



What's a Parent to Do: 10 Steps You Can Take Today to Protect Your Family.

The ubiquity of the Internet and Internet-enabled devices, combined with the lack of Internet regulation and misconceptions surrounding its “family friendly” nature, have endangered our communities and made a parent’s job far more difficult. Internet pornography in particular is so easily accessed that we are truly in the midst of a pornemic—with consequences that are just as harmful and real as any plague that has threatened mankind.

However, there are a few steps that you can take to protect yourself, your family and your community:

1). The Internet is NOT Family Friendly

The Internet is an amazing communication tool. It offers a wealth of information to anyone who is connected to it, including educational resources, entertainment, news, and much more; however, the Internet is not without its problems.

One of the chief architects of the Internet, Vinton Cerf, has repeatedly stated his support for an Internet that is free from “rules and regulations” where individuals can express their ideas without any responsibility or accountability. As a result, the Internet contains extremely mature content—content

that some believe is not even appropriate for adults, let alone children.

Mature Content on the Internet

By “extremely mature”, we are talking about some of the darkest, most disturbing and most violent pornography imaginable, as well as websites promoting violence, hatred, drug use, criminal activity and worse. Whether it is text, images, games, audio or video, the level of mature content on the Internet is alarming.

In fact, if the Internet as a whole were rated using the well-known MPAA movie rating system, it would undoubtedly receive an NC-17 rating for mature content, indicating that minors are not allowed to view it.

The Internet is not Family Friendly—it is for Adults Only!

As parents, we need to realize that the Internet is NOT family friendly. There may be kid-friendly websites on the Internet, such as disney.com and nickelodeon.com, but in cyberspace, those well-known family sites exist next door to other websites, which are dark, disturbing and only a mouse-

click away.

We need to understand the dangers of the Internet and also realize that the current lack of any real technological, legislative or administrative solutions means that:

The Internet is for adults only—treat it with the same caution you would a loaded firearm, poison, or any other harmful substance you might have in your household.

Do not allow your children to have unsupervised access to the Internet.

Do not assume that because they want to visit on a family-friendly website they are safe on the Internet.

Do not assume that just because you have chosen to disconnect from the Internet in your home that it is not available from within your house.

If you live in a wired community, the Internet is everywhere. Use it with great caution and only when you can properly supervise it—only then can it live up to its potential. Ultimately, it is a parent’s responsibility to see that our children gain every advantage possible from the Internet without being harmed by it.

Helping to Dispel the Myth

You may be surprised by the strong language used here. But the truth of the matter is that the Internet is not family friendly. Once you have come to appreciate the dangerous and mature nature of the Internet, you should help spread word. Let your

friends and family know about the truth. Send them to this website.

If people changed their perception of the Internet from “an amazing information super highway” to “an amazing information super highway that is not family friendly”, parents and community leaders would make better decisions about when and where

Internet access is appropriate.

Lastly, you should also consider posting a “Warning” button on your website or blog. This warning helps stir debate and discussion concerning the mature nature of the Internet. The buttons are available from www.whataparentcando.com.

2). Become Tech Savvy

If you want to protect your family, you must understand the basics of the Internet and the devices that can be used to access it—which now includes computers, cell phones, PDAs, digital music devices, portable game devices,

and much more.

To start, you can learn more about the Internet. The CP80 Foundation, at www.cp80.org, offers a number of free courses at:

<http://www.cp80.org/content/training/overview>

You should also consider looking for a basic computing class from your local community college or through continuing education programs in your area.

Lastly, be sure to subscribe to our Alerts newsletter, which will keep you up to date on the latest



tech trends and simply explain what you can do to keep your family safe.

3). Become Internet-Access Aware

You need to be aware of where, when and how members of your family can access the Internet in your home and throughout the community in which you live:

Dial-up Service

Dial-up service uses standard phones lines to access your Internet Service Provider (ISP) and the Internet. All you need is a phone line, the ISP's phone number, a username and a password to connect to the Internet. If you have the phone number, username and password, any phone line, in your own home or anywhere else, can be used to dial-in to the ISP and connect.

If you choose to use dial-up service, one of the most important precautions you can take to keep your children safe is to keep your username and password a secret. Once your child knows your username and password, he can use any computer with a dial-up modem and any phone line to access the Internet.

Furthermore, many computers and applications have the ability to remember or auto-complete your username and password once you start typing the first characters. Make sure to disable this capability.

Broadband Service

Broadband service offered by cable television companies, through DSL connections, or in communities that have high-speed connections directly into their homes, offer Internet connections on any cable TV outlet, phone socket or network socket respectively.

