**Child Safety on the Internet**



The Internet is a powerful tool that has changed the way we do things. More than ever before, people of all ages are going online for social, educational and commercial reasons (i.e. shopping online). Websites are created every day containing content that is inappropriate for children. This makes it harder for parents to protect their children; but do not fear, because there are tools to help you!

**#1 – Where do I start?**

The first thing you should do to protect your children is to educate yourself. Why is this important? Because even though there are rules and socially accepted behaviors for interacting with children, online or otherwise, many immoral people will break these rules if they think that they can’t get caught. You don’t want your child to fall victim to this! A great place to get advice about online risks is [www.commonsensemedia.org/advice-for-parents](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/advice-for-parents) . Another useful tool, <http://safely.yahoo.com>, has a wealth of information about protecting your children and the conversations that you should have with them about electronic media.

**#2 – Guide your child to a positive online experience**

One of the best ways to protect your elementary age children is to help them find positive and fun sites online. This can be done in a variety of ways. For example, you could install the free web browser Kidzui at [www.kidzui.com](http://www.kidzui.com). This browser is designed to provide a safe experience for children, and it guides them to content designed specifically for children.

**#3 – How do I setup parental controls?**

Both Windows and Mac users can set up parental controls directly through their operating system. Windows has a free tool called [Windows Live Family Safety](http://download.cnet.com/Windows-Live-Family-Safety/3000-27064_4-10920663.html), which provides a simple set of tools for keeping children away from questionable material online. Mac users have the benefit of a whole suite of parental controls, and a step-by-step guide to setting it up which can be found at http://gigaom.com/apple/kid-proofing-a-mac-with-parental-controls/.

**#4 – How do I use search filters?**

You should enable the content filter on the main search engines (Google, Yahoo, Bing especially). Even if you never use one of them your children still might, and they probably will. Google and Yahoo give you the ability to filter content, *and* the ability to protect your search filter with a password. This is highly encouraged because even innocent search terms can return inappropriate content or images. The password will also stop computer savvy children from changing the search filter.

YouTube is another website that your children are probably using already or will use in the future. It is one of the highest trafficked sites on the web, and it has videos on almost any subject. YouTube has a safety mode that is easy to set up and that can be secured with a password. This link, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWO5f7IsKY8> , provides a video showing how to set up [Safety Mode](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWO5f7IsKY8) for YouTube.

**#5 – What about a** [**web filter**](http://www.learningfromatoz.com/uncategorized/5-ways-to-protect-your-kids-when-theyre-online/)**?**

[Web filters](http://www.learningfromatoz.com/uncategorized/5-ways-to-protect-your-kids-when-theyre-online/) allow you to restrict content and they can work side by side with a search filter. A good Web Filter can also protect your family from things a search filter might miss or from accessing inappropriate content from another [web site](http://www.learningfromatoz.com/uncategorized/5-ways-to-protect-your-kids-when-theyre-online/). There are a large number of Web filters, including [Norton Online Family](https://onlinefamily.norton.com/familysafety/loginStart.fs), a free product from the makers of Norton Antivirus. This product helps you keep track of what your kids are doing online and can help you teach them Internet safety. One feature that really sets this product apart is the ability to log-in remotely to see what your children are doing online. You also can receive an email when something inappropriate has been accessed.

If you use Mozilla Firefox to access the internet, it has a fantastic plug-in called [FoxFilter](http://download.cnet.com/FoxFilter/3000-11745_4-10785260.html?tag=mncol;1which) that will help you protect your family. This plug-in has a free and a premium version available. There is a wealth of other options available for web filtering, including Net Nanny, CYBERsitter, and CyberPatrol.

**Now what do I do?**

The next step you need to take is to talk to your children. Depending on their age, they may not notice the changes to the Internet, but it is still important to talk to your little ones. You need to explain that not everyone on the Internet is nice or will have their

best interests at heart. It is *especially* important that you educate your children about protecting their private information.

While this may seem overwhelming at first, it can be tackled one step at a time. It is so important to talk to your child before anything bad happens!

**The Payoff**

By following these steps, you will be much better equipped to understand, monitor, and control what your children are doing online. Your children need your help and support to get the most out of the Internet.  These steps will help provide your child with a much safer online experience.