kids you will need to enter your Hulu Password

Enter Hulu Password

Hulu Kids Lock

To access content outside of Hulu Kids please enter the Hulu password for **user1234567890**

Enter Hulu Password

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Streaming services seem eager to capture the family market, but so far they have made only nominal efforts to accommodate what parents truly need: meaningful cost-savings, and robust parental controls.

Economics:

With respect to cost, streaming video may be a somewhat cheaper alternative for families than cable – at least for now, though how long that will remain true is anyone’s guess. The same media conglomerates that pushed us into expensive cable bundles are at work in the streaming universe; they are simply performing on a different stage.

In a New York Times piece titled “Streaming Video Will Soon Look Like the Bad Old Days of TV,” Matthew Ball, former head of strategic planning for Amazon Studios writes:

“In this new multiplatform world, viewers will find they have to pay for a fistful of streaming subscriptions to watch all of their favorite programs – and in the process, they’ll again end up paying for lots of shows and movies they’ll never care to watch... and to navigate these many subscriptions, most households will want companies like Amazon or Apple to further bundle these services together into a single app – just as they do with Dish or Xfinity. All of this bundling will eventually mean the return of a high monthly bill.”

Vulture concurs: “Paramount+, like Netflix or Peacock or Amazon Prime Video, is essentially looking to recreate the cable bundle that for decades funneled billions of dollars in revenue to conglomerates — and is now crumbling as millions of Americans flee into the arms of relatively cheaper streaming services. Consumers are cutting the cord because they don’t like huge cable bills and dealing with spotty customer service, and yet many do want the kind of soups-to-nuts programming mix you get with a cable subscription... So I think if you want to be a major player in streaming TV/video, you need to be a broad-based product that can service a whole household and provide a range of great content in all, or almost all, key categories.”

Non-Economics (Parental Controls):

Families urgently need basic protections from these streaming services, as well as the confidence and ease of functionality to use those protections, especially given how much families are increasingly relying on streaming. The same media conglomerates that stonewalled efforts to reform a faulty ratings system, block content filtering and challenge FCC indecency enforcement are all at work in the streaming universe.

The Parents Television and Media Council calls on the entertainment industry to participate in a symposium that would be attended by representatives from all the major streaming services; and from that symposium they would produce an Industry Best Practices guideline which all of the players would commit to adopting. The Best Practices guidelines specifically should include, though not be limited to, the following:

- Reliable gating/blocking technology measures. In the three years since our last report on streaming video, there does appear to be some movement toward a more consistent standard, as many streaming services have adopted separate user profiles for different members of the family; age-restricted access to content based on some combination of TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board and Motion Picture Association ratings; and PIN-controlled access to age-restricted content. All major streamers, including Hulu and Paramount+ need to move more in this direction. All streaming services need to follow Netflix’s lead and allow parents to block individual titles.
- Consistent application of age-based ratings. This study did not delve into the accuracy of the ratings on the original content produced by these streaming services, but to the extent that children’s access to content is based on the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board and Motion Picture Association ratings, they need to be uniformly and consistently applied. A 2020 analysis by the Parents Television Council found the vast majority of Netflix programs targeted to teens were not rated as appropriate for teens; and that among programs rated TV-14, many still contained adult content that should have warranted a higher age-rating. Content descriptors should be used consistently across streaming platforms.

Our elected and appointed government officials in Washington, D.C. also have a vital role to play:

- Congress must update the Family Movie Act of 2005 to include streaming media platforms. In 2005, the home entertainment platform of choice was the DVD player. Against the wishes of Hollywood, a bipartisan Congress passed the Family Movie Act authorizing technology providers to engineer and bring to market DVD players that could be set to “skip past” explicit content contained in mainstream motion pictures. Families were given a tool to protect their children from age-inappropriate content; and the major studios reaped a financial windfall by selling films to a family marketplace that would not otherwise purchase their products. Unfortunately, a Hollywood-friendly 9th Circuit Court ruled that the 2005 Act does not apply to streaming video programming. Congress must update the measure to provide parents greater control over the explicit content that might reach their children on streaming media, just as it did nearly 16 years ago for explicit content on DVDs.
- The Federal Communications Commission must revisit and renew the promises Congress made to parents when it passed the Child Safe Viewing Act. Much in the entertainment media world has changed since Congress passed that law in 2008, and in fact most of the major streaming media platforms did not even exist. The FCC, which was instructed to review and recommend blocking technologies and parental controls, must revisit both the spirit and the letter of the Child Safe Viewing Act.

*APPENDIX

Following is a list of “channels” currently available through Amazon Prime Video. These are separate subscriptions that can be layered on top of your Amazon Prime Video subscription, and accessed through your Prime Video account and viewed from a Prime Video app on your OTT device, smart phone, or smart TV.

