GUIDELINES FOR PARENTAL CONTROL

INDEX

The Need for Parental Controls

If you're not at all familiar with the internet-connected world, you might not know how internet world has its pros and cons for children. The easy accessibility to internet/web world gives exposure to Music with explicit lyrics, violent video games, untold forms of sexual content, and many other adult-oriented forms of content which are only a few clicks away.

As a parent in the digital age, you probably have concern about how your children use technology. While you can guide them to good principles, it's practically not easy to control and /or keep them away from every possible internet scam and all explicit content online That's where the requirement of parental controls come in. If you've never used and/or taken advantage of these tools, you've got a lot of new things to catch up on. Read on to find out everything you could want to know about parental controls. We'll explain how this works, how to use controls on specific devices, and offer some recommendations.

How Do Parental Controls Work?

First, let's discuss a bit about parental controls in general and what they're used for.

Parental Controls are used in following ways:

- Limit what children can do with an electronic device

- Some parental control methods let you stop children from using a computer after a certain time, or limit their daily screen time.

- Restrict video or game content based on their ratings.

- And further forms of parental controls outrightly blocks websites or content that you specify

You can prefer to set up monitoring on the browsing so that you can review what your children are doing on their devices. No matter your parenting style, you'll find a method that controls the online surfing of your children.

We'll cover this later, but it's important to note that parental controls are not fool proof. While a toddler probably won't be able to find out what you've set

up, it's not very difficult for a tech-savvy teenager to figure out a way to get around blockages.

The gatekeepers like Google, have worked on the same extensively and done a lot to filter out the explicit content in recent years. But there is quite a possibility that a child could end up accessing something you'd rather like them not to see, even accidentally. We're not here to tell how to do the parenting, but to explain how you have control at your disposal.

No matter if you're tech savvy or only use computer occasionally, we'll explain the ways you can filter inappropriate content for your kids.

Major Types of Parental Controls

Now that we've discussed the basic abstract function of parental controls, let's explain some specific methods to enable them. Different "levels" of control exist, and you can use more than one of these at a time in most cases.

◆ Smartphone Parental Options

Let's start with a relevant method. Children today know how to operate a smartphone before they can even tie their shoes. If your children are accessing your phone and/or you're handing them so they can play game, you definitely don't want them to access certain apps or browse the web freely.

◆ Android

On Android, you can set up a second account for your children to use (or just enable the below features on your own account). Combined with disabling Google Play or adding parental controls for downloading apps, you can restrict the apps they use. Head to Settings > Users and tap Add user. Go through the steps to create the second account, and when asked to set up a Google account, choose Skip if you don't want them to use Google Play.

If you want to add an account for them, you can restrict use of the Play Store. Open the Google Play app on their account, slide out the left menu, and tap Settings. Slide down to Parental Controls and create a PIN first. Then, you can set restrictions based on category.

For instance, you can choose which films they can view based on MPAA rating (in US) or filter apps/games based on ESRB (USA) or PEGI (Europe) rating. If

you only want them to play games rated E (Everyone) or E10+, you can check E10+ to allow up to that. Anything above this rating, like Teen, won't work.

This is only part of the equation for Android — while restricting games is important; your kids aren't going to purchase movies from the Play Store unless you've added a credit or gift card. What is more important is kid-friendly apps, like YouTube Kids. This modified version of YouTube is filtered to only show kid-friendly content.

◆ iOS

iOS calls parental controls restrictions, and they're easy to access. Open Settings on your iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch, and then visit General > Restrictions. Tap Enable Restrictions to start using them, then make a passcode. You'll need to enter this later to change these options. Don't lose this code, or you'll have to reset your device.

After you've made a code, take a look at the list of apps and features you can turn off. Examples include Safari, FaceTime, iTunes Store, Installing apps, and more. If the slider is on, anyone on your device can use it. When something is off, nobody can use it. Like Android, you can also block content on the iTunes and App Stores based on ratings.

Final Word: If you let your child use your smartphone (or they're old enough to have their own), there's no reason to forgo using these controls. They don't lock down every aspect of the device, and sometimes they might be annoying if you use them on your own account (like restricting Safari on your own iPhone). But they're a good precautionary first step.

On YouTube, you can enable restricted mode, which performs a similar function. Scroll down to the bottom of any YouTube page, and click the restricted mode button. Choose On and click Save to filter explicit results. If you sign in, you can lock it, too.

◆ Browser Add-Ons

The other half of browser parental controls are add-ons. A search in the extension library for Chrome and Firefox will bring up hundreds of results for these. Most automatically block inappropriate content and allow you to set keywords that block access to websites.

We've listed a few below:

- **Chrome**: Web Filter Free, MetaCert Parental Controls & Web Filter
- **Firefox** : FoxFilter, Porn Blocker

Aside from the lack of parental control extensions in Microsoft Edge and Safari, the above all have a common problem: a conversant user can easily uninstall these just like any other extension.

Conclusion: Using website-specific controls and filtering browser extensions isn't the most reliable method of parental control. A child with some knowledge can use another browser or search engine, or just uninstall the filtering extension.

These are only useful for protecting younger kids who wouldn't know how to clear cookies or uninstall browser add-ons.

◆ Desktop Operating System Controls

It took some time, but both Windows and macOS have built-in parental controls now. Unlike the browser methods above, they're reliable because there's no method for kids to easily disable them.

Windows

In Windows 10, you should create a locked-down account using the Child Account feature. This lets you restrict access to apps in the Windows Store, review what your children are doing on the computer, and limit screen time.

Mac

Protecting your kids on a Mac has been made easy owing to built-in controls. To get started, head to Apple Menu > System Preferences and choose the Parental Controls option. If you get a message that there aren't any users to manage, choose Create a new user account with parental controls and follow the steps. You can select your child's age group during this (4+, 9+, 12+, 17+).

