



Parental Controls Become Easier to Understand, Install

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No more excuses! Parental control software helps parents supervise their children's computer usage, even when the parents are away from the computer, and the software is becoming simpler to use, according to TheOnlineMom.com.

Nearly everyone knows of a friend or neighbor's child that stumbled across an inappropriate website or accidentally deleted important files. How can you make sure this doesn't happen in your house? It's easy... and getting easier, according to TheOnlineMom.com. And it's even more important in this post-holiday season with new laptops and desktops received as gifts. Use this primer to learn about parental controls.

What are parental controls?

Parental control software allows parents to:

- ♦ Manage time spent on the Internet or on the computer
- ♦ Limit what their children are allowed to see and read online
- ♦ Select which computer programs children can use
- ♦ Monitor and log all Internet activity



Managing computer time

For all children, managing time spent at the computer is as important as monitoring the amount of time spent watching TV. Like the TV, computer use should not be an automatic right; rather it should be a privilege earned by good behavior and respect for the rules of engagement.

Most parental control software allows scheduling of times when the computer, and by extension the Internet, is and isn't available to your children.

Filters and blocking software

When it comes to controlling what children are allowed to see and read, most security suites will typically offer to block websites matching specific categories such as pornography, violence, drugs, or chat. Some blocking software will refer to its own database of matching sites, which is constantly updated for new additions, and others will analyze page content in much the same way that search engines do.

Protect files and turn off applications

All parental control software programs will also allow parents to "turn off" applications that are normally available to older users. Typically these would be e-mail services but could also include financial applications, games, movies, or other entertainment programs available off the desktop or elsewhere.

To spy or not too spy?

Finally, there is the "spyware" side of parental controls. This can be a useful tool if you want to monitor how adventurous your children might be getting with their Internet searches. Typically, these monitoring features will log every attempt to visit a banned website or simply record every website visited, good or bad. They can even send notifications real-time, so you can be at work and see which sites your children are attempting to visit.

This abridged article is reproduced from a two-part series on parental controls originally published on TheOnlineMom.com, a website offering tech information and advice to parents. [Both articles](#) can be found in full at TheOnlineMom.com.