Some connections require special devices to enable an Internet connection, such as a modem. Others do not. While some services do require a modem to connect to the Internet, modems are cheap and readily available from classified ads, on an Internet auction site or at local computer stores.

It is also important to note that a broadband connection is "on" all the time. As soon as you connect your computer to a modem or socket, you are wired to the Internet. Some Internet services may require a username and password to connect. If an ISP does require a username and password, keep

them secret. On the other hand, if your service does not require a username and password, you need to know where the access points are in your home and monitor their use closely.

You should also consider setting a local username and password on the computers in your home. Securing your home computers would prevent your children from using them when unsupervised, but would not prevent a friend from bringing a laptop to your home and connecting or prevent your child from purchasing his own laptop, for as cheap as \$50 on sites like ebay.com, and connecting.

Internet at Your Neighbors' Homes

You may have taken the appropriate steps to secure the Internet in your own home, but that doesn't mean your neighbors have done the same. You should take the time to know if the homes of your children's friends have Internet access and if so, what their family's rules are using to it.

It may put you in a tough and unpopular position, but if a neighbor does not secure his Internet access, you need to re-evaluate whether or not your children are allowed to play there.

Internet Access at Public Institutions and Businesses

Many public institutions and business offer free Internet access to their patrons, either providing a hotspot for wireless users or a computer with a connection. Do not assume that just because an Internet connection is offered for free to the public that it is filtered and/or supervised. It very well might not be.

If you are going to allow your children to access the Internet at a local library, a neighborhood school or a local business, find out what their usage policies are, what kind of filter they offer, and if they supervise usage.

However, even if Internet access is filtered, allowing your child to surf the Internet unsupervised can be just as dangerous as unfiltered Internet access. Ultimately, you may be better off making institutions and businesses that offer free Internet access off limits.

Unsecured Wireless Networks and Hotspots

A wireless network is a computer network that broadcasts the Internet over a local area similar in

some respects to how a radio broadcasts music. Any device that is “WiFi” enabled can connect to the Internet by using one of these wireless networks—no direct connection to a modem or socket is necessary.

Many individuals choose to use wireless networks in their homes for convenience purposes. However, in doing so, they make the Internet available well beyond the four walls of their home. Some networks are accessible for hundreds of feet surrounding the wireless antenna.

Where these wireless networks exist as a public network, they are often referred to as a hotspot.

The problem with wireless networks and hotspots is that they make the Internet available everywhere. Even if you decide to disconnect from the Internet entirely within your home, if your neighbor has a wireless network, the Internet will be accessible from within your home!

To manage wireless networks in your neighborhood, you need to find them and make sure that they are properly secured using WEP, WPA or some other encryption method. By securing wireless networks, it is more difficult for the casual computer user to connect anonymously to the Internet—but not impossible.

Also, be aware that with certain devices, such as a portable Sony Playstation (PSP), a child could access the Internet while moving in and out of the range of various wireless networks on the way to school.

Due to the pervasive nature of wireless networks, you must be very aware of where the networks are and what devices can be used to access them.

4. Know What Devices Can Access the Internet

The Internet is not just for computers. The list of Internet-enabled/WiFi-enabled devices is long and getting longer all the time. Soon, just about every appliance in your home, the clothes you wear and many other devices you own will use the Internet to transmit information.

Today, the list includes:

- Computers (desktops and laptops)
- Cell Phones
- VOIP Phones
- PDA's
- MP3 players (ie. iPod, Zune, etc.)
- Portable Gaming Devices (ie. PSP, Nintendo DS, etc.)
- Console Game Stations (ie. Xbox, Playstation, etc.)
- Televisions (ie. cable tv services, on-demand service, etc.)
- Digital Recording Devices (ie. Tivo)
- Personal Communications Devices (ie. Sony Reader, Nokia Internet Tablet, etc.)

Before you purchase one of these devices and simply hand it over to your children, look on the box and in the documentation—do a little research. If the device allows your children to access the Internet, you are creating a potential problem for yourself and for them.

If you decide to purchase it, find out if the device allows you to manage Internet access in some way. Many devices have username/password capabilities

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or possibly firmware/bios configurations that allow you to control your children's access to the Internet. If not, be prepared to closely supervise their use.

Lastly, be sure to subscribe to our Alerts newsletter, which will keep you up to date on the latest tech trends and simply explain what you can do to keep your family safe.

5). Create a Family Internet Use Policy

Because you cannot be with your children all of the time, each family should create and discuss an Internet use policy. A family Internet use policy is a collection of rules that governs when and where family members are allowed to access the Internet.