CHANNEL	COST	CATEGORY
88bb	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Acacia TV	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Acorn TV	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Alchemiya	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
All Babies Channel (ABC)	\$1.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
All Warrior Network (AWN)	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
AMC+ (includes Sundance Now, Shudder, and IFC Films Unlimited)	\$8.99/month after 7-day free trial	Premium Channel
Ameba	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
BeFit	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Best of British TV (BOB)	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Best TV Ever	\$0.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Best Westerns Ever	\$1.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
BongFlix	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Boomerang	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Britbox	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Broadway HD	\$8.99/month after 7-day free trial	Performing Arts
Brown Sugar	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
CBS All-Access	\$5.99/month (limited commercials) after 7-day free trial	Premium Channel
Cheddar	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	News
CineFest (Flix Fling)	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Cinemax	\$9.99/month after 7-day free trial	Premium Channel
CinePride	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	LGBTQ

Cohen Media Channel	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Comedy Central Now	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Comedy
CONtv	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Cross Counter	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Gaming
Curiosity Stream	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Daily Burn	\$14.95/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Daring Docs	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Dekkoo	\$9.99/month after 7-day free trial	LGBTQ
Destination Unknown	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
Doc Club	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
DocComTV	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Docurama	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Dove Channel	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
DOX	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
DreamWorks TV	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Echoboom Sports	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
El Gourmet	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Food & Cooking
Epix	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
ErosNow	\$7.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Eurocinema Carte Blanche	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Fandor	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Fear Factory	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
FIDO TV	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Filmbox Live	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
FilmDoo	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
FitFusion	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
FMTV Food Matters TV	\$9.95/month after 7-day free trial	Food & Cooking
Full Moon	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
Gaia	\$9.95/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Gilad TV	\$9.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Go Russia	\$7.95/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
GONE TV	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Green Planet Stream	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Grokker Yoga and Fitness	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Hallmark Movies Now	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
HBO Max	\$14.99/month after 7-day free trial	Premium Channel
Here TV	\$7.99/month after 7-day free trial	LGBTQ
HISTORY Vault	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Hi-YAH	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
HooplaKidz Plus	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Horror TV	\$1.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
IMDb Freedive	free with ads	Entertainment
Indie Club	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
IndieFlix Shorts	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Indiepix Unlimited	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Inside Outside	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Home & Lifestyle

J-Edge	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
Jennifer Adams Home and Lifestyle	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Home & Lifestyle
Kid Genius Plus!	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Kidstream	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
KIKIRIKI	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Lifetime Movie Club	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Magnolia Selects	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
MHz Choice	\$7.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Miao Mi	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Monsters and Nightmares	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
Motor Trend OnDemand	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	MotorSports
Motorland	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	MotorSports
Motorvision TV	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	MotorSports
MubiTV	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
NatureVision TV	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
NBA League Pass	\$28.99 all team pass/month after trial; Single team pass from \$17.99/month	Sports
Next Up Comedy	\$3.50/month after 7-day free trial	Comedy
NickHits	\$7.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Noggin	\$7.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Nursery Rhymes Club	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Outside TV Features	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
PANNA	\$1.99/month after 7-day free trial	Food & Cooking
Pantaya	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Paul Rabil Experience	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Paula Deen Network	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Food & Cooking
PBS KIDS	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
PBS Masterpiece	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
PGA Tour Live	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Pinoy Box Office (PBO)	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Pio Pio	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
PixL	\$1.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Pokemon	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Pongalo Next	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Powerslam Wrestling Network	\$5.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
PREMO	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Qello Concerts	\$7.99/month after 7-day free trial	Music
REELZ NOW	\$1.99/month after 7-day free trial	Entertainment
Ring TV	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
ScholarView	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Screambox	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
Secret Golf	\$7.95/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Shout! Factory TV	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Showtime	\$10.99/month after 30-day free trial	Premium Channel
Shudder	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
Sleep Sounds & Meditation	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness

Smithsonian Channel Plus	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
SpaceRip	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
Sport Now	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Sports Illustrated TV	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Starz	\$8.99/month after 7-day free trial	Premium Channel
Stingray Classica	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Performing Arts
Stingray Djazz	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Music
Stingray Karaoke	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Music
Strand Releasing	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Sundance Now	\$6.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
SweatFlix	\$9.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Tastemade	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Food & Cooking
The Great Courses Signature Collection	\$7.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
The List	\$0.99/month after 7-day free trial	Entertainment
The/DRIVE	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	MotorSports
TheSurfNetwork	\$9.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Toku	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Anime
Toonscape	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Anime
Toonscape	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Tribeca Shortlist	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
True Crime Files by ID	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
TV1000 PYCCKOE KNHO	\$9.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
UMC (Urban Movie Channel)	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Undisputed Champion Network	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
UP Faith and Family	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Kids & Family
Vaporvue	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Vemox Cine	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	International & Foreign
Viewster	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Anime
Warriors and Gangsters	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
XiveTV	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Educational & History
XLTV	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Horror
XLTV	\$4.99/month after 7-day free trial	Movies & TV
Xterra.tv	\$2.99/month after 7-day free trial	Sports & Outdoors
Yoga Anytime Channel	\$8.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Yoga International	\$14.99/month after 7-day free trial	Health & Wellness
Young Hollywood	\$3.99/month after 7-day free trial	Entertainment



The Parents Television and Media Council® (www.parentstv.org) is a non-partisan education organization advocating responsible entertainment.

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