



CyberAngels

A program of Guardian Angels
keeping it safe

Choosing Parental Control Software

Choosing a filter for monitoring and blocking harmful content on your computer can be an overwhelming task. There is no **one** software program that will guarantee your child complete and total security. It is vital to remember that parents must do their part by monitoring their child's Internet activities and by selecting a filter that suits the needs of their family appropriately.

When deciding what type of filter to install, it is necessary to determine the type and amount of protection needed. For instance, a family with five and seven-year-old children may want to purchase a program that allows them the opportunity to filter out harmful keywords, phrases, materials or content (i.e.: Typing "The Wild West" and finding oneself at a pornographic adult web site). Filtering software should offer options which include limiting access to key phrases or words; websites, images or chatrooms that contain sexually explicit material; graphic or extreme violence; messages of hate or intolerance, as well as illegal activities, such as pro-marijuana usage or club drug recipes.

In the case of the older, more sophisticated minor user, a filter would be necessary not only to filter materials but also to track and monitor the user's whereabouts. Parental control options are limitless, allowing the parent to control features such as incoming and outgoing email, chat room access, instant message access, file sharing, log URLs and browser activity, enforce curfew, etc. There are several programs that will even notify parents with an email about any violations that occur.

What types of filters are there?

GetnetWise.com defines the two software options as follows:

Client-based filter - A software program that a user installs on his or her own computer to monitor Internet use, block access to specific types of material, prevent kids from accessing the Internet at certain times, or prevent kids from revealing personal information online.

This refers to actual software that is purchased or installed on your PC.

Server-based filter - Software which is installed on a host server, such as a web server, to filter out Web pages which include content which meets specific criteria. Users who connect to a server which uses a filter will only be able to access those pages which get through the server's filter.

This refers to web servers such as AOL or Prodigy.

Resource

GetnetWise.com

A well-organized site dedicated to informing families how to keep children safe on the net. Using the "Tools for Families," allows parents to select exactly the level of control needed and what type of filter to use.