

How do I stop my children coming across porn or other adult content?

Filtering programs, rating systems, child friendly ISPs, browsers for kids, safe search engines and monitoring systems can help you stop your children from coming across adult material like porn.

While the net has a lot of great information on it, it is still important to try and shield children from potentially harmful web pages.

There are some things you just don't want your kids to see!

Filtering programs

Filtering programs are designed to 'screen' web pages before your child has a chance to see them. They can screen for pornography and other content as well, such as violence, drugs etc.

Parents are given different degrees of control over the censorship depending on the program, and certain programs are more effective than others.

[SurfWatch](#), [Net Nanny](#), [Cyber patrol](#) and [Cybersitter](#) are some of the popular filtering programs.

For a full selection of available software, you can search on a website like [download.com](#).

These programs may also help you to screen the material your child receives via e-mail or in chat rooms.

Ratings systems

Some websites are classified by a ratings system, so that you can better select what your child should and shouldn't be looking at.

These ratings generally come in categories, so you can exclude specific groups like 'pornography'.

Internet Explorer supports ratings through the 'content advisor' which you can find under the 'Tools' menu in 'Internet Options'. It allows you to restrict which sort of sites can be visited.

The main problem with ratings is very few sites bother to set the rating of their site so your kids may be stopped from visiting legitimate content.

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Child friendly ISPs

There has been a lot of talk of ISPs that are 'child-friendly' and screen what content they offer before it reaches your house.

In reality, there aren't very many ISPs that offer this type of option.

One that does is [AOL](#). That's because they have their own content and parents can use a control panel to restrict what AOL pages kids can visit.

It allows parents to create passwords for each child and install parental controls depending on their age.

So, for example, their 'Kids Only' setting for ages 12 and under restricts kids to areas on AOL and the internet that are targeted at them. They also have young and mature teen settings.

Other child-friendly ISPs include [Surfonthesafeside](#) and [UK Online](#) which offer free access to Childcheck filtering software.

Browsers for kids

Some browsers are designed to screen what results a child can get from a search, to make sure material such as pornography doesn't make it through.

[Surfmonkey](#) is one example which also comes with a safety service.

[Acemonkey](#) also have a browser aimed at children aged 4 -11.

Safe search engines

There are also child-safe search engines available, which limit and screen the sites they present to children.

[Yahooligans](#), [AJkids](#) and [KidsClick!](#) are directories aimed at kids.

There are also mainstream search engines that allow you to filter search results to remove adult content.

Use [AltaVista Family Filter](#) from the 'Search tool' links below the main search box or try [Cleansearch](#), a search engine from search giant Inktomi.

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Monitoring systems

You can also put in place a monitoring system - these programs monitor what your child has been looking at for you to check later.

These will not stop your child from looking at pornography, but knowing that you, their parent, will find out about it later may help to convince them not to go there.

Normally, parents can then view the addresses or screenshots of the sites their kids visit. They also can keep logs of what is said in instant messenger, chat and e-mail programs.

You can see a list of many of the providers of this type of software at [DMOZ](#).

Browser hijackers

Browser hijackers are spyware programs that divert you to sites without asking you. They are sometimes called 'scumware'.

They are particularly worrying as they can divert children from perfectly suitable sites to web pages with adult content.

Most people install them without realising, when they download and install a piece of shareware like KaZaA, the popular file sharing program.

These programs hijack links inside web pages. So, for example, when you click on a link for [BBCi Sex](#) (education) pages the program might hijack your browser and send you to a site with pornographic content.

Likewise, if you clicked on a link for [BBCi Motoring](#) the program might divert you to a car sales website.

They also generate banner adverts and pop-up windows targeting products at you on top of the original web page. If these are adult products it can be very disturbing for children.

Dealing with hijackers

The best way to avoid getting 'scumware' is to be very careful when installing free software.

Look out for check boxes on setup screens where you agree to the installation of secondary software. Sites like [scumware.com](#) have a list of popular 'infected' programs.

Also consider trying software that will check your system for browser hijackers and then remove them. [Cnet](#) have lists in their online privacy section.