

Internet Safety and Software for Every Device In Your Home

By David McVety

We all struggle with keeping our family safe and secure, especially in our world of easy and often-unsecured Internet access. You may be asking yourself where to start and how to know what filters to choose or even what safety steps you should take. We at Doing Family Right have done the work for you and have come up with our top picks for filters and software.

Internet filters/reporting software:

★ www.covenanteyes.com

This is filtering and reporting software for Macs and PCs. This filter is especially useful because, even when it is turned off and isn't blocking, it keeps track of all sites visited. 5 users/computers are included.

When you sign up you also get free access to the mobile browser, which is installed in place of safari or whatever other browser is native to the phone/iPod/tablet. All sites visited with the browser are recorded and reported (this does not monitor other apps or block negative sites but simply reports what the browser itself is used for).

For 1 month free enter the code "**family**" when signing up.

★ www.internetsafety.com (safe eyes)

This filter is very similar and functional as well. Just as with www.covenanteyes.com, individual users and time limits are optional and helpful for avoiding fights with your kids when their time is up.

Router filtering:

★ www.OpenDNS.com

This is a **free** tool used to filter your entire network through your router (which means your wired and wireless network/internet access in your home).

This site has step-by-step instructions on how to filter ALL access to your network. Although ONLY effective in your home and on your network, it's an incredible place to start as you work through parental controls and

other boundaries on the devices in your home. It also helps filter what is accessed through gaming consoles in your home.

With this program you can also allow friends and visitors access to your network without worry or concern for their safety either.

Keystroke logger:

★ www.webwatchernow.com

In my opinion it is a rare situation that will require this type of program.

This program is for situations where blockers aren't enough. It blocks but also takes screen shots and records EVERY key typed. It is not legal to use these programs without the individuals involved being aware that they exist for fear of identity theft and other similar concerns. However, within the context of your family these concerns are usually not valid.

Cell Phone resources (Tablets and iPods also apply):

Cell phones are complicated and dangerous devices given their usual access to the Internet without a wireless network.

They are also dangerous because you cannot filter their access to the Internet because of the number of individual apps that access the Internet independently.

For these reasons it is important to have 4 levels of protection:

1. Set up parental controls; Google your particular phone and find a walkthrough showing how to set up the controls if you can't do this on your own.
2. Be sure that your child does not have the password for the app store. This can also be set up in the parental controls to some extent.
3. Monitor and research each application your child asks to install on the device.

www.common sense media.org is a good resource for mobile app reviews and parent information.

You should also try each application out as "internal browsers" or Internet browsers that are built into many applications allow unrestricted and unmonitored access to the internet as well.

4. Restrict access to the Internet browser (ie. Safari) on the device and install an alternate browser if you believe your child needs access to the Internet.

www.covenanteyes.com gives free access to an alternate browser with the use of their computer filter but content is NOT blocked, only recorded.

Other alternate browsers exist as well like x3watch in the apple app store on your device.

If you feel the need to take it to the next level, either as part of the trust building process (graduated system) or because of a growing lack of trust you can use a program like:

<http://www.phonesheriff.com>

This monitors text messages, allows specified sites to be blocked (very labor intensive for parents), allows GPS tracking and even allows the option of time restrictions for phone use.

This is NOT a failsafe however; it does NOT record Web content at all. It simply allows you, as the administrator, the option to block the sites and categories you believe are dangerous. Internal browsers within applications will also still be an unmonitored hazard.

This, much like a keystroke logger, should not be necessary if proper guidelines, contracts and relationship with your children are set in place and adhered to.

If you have any further question or comments please contact us at david@doingfamilyright.com.