

Crossing the Digital Divide (v43)

“Mind the Kids”

By Joseph Feigon for the Observer

There are many reasons to monitor your child's Internet activity. Age appropriate material is of prime consideration for most parents. Many opt to keep their kids away from porn, hate, social media and gaming sites. Granted, there's plenty of reasons to completely limit use of a smartphone, tablet or computer, and ample opportunity for both parent and child to learn. Life is about choice, using a computer and the Internet no different, but, there's no denying the societal pressure to “get connected”. Sooner or later, your child will be asking for a computer, or spending time at a friend's place using their computer, or discovering that, the cellphone you gave them to call you when soccer practice is over with can also be used to surf the web.

If you and your child are ready to begin exploration of the World Wide Web, some advance preparation will help you control what and where you child can go on the Net. First off, whether you are a Mac user or a Windows user, you should make sure your account is password protected - do not give this information to your child, and do not leave your password list under the keyboard. Next, open up Settings or Control Panel and create a Child Account (