



Internet Parental Control Software

The Internet, like the real world, provides many benefits but harbors a number of risks that parents need to be aware and mindful of. In Qatar, Q-Tel already filters residential access to websites that contain content such as pornography and extreme violence, but parents can add to that protection by using software at home that provides more control and broader protection. As the Internet can be used for so many purposes and content is delivered through blogs, email, chatrooms, social networking sites, etc. it is important to understand the types of protection that each software delivers.

When using such software, parents should be aware of the following:

- It can help prevent children from accessing undesirable web content.
- The software is not foolproof and may not block all types of content, or all the different ways content is provided from the Internet
- They can mistakenly filter out 'safe' content and sites.
- They're not a substitute for proper parental supervision.
- Some free software can perform as well as commercial programs.

As a parent, some of the things that you should be looking for, when assessing which software you should choose are:

- Does it support content that is not just in English, e.g. Arabic content?
- Do you need the software to work across devices, i.e. do your children use their mobile phones, PS3, etc. to surf the web in addition to the PC?
- How easy is it to setup the software, maintain it and generally use it?
- What functions does the software provide – does it cover chatrooms, social networks, email, p2p, blogs etc. or only filtering of websites? What about monitoring usage and alerting?
- How customizable is it and does it cater for different ages of children?

Below we provide guidance on what options are available for parents, from using the tools built into your existing PCs, to free software/solutions and finally to commercially available software. It is important to choose the solution that best fits the age of your children, covers the methods they use to access the Internet and protects to the levels that you require.



Built Into the Computer

There is some limited parental controls built into modern operating systems, that can provide some basic levels of protection:

Microsoft Windows Vista/Windows 7: allows you to determine which games children can play, which programs they can use, and which websites they can visit—and when. As Internet activity can be logged, you can clearly see what your children have been doing on the Internet as well. [Click here for more information on Windows Vista](#) and [here for more information on Windows 7](#).

Apple Mac OS X: allows you to determine which programs children can use, provides checking of websites based on a list of explicit keywords and the use of website blocking based on the website address. You can specify a set of acceptable sites or a list of banned sites, depending upon your needs. Apart from providing logging of Internet activities, you can also specify the amount of time children spend on the Internet. [Click here for more information](#).

Free Alternatives

[All OS] OpenDNS: OpenDNS provides an easy to use, built into the Internet method for controlling and monitoring Internet usage. It provides cross-platform, cross device protection. Parents can specify which categories of websites are permitted and can specify a set of acceptable sites or a list of banned sites. Detailed reporting on Internet usage is available together with protection against common Internet security threats such as phishing, malware, botnets etc. This solution requires no additional software to be installed, and allows centralized control of content for the whole household. [Click here for more information](#).

[Windows/Mac] BlueCoat K9 Protection: This is a free product, which provides extensive, category based website blocking, similar to that used by Q-Tel. It provides custom websites to be added for blocking, including explicit keyword checking and customization. Additionally it allows enforcement of safesearch search engine options. Finally it will log Internet activity and allow you to specify the amount of time children are permitted to use the Internet. [Click here for more information](#).

[All OS] Parental Control Bar: This is a simple software solution that can be added to a browser to block access to adult orientated websites. Parents can define the level of filtering and can specify a set of acceptable sites or a list of banned sites, depending upon your needs. The organization behind the software attempts to maintain a list of acceptable/unacceptable websites that this software uses to make its filtering decisions. [Click here for more information](#).



[All OS] Glubble: This is an Internet service that provides a child friendly access to the Internet, through effectively a safe portal. Children can play, learn and discover the web safely using the safe Glubble Kids browser which is software that can be added to the web browser. [Click here](#) for more information.

Commercial Software

There are a large number of commercial offerings available with some providing a large number of functions. Industry based reviews of commercial software are provided by the following websites:

- Australia's Choice magazine ([Internet Filtering Software - Review](#))
- Computer Magazines such as PCMag.com and Computer Shopper ([Internet Filtering Software -Reviews and Editors Choice Awards](#))
- TopTenReviews ([Parental Control Software -Review](#))

The most popular and recognized commercial products are:

[Windows/Mac] NetNanny: This is simple to use PC based software which provides extensive website filtering, including chatroom monitoring/filtering, email filtering, p2p blocking, reporting and alerting. It is feature rich and considered as one of the more mature and capable products. [Click here](#) for more information.

[Windows/Mac] Safe Eyes: This is software that is installed on the home PC. It provides a user-friendly interface and has extensive filtering functionality covering chatrooms, social networks and email blocking. It also provides reporting on Internet usage and daily limits. [Click here](#) for more information.

ictQATAR does not explicitly endorse any specific free or commercial software for Internet parental control, and the information provided should be seen as guidance only on choosing something that suits your needs. ictQATAR, is endeavoring to provide more support to parents, for keeping our children safe on the Internet. Keep an eye open for ictQATAR's up and coming Child Online Protection initiative.