

Everything You Need to Know About Parental Controls

From simple content filters to robust home network solutions, new parental controls offer a range of media-management options

Even if you've talked to your kids about screen-time limits and responsible online behavior it's still really tough to manage what they do when you're not there (and even when you are). Parental controls can support you in your efforts to keep your kids' Internet experiences safe, fun, and productive. But they work best when used openly and honestly in partnership with your kids -- not as a stealth spying method.

Of course, nothing is entirely fail-safe -- and you'll still want to have conversations about making good choices. Here's an overview of the different levels of protection available.

Smart phones and tablets. Some mobile devices come with basic parental controls -- but the options vary a lot depending on what you have. You can also download apps to track and control online activity, including text messaging and social media. If you're an Amazon user, Kindle Fire tablets come preloaded with Kindle FreeTime parental controls. (Learn how to set parental controls on the iPhone and how to lock down your iPad.)

Good to know: To monitor your kid's social media accounts, you'll need their passwords and user names.

Good for: Younger kids. Once kids get older, they will either resist any attempt to limit their access or simply figure out a way to defeat what you've restricted.

Your device's operating system. Microsoft's Windows, Apple's Mac OS, and Google Chrome come with robust built-in parental controls. To get the most benefits, you need to use the most updated version of the operating system, and each user has to log in under his or her profile.

Good to know: You don't have to pay extra for them and they apply globally to everything the computer accesses.

Good for: All ages.

Web browsers. Browsers, for example Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari, are the software you use to go on the Internet. Each one offers different ways of filtering out websites you don't want your kids to visit. Learn how to set restrictions in your browser.

Good to know: Browsers are free, but if you have more than one on your machine, you need to enable filters on all of them.

Good for: Younger kids. Older kids -- especially very determined ones -- can easily defeat browser restrictions either by figuring out your password or simply downloading a new browser.

Kids' browsers. Sometimes called "walled gardens," these are protected environments that fill up your entire screen (so kids can't click out of them). They typically offer games, preapproved websites, email, and various activities.

Good to know: Kids' browsers are usually free for the basic version, but cost money for a premium upgrade. They also sometimes display ads or promotional content

Good for: Younger kids. Walled gardens are too limiting for older kids who need (or are allowed) greater access to the wider Web.

Third-party apps and software. Full-featured parental-control programs, such as NetNanny and Qustodio let you block websites, impose screen-time limits, and monitor online activity (for example, which sites your kid visits) on your computer or laptop. Many of these programs also offer added security against malware and viruses and will send you a summary of what your kid does online.

Good to know: They usually require a monthly subscription fee.

Good for: Kids of all ages -- and especially kids who need a lot of support in following your rules.

Home networking. There are both hardware and software solutions to control your home network and your home WiFi. OpenDNS is a download that works with your existing router (the device that brings the Internet into your home) to filter Internet content. Circle Home and Torch are newer types of WiFi router controls that are designed to be easy for parents to operate. They include the ability to turn off the internet with a single click when used in conjunction with the app.

Good to know: Mucking around in your network and WiFi settings can be challenging.

Good for: All ages.

4 Ways to Set Up Parental Controls On Your Home Network

Parental controls can filter the web, blocking inadvertent access to inappropriate websites. There are a variety of ways to do this, from configuring network-wide parental controls on your router to using the parental controls built into Windows or third-party software.

Web filtering is best used to restrict the web for young children, preventing them from accidentally wandering into the seedier corners of the Internet. Teenagers are adept at finding their ways around parental controls if they want to.

On Your Router

One of the easiest ways to set up parental controls is by configuring them on your router. Your router functions as the choke point where all the Internet traffic for your network flows through. Setting up parental controls here will allow you to perform web filtering for all the devices on your network -- computers, smartphones, tablets, and even game consoles with built-in browsers. Some routers ship with built-in parental controls. If your router has this feature, it will often be advertised on the box and will generally be explained in the manual. You can go to the router's web-based configuration pages and set up the parental controls for your network.

Many routers don't include parental controls, but you can use OpenDNS to set up parental controls on any router. To do this, you'll just need to change your router's DNS server settings to use OpenDNS. [OpenDNS allows you to set up an account and configure web filtering](#) -- you can select different types of categories of websites to block. Websites you block will redirect to a "This site is blocked" message when visited on your network.

For more information about changing your router's settings, refer to its manual.