It should further indicate what websites are acceptable to visit, what applications are acceptable to use, when it is acceptable to communicate with other people on the Internet, and what they should do if they find inappropriate content or are contacted by a stranger. Taking the time to discuss these rules with your children creates a sense of responsibility and accountability for them and should be accompanied by some form of consequence when these rules are broken.

Below is an example of a family Internet use policy.

Family Internet Use Policy

We agree that the Internet can be dangerous, that it is not family-friendly, and that it can only be used when we follow these rules:

- 1). We understand that nothing is private when we use the Internet. Anything we do on the Internet or with any device can be looked at, discussed and reviewed for any reason and at any time. We will not keep online secrets from each other.
- 2). We will not change, delete or hide any of our online activities.
- 3). We will only access the Internet from specific locations, times and durations.
- 4). We will only access the Internet with specific devices.
- 5). We will ask permission before accessing the Internet from any location, at any time that, or with any device that has not been discussed.
- 6). We will only visit/use specific websites, games and Internet services.
- 7). We will ask permission before visiting any website or using any games or Internet services that have not been discussed.
- 8). We will always inform our parents of any situation where the Internet could be accessed of which they are not aware.
- 9). We will only communicate over the Internet with the approved list of people.
- 10). We will ask permission before communicating with someone whom has not been discussed.
- 11). We will ask permission before purchasing anything online, filling-out any forms or subscribing to any services or lists.
- 12). We will ask permission before offering personal information (name, phone numbers, email addresses, street addresses, photographs, etc.) to anyone over the Internet.
- 13). We will ask permission before discussing or agreeing to meet anyone from the Internet.
- 14). We will immediately inform our parents if anyone attempts to get personal information from us or asks to meet them in person.
- 15). We will avoid websites and Internet applications that allow access to adult content (i.e. content that includes sexual, violent, hate-related, drug-related, criminal, and similar mature content).
- 16). If I encounter adult content, we will immediately tell our parents and discuss it with them.
- 17). We will not download or exchange anything over the Internet without permission.
- 18). We will not download or exchange files that are illegal (i.e. music, movies, etc.)

19). We will not attempt to bypass any filtering software that has been installed.

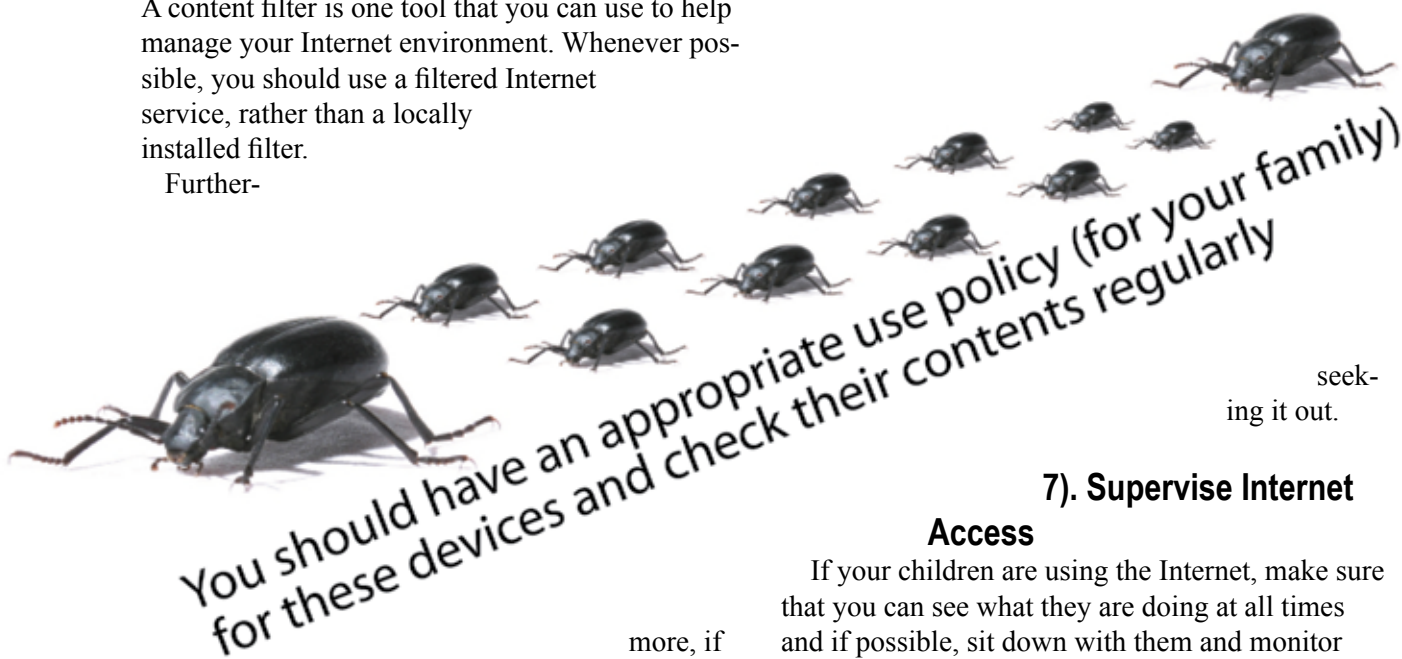
20). We will not use any proxy services that hide our online activities.

