Apple iOS Age Verification: The Complete Guide for UK Users

Current as of iOS 26.4.2 (May 2026)

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Introduction: Why You're Being Asked to Verify Your Age

Apple introduced mandatory age verification for all UK iCloud accounts with the iOS 26.4 update, following the country's Online Safety Act. While the law does not explicitly require device-level checks, Apple has chosen to implement them as an additional child safety measure.

> ⚠️ **Note:** If you skip verification, Apple will automatically enable **Web Content Filter** (blocking adult websites) and **Communication Safety** (blurring nudity in Messages and FaceTime), and restrict access to age-rated apps.

Section 1: What Documents Does Apple Accept?

As of iOS 26.4.2, the following forms of identification are accepted or rejected for manual verification:

✅ Accepted	❌ NOT Accepted
A **credit card** in your name (legally issued only to those 18+)	A **debit card** (can be issued to under-18s)
A UK **driving licence** (full or provisional)	**PayPal** (unless using PayPal Credit virtual card)
A valid **passport** (Apple announced this change on 29 April 2026)	Apple Account balance/gift cards
PASS-accredited proof-of-age cards (CitizenCard, My ID Card, TOTUM ID, Young Scot NEC)	Channel Islands or Crown Dependencies ID (only UK-issued ID works)

> **Important update:** Passports were not accepted at launch in March, but Apple added passport verification on 29 April 2026. However, this change may not have been retroactively applied to all accounts. Some users who previously verified with a passport in 2024 or earlier may still need to re-verify.

Section 2: The Automatic Verification Process

Before you do anything else, Apple tries to verify you automatically using signals such as:

- **The age of your Apple account** (accounts opened over 18 years ago are automatically verified).

- **Linked Cards:** Whether you already have a credit card linked to your Apple ID.
- **History:** Payment history and subscription activity.

If automatic verification works, you will never see the manual prompt. For everyone else, the manual process begins when you update to iOS 26.4 or later.

Section 3: Step-by-Step Verification Process

1. **Step 1: Find the prompt.** Open Settings. The "Confirm You Are 18+" prompt appears under your Apple ID banner.
2. **Step 2: Automatic check.** Apple will first try to automatically verify you. If this succeeds, you are done.
3. **Step 3: Manual verification.** If automatic verification fails, you will be guided to verify by either manually scanning a government-issued ID (passport, driving licence, or PASS card), or adding/confirming a credit card as a payment method.
4. **Step 4: Scanning your ID.** Place your ID on a flat, dark surface in a well-lit area. Hold your device steady for approximately 10 seconds per side during scanning. Steady, patient scanning with good lighting and a solid background is usually the difference between success and failure.
5. **Step 5: Credit card option.** Go to Settings > [Your Name] > Payment & Shipping. Add a credit card in your name. Ensure the billing address matches your Apple ID profile exactly.
6. **Step 6: Completion.** Once verified, you will see a confirmation message, and all content restrictions will be lifted from your device.

Section 4: Common Scenarios & Solutions

Scenario A: "I've had a credit card linked for years—why am I still being asked?"

This is one of the most common and frustrating scenarios. Having a credit card on file or having previously verified your identity with a passport in 2024 does not guarantee automatic verification.

Why this happens: Apple introduced age verification as a new system in iOS 26.4. Prior identity verification (e.g., for Apple ID creation or purchases) was not automatically connected to this new age verification framework. Similarly, even if your account is old or has a credit card, the system may still trigger manual verification if the card details do not sufficiently "signal" your age to the new system.

Solutions:

- **Wait 24–48 hours.** Sometimes the prompt is triggered immediately upon updating, but the server-side verification takes time. Force-quitting Settings and reopening may also help.
- Add your credit card to **Apple Wallet** before attempting verification (some users report this resolves the issue).
- If still stuck, **remove and re-add your credit card** in Settings > [Your Name] > Payment & Shipping. Ensure the billing address exactly matches the one in your Apple ID profile.
- Contact Apple Support if all else fails.

Scenario B: "The ID won't scan"

- Place your ID on a flat, **dark surface**—a dark table or desk works best.
- Ensure the room is **well-lit**, with no shadows or glare falling across the document.
- Hold your phone **very steady** for a full 10 seconds on each side before assuming it has failed.
- Make sure your camera permissions are enabled for the Settings app (Settings > Privacy & Security > Camera > ensure Settings is toggled on).

- Clean your camera lens.

Scenario C: "I don't have a credit card or driving licence"

1. **Option 1: PayPal Credit virtual card.** Set up a **PayPal Credit** account (a virtual credit card linked to your PayPal balance). Once approved, add the virtual card to your Apple Wallet. This virtual card acts as a credit card and has successfully allowed many users to pass verification.
2. **Option 2: PASS-accredited proof-of-age card.** Purchase a CitizenCard, My ID Card, TOTUM ID, or Young Scot National Entitlement Card. These are Apple-accepted forms of ID for verification.
3. **Option 3: Borrow a family member's ID (temporary).** If a trusted family member over 18 has an accepted ID, you can use it to verify the device (not the Apple ID). Note that this may have implications for content restrictions tied to that device.
4. **Option 4: Contact Apple Support.** If you have none of these options and cannot obtain them, Apple Support is your only remaining avenue.