Web Content Filtering

Choose your filtering level

- High** Protects against all adult-related sites, illegal activity, social networking sites, video sharing sites, and general time-wasters. [26 categories in this group - View - Customize](#)
- Moderate** Protects against all adult-related sites and illegal activity. [13 categories in this group - View - Customize](#)
- Low** Protects against pornography. [4 categories in this group - View - Customize](#)
- None** Nothing blocked.
- Custom** Choose the categories you want to block.

If you would like a device on your network not to be filtered, you can change its DNS server manually so it won't use OpenDNS. Of course, this means that anyone on your network can change their DNS server and bypass the filtering. Like we said, such filters can be helpful for your children, but a teenager can get around it.

On Windows 7

[Windows 7 has some built-in parental controls](#) that allow you to control what time a user account can log into the computer and what programs it can use. This is helpful if your kids use separate user accounts on your computer.

However, Windows 7 doesn't include a web filter. Microsoft does still offer Family Safety, a free program that allows you to set up web filtering on Windows 7. Install the Family Safety program on your Windows 7 computer and you'll be able to manage its settings from Microsoft's Family Safety website. The program is available as part of Microsoft's Windows Essentials package.



On Windows 8 or Windows 10

Windows 8 and Windows 10 have integrated parental controls that combine Windows 7's time limits and program access controls with Family Safety's web filtering and more new features. You can manage your settings and view reports from the same Family Safety website. All you need to do is check the "Is this a child's account?" box when setting up a new user account on Windows 8. The account will be marked as a child's account and can be managed from the Family Safety website online.

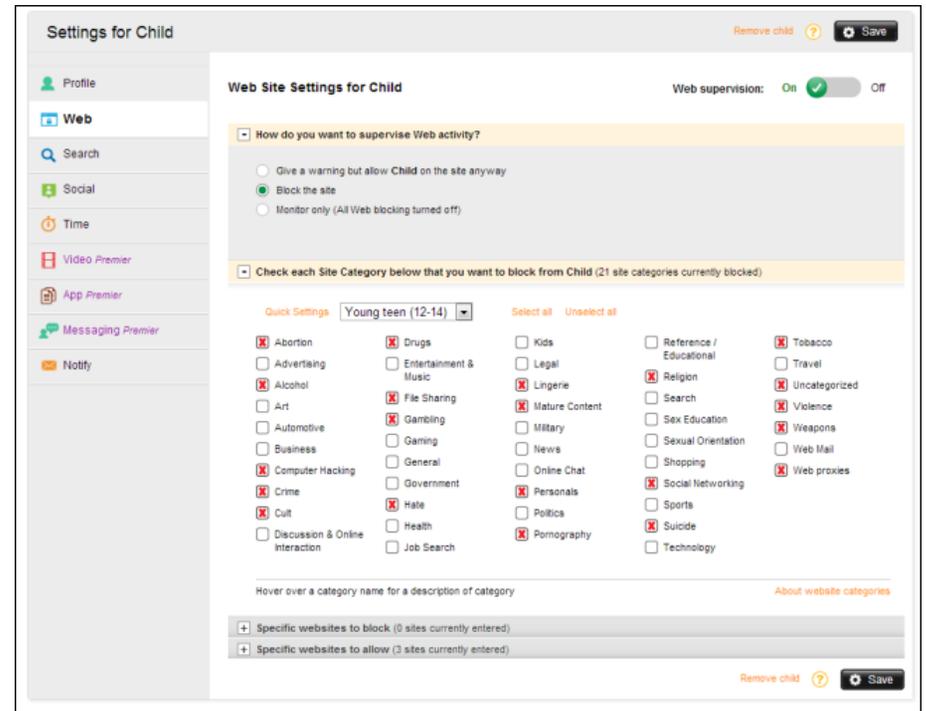
Read more about using parental controls on Windows 8



With Third-Party Software

You can also turn to third-party parental controls. Many Internet security suites come with built-in parental controls. If you have a security suite installed on your computer, check if it has built-in parental controls.

There are also dedicated parental control solutions you can pay for, like the famous Net Nanny that everyone has heard of. However, you don't need to pay for a parental control solution. There are many other free web filtering solutions you can use. For example, Norton offers a free Norton Family parental control application that seems to be widely recommended. Try doing a search online and you'll find many other options that may fit your needs.



Of course, no parental controls are perfect. They won't block everything bad and may occasionally block something good. Sufficiently motivated teenagers can also get around them, if only by leaving your house and accessing the Internet elsewhere or using their smartphone.

For more information visit :

<http://www.cyberswachhtakendra.gov.in>

<http://infosecawareness.in>