

Allowance App — Sync & Hosting Setup

How to host the app for free and turn on real-time sync across both parents' phones and the child view.

By Greg Snyder, Ph.D. · A Perspective Behavioral Health resource

Technical guide · one-time setup, about 20–30 minutes · no coding required, just copy-paste. The app already runs without any of this — on a single phone it saves to that phone. This adds hosting (so there's a link to open) and sync (so devices share one total).

The mental model: two separate jobs. **GitHub Pages** hosts the *code* (gives you a web link). **Firestore** holds the *shared data* (keeps the phones in sync). You need both for a shared, always-available board. Do them in that order.

1 Host the file on GitHub Pages

This gives you a public web link to the app. Free, and it's the same GitHub you already use.

1. Create a new repository at github.com/new — name it something like `allowance`. Set it to **Public** (Pages needs public on the free tier) and check "Add a README."
2. In the repo, click **Add file → Upload files**, and drag in `teen-allowance-tracker.html`. Rename it to `index.html` so it loads at the root (Add file → the upload dialog lets you set the name, or rename after). Commit.
3. Go to **Settings → Pages**. Under "Build and deployment," set Source to **Deploy from a branch**, branch **main**, folder **/ (root)**. Save.
4. Wait 1–2 minutes. Pages shows your live URL, like `https://YOURNAME.github.io/allowance/`. That's the link you'll open on each phone.

Public repo, private data: the repo being public only means the *code* is visible — and there's nothing sensitive in it. Your family's actual numbers live in Firestore, gated by the security rules in step 2, not in the repo. Keep your Firebase config's real values in mind though: they're not secret in a web app (they ship to the browser by design), so the security rules are what actually protect the data.

2 Create the Firebase project & database

1. Go to `console.firebase.google.com` and click **Add project**. Name it (e.g. `family-allowance`). You can turn Google Analytics off — not needed.
2. In the project, open **Build → Firestore Database → Create database**. Choose **Production mode**, pick a US location (e.g. `nam5` or `us-central`), and create.
3. Open the **Rules** tab and replace the contents with the block below, then **Publish**. This locks the database to a single known family document and blocks everything else.

```
rules_version = '2';
service cloud.firestore {
  match /databases/{database}/documents {
    // Only the one family document is reachable, and only
    // if the reader/writer knows the exact family code.
    match /families/{familyCode} {
      allow read, write: if familyCode == "our-family-CHANGE-ME";
    }
  }
}
```

Change the code to a long, unguessable string. Replace both `our-family-CHANGE-ME` here *and* the `FAMILY_CODE` in the app file (step 3) with the same value — something like `snyder-9f3k2p7q`. Because there's no login, this code is the only thing standing between your data and anyone who finds the URL. Long and random is the whole security model. (If you later want proper accounts, that's the upgrade to make — happy to build it.)

3 Connect the app to Firebase

1. In the Firebase console, click the **gear → Project settings**. Scroll to "Your apps," click the **web icon (</>)**, give it a nickname, and register. (Skip Hosting — you're using GitHub Pages.)
2. Firebase shows a `firebaseConfig` object with your real values. Copy it.
3. Open `teen-allowance-tracker.html` in any text editor. Near the bottom, find the block marked **FIREBASE CONFIG** and paste your values over the `PASTE_ ...` placeholders. Set `FAMILY_CODE` to the same string you used in the rules.

```
const FIREBASE_CONFIG = {
  apiKey: "AIza...your real value...",
  authDomain: "family-allowance.firebaseio.com",
```

```

    projectId: "family-allowance",
    storageBucket: "family-allowance.appspot.com",
    messagingSenderId: "1234567890",
    appId: "1:1234...:web:abcd..."
  };
  const FAMILY_CODE = "snyder-9f3k2p7q"; // same as the rules

```

4. Save the file, then re-upload it to the GitHub repo (Add file → Upload files → drop in the updated `index.html` → commit). Pages redeloys in a minute.

How to know it worked: open the live link. In the top-right you'll see a green dot and **Synced** instead of "On this phone." Open ⚙️ → Sharing and it will say sync is ON. Apply a test fine on one phone and watch it appear on the other within a second or two.

4 Put it on every device

DEVICE	WHAT TO OPEN	THEN
Parent phone 1	the Pages link	Add to Home Screen (Safari) / Add to Home screen (Chrome)
Parent phone 2	the same Pages link	same — both now share one live total
Teen's device	the Pages link + <code>?view=child</code>	Add that page to the home screen — it's read-only

The exact child link is shown inside the app under ⚙️ → Sharing, ready to copy.

5 Cost & what to expect

- **Cost: \$0.** A family's usage is a rounding error against Firestore's free Spark tier (50,000 reads and 20,000 writes per day). You won't approach it. No card required for Spark.
- **Offline:** the app keeps working with no signal and syncs when the phone reconnects (Firestore handles this). If a phone is offline a long time, the live total catches up on reconnect.
- **Backups:** the whole week's state is one small document. If you ever want history, export it, or I can add an auto-archive of each finished week — just ask.

One scope note, for you specifically: this is your family's own data in your personal capacity — ordinary personal data, no PHI, no BAA question. That analysis changes entirely if this were ever pointed at PBH clients (children's behavioral data on infrastructure you'd then be custodian of). This setup is built for family use, not clinical deployment. Keep that line bright.

Companion to the Allowance app and the family-facing Allowance Playbook. Setup steps reflect Firebase and GitHub as of 2026 — both consoles change their wording occasionally, so if a button name differs, look for the nearest equivalent. Created by Greg Snyder, Ph.D. — a Perspective Behavioral Health resource. © 2026 Greg Snyder, Ph.D. All rights reserved.