Scenario D: Channel Islands & Crown Dependencies Users

If you have a UK Apple account but a locally issued ID from Jersey, Guernsey, or the Isle of Man:

- Only **UK-issued identification** (UK passport, UK driving licence) is accepted.
- Channel Islands-only ID will not work.

Solution: Use a valid UK passport if you have one. If not, contact Apple Support directly.

Scenario E: Family Sharing & Children's Accounts

- **Children under 13:** Cannot create an Apple account alone. A parent or guardian must add them to Family Sharing. The parent must have successfully verified their own age first.
- **Teenagers (13–17):** If the teenager has not been verified, content restrictions will be applied. To lift them, they must be linked to an adult's Family Sharing group where the adult has verified.
- If the adult in the family cannot verify, the teenager will remain restricted until the adult resolves their own verification issue.

Scenario F: "I'm over 50 and have no credit card"

This exact issue has been widely reported. One user, 50 years old and without a credit card, passport, or driving licence, discovered that setting up **PayPal Credit** and adding the virtual card to Apple Wallet resolved the problem. Try this method first.

Scenario G: Verification Loop / Endless Failure

If the verification screen reappears every time you try to access apps or settings:

- **Restart your iPhone fully.** This alone fixes many temporary glitches.
- **Check your payment methods.** Remove any debit cards, PayPal (non-credit), or gift card balances.

- **Ensure name and address matching.** A tiny discrepancy can cause failure.
- **Wait 10–30 minutes.** Server-side issues can occur. Try again later.
- If all else fails, contact Apple Support.

⚠️ Scenario H: Scams – How to Protect Yourself

- **Never share** your Apple ID password or verification codes with anyone—including people claiming to be Apple Support.
- **Never install** remote access software at someone's request.
- Apple will **never call you** out of the blue to request personal details or verification codes.
- **Ignore any message** asking you to pay a fee to bypass age verification. This is always a scam.
- **Verify directly:** If you receive suspicious communication, do not click links. Open Settings or go directly to appleid.apple.com to check your account status.
- **Report scams:** Forward suspicious emails to reportphishing@apple.com. Report suspicious messages to moderation teams.

Scenario I: "I'm worried about privacy"

Apple states that any ID or credit card information submitted during verification will not be stored unless you choose to save it for something else. However, privacy campaigners have raised concerns about:

- The requirement to hand over sensitive ID documents to use a device you already own.

- This setting a precedent for the global expansion of device-level age checks.
- The exclusion of users who do not have credit cards or official ID.

If you have serious privacy concerns, your only current solution is to not update to iOS 26.4 or later (but you will miss security updates), or switch to a non-Apple device (some users have threatened to leave iPhone entirely over this change). These are extreme solutions, but they are the only ways to avoid the requirement entirely.

Scenario J: "The Verification Prompt Doesn't Appear"

Even after updating to iOS 26.4 or later, some users never see the prompt:

- **Wait up to 24–48 hours.** The prompt may take time to activate after the update.
- Check for a pending minor update (Settings > General > Software Update).
- Go to **Settings > [Your Name]**. Sometimes the prompt is buried under your Apple ID banner and requires scrolling down.
- **Force restart your device.** A fresh reboot can trigger the prompt.

Section 5: Important Dates & Update History

iOS Version	Release Date	Key Changes
iOS 26.4 beta 2	Late Feb 2026	Age verification prompt appears by mistake; Apple says it was a bug

iOS Version	Release Date	Key Changes
iOS 26.4 official	24 March 2026	Mandatory age verification rolls out for UK users
iOS 26.4.1	Early April 2026	Minor bug fixes; no major changes to the verification process
Server-side update	29 April 2026	Apple announces passports are now accepted
iOS 26.4.2	**Late April 2026**	**Current version; includes passport support and improved scan reliability**

Section 6: Still Stuck? Contact Apple Support

If you have exhausted every solution in this guide and still cannot verify, contact Apple Support directly. A representative can diagnose account-specific issues that no public guide can solve.

How to contact Apple Support (UK):

- 📞 **Phone:** 0800 048 0408 (free from UK landlines and mobiles)
- 💻 **Online:** getsupport.apple.com
- 🏬 **In-person:** Book a Genius Bar appointment at any Apple Store (bring your device and ID)

Before you call, have ready:

- Your Apple ID email address.
- A list of the steps you have already tried from this guide.
- Any error messages you have received (screenshots are helpful).

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only. We are not affiliated with Apple Inc. The information in this guide is accurate as of May 2026, but is subject to change. Always refer to Apple's official support documentation for the most current information. We do not endorse any method of bypassing Apple's security features, as doing so may violate Apple's terms of service or applicable laws.