For existing accounts, you can also select the User & Groups option in System Preferences, then choose a standard user and select Enable parental controls to convert it to a managed account. See our guide for managing Mac accounts if you need more help.

Back in the Parental Controls page, click the lock to make changes and enter your username and password. Select the user you want to manage, and click Enable Parental Controls. From here, you have a variety of ways to restrict your child's use of your Mac.

On the Apps page, you can check use Simple Finder to make browsing files on your machine much easier. Limit Applications lets you specify a specific list of apps that the child can open.

The Web page is important, as it lets you pick between three levels of web filtering. Allow unrestricted access filters nothing, while try to limit access will do its best to block any adult content. The most restrictive option is Allow access to only these websites, which lets you approve a set list of pages.

Check the Time Limits tab to prevent kids from using the computer at certain times. Finally, click the Logs… button to review everything your child has done on your Mac. This shows websites they've visited, websites Safari blocked, and what applications they used.

Are they Worth It? - This operating system (OS) level parental controls are a great line of defense. The ability to restrict which applications your child opens and specify a list of approved websites without installing extra software is really handy.

◆ Child-Specific Sites

In conjunction with other tools, you'll find many tools designed for children. These sites are designed to let them enjoy the web while staying safe. In the past there were entire web browsers built for kids, but most of these have unfortunately ceased to exist.

You can set your child's homepage to Kiddle. This search engine specifically caters to kids' requirement. Safe Search is always on, and brings the search results based on how useful they are to kids. The first few are hand-picked by editors, while the other results are easy to understand even if they're not specifically for children.

◆ Third-Party Security Suites

Most of the other tools on this list are free of cost. But if you are more keen want to spend/invest on a security suite to protect your kids, we've detailed seven of the best. These solutions, such as Net Nanny, allow you to install their

software on all devices your kids use and block inappropriate sites, monitor their usage, and more.

◆ Router Protection

Depending on your router, you have a number of tools available for filtering internet usage at the network level. Because your router handles all the traffic flowing to your family's devices, controls set on it work regardless of the device or browser your child is using.

◆ Limiting Screen Time

Many of the methods discussed include an option to limit screen time. If you need a more powerful solution, we've covered the best tools to prevent kids from using the computer beyond a limit.

- Goodnight Chrome, as the name implies, is only available on Chrome. This cool tool lets you set the Unplug and Return times and the days of the week.

- On both Windows and Mac computers, you can use the native parental controls to limit your child's screen time

- Screen Time Parental Control is available for both Android and iOS devices.

- Another good mobile option is Our Pact. On Android and iOS devices, you can set up recurring schedules for your child. This allows you to block times for meals, homework, time with family, and bedtime.

If your kids have a problem and/or is in the habit of using devices too often, using one of these is worth a try.

Educate and Talk to Your Child

Even though everything above is useful, nothing can replace it with honest chat and discussion with your child. Obviously, what you discuss will depend on their age, but being honest is important. Explaining them how wonderful

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the internet is and how it lets you understand and perform. But at the same time, we also have to apprise them with the pros and cons of this virtual world

Now You're in Control

By this, you're aware of the various forms of parental control and how to enable them on all your devices. Before we close, let's quickly discuss a few final points.

Parental Controls with Multiple Children

Once a parental control has been set up, you may wonder about the best ways to manage them with amongst your children, especially kids of different ages. Unfortunately, it's a bit tricky to answer as it varies depending upon the device.

Some platforms, like Amazon's Fire tablet, the Xbox One, and macOS let you manage individual profiles for each of your children. For these, we recommend setting up a unique account for each kid. Perhaps your 14-year-old can play games rated Teen on the Xbox, but you want to restrict a six-year-old to Everyone-rated games.

Suppose you have parental controls set on your PS4 so your six-year-old doesn't play inappropriate games. You're OK with your 14-year-old playing Teen-rated games, so you'll have to entrust him with the password or enter it for him when he wants to play.

In the end, parental controls aren't always super convenient. But it's more important to protect your kids.

Be Aware of Workarounds

We mentioned some pitfalls above, so it's clear that smart kids can get around parental controls. Whether basic methods like uninstalling browser extensions or using a different device, or more devious methods such as going through a proxy server or resetting device options, they may find a way.

Summary and Recommendations

We've offered hints and tips throughout the article, but in case you didn't get through everything, here's a summary of our recommendations for setting up parental controls:

- Use the operating system controls that are best for you. After DNS filtering, the next best "level" is the OS control. Take advantage of the time limits, website blocking, and log-keeping functions of Windows and macOS. They are free of cost and cannot be easily trounced by kids.

- For other devices, use parental controls as needed. If your child regularly plays with your tablet when you're not paying attention, you should probably configure the parental controls. But if your child doesn't really play video games, there's not much reason to bother yourself with the parental controls on your PS4. Just hide the Mature-rated games.

- You don't really need browser extensions or security suites. Browser extensions are too easy to remove, and full-featured software is expensive. Some do offer great features, but for most people they're not worth paying for.

- What websites you allow and block is up to you. Some parents will want to create a list of approved website and block everything else, fearing that their kids could find explicit content even on a site like Wikipedia. Others want to block the worst offenders but don't mind their kids surfing the web otherwise.

Talk to your kids. With everything we've said here, being open and honest is the key.

That's all you need to know about parental controls! Now you're ready to set up, configure, and use them as needed. Hopefully the controls for the devices you use are useful for your family. Along with proper parenting, parental controls are awesome for kids enjoy the awesome devices with access to constructive and positive content keeping them safe.