Breaking any of these rules results in the immediate suspension of Internet use and the use of any device that allows us to access the Internet or view digital files.

6). Deploy a Filter—but Understand its Limitations

A content filter is one tool that you can use to help manage your Internet environment. Whenever possible, you should use a filtered Internet service, rather than a locally installed filter.

Further-



more, if you are going to use a filter, it is important that you understand a filter's limitations. Filters cannot guarantee your family's protection for two reasons.

The first reason is that the Internet is largely unregulated. In many instances, there are no consequences with regard to minors accessing adult content. Nor is there any real motivation for adult-content providers to allow themselves to be filtered—in fact, quite to the contrary, many adult-content providers actively work at defeating a filter's ability to block them.

Secondly, filters are easily bypassed using a number of simple methods, including rebooting a computer using an install disc, using an alternate

internet-ready device, using an alternate Internet connection, using a proxy, accessing offline content, and more.

The best use of a filter is to protect those who are not actively seeking adult content. For those who are, a filter offers little protection and in some cases can even create a dangerous sense of false security.

Deploying a filter does not relieve you of your responsibility to monitor and supervise Internet access. It does not take the place of good parenting. It is only a tool that can minimize exposure to mature content for those individuals who are not

seeking it out.

7). Supervise Internet Access

If your children are using the Internet, make sure that you can see what they are doing at all times and if possible, sit down with them and monitor their activities. Even trustworthy children can accidentally stumble upon inappropriate content. If you are nearby, you can quickly explain why the content is inappropriate, why they should avoid it, and comfort them.

Unfortunately, with the high level of Internet availability in our communities, it is impossible to be with them whenever they could access the Internet. A few precautions that you can take to extend your supervision is to have a family Internet-use policy, deploy a filter, and support community efforts to appropriately limit Internet access.

8). Educate your Children

As a parent, it is your responsibility to prepare your children to deal with many adult situations, includ-

ing sex, drugs and violence. Unfortunately, if you live in a wired community, you need to have those frank discussions with your children earlier than you think.

If your children are allowed to access the Internet, they will eventually encounter some form of adult content, whether it is pornography, hate sites, drug-use sites, criminal-activity sites, or other websites that are equally inappropriate and disturbing.

Your inability to manage and control the Internet in your home and community means that you need to discuss the Internet and what your children might find on it as soon as they are capable of accessing it. Obviously, the discussions should still be age appropriate, but it is important for you to realize that the Internet does not care if the individual clicking the mouse is seven or 47—it will treat them both as if they were adults.

9). Monitor Offline Access

The Internet is only the start of a worldwide distribution chain for adult content. Once an individual



has downloaded an inappropriate image or file from the Internet, it can be transferred to a number of devices that do not need Internet access in order to view. There are many devices that are cheap and commonplace today that can allow your children to exchange files, such as CDs, DVDs, thumb drives, iPods, portable gaming devices, etc.

Anytime your children have access to technology, they have the ability to save and trade adult content. You should have an appropriate use policy for these devices and check their contents regularly. If you are not sure how to check a device, seek the help of more technically capable neighbors or technical support individuals from local computer stores.

10). Help Solve the Problem

Everything you have read so far are solutions to the symptoms created by an adults-only Internet—but they do very little to solve the real problem. At the heart of the pornndemic caused by the Internet is a general lack of leadership, responsibility and accountability from those who control cyberspace. If you would like to make a difference, if you would like to see the Internet evolve into something that can better serve mankind, you need to get involved with programs and organizations like The CP80 Foundation.

The CP80 Foundation is working to organize and regulate the Internet so that you can better manage your Internet environment; so that the Internet can be family friendly; and so you can do a better job as a parent.

Changing the Internet is possible, but only with your support and involvement. Visit www.cp80.org to learn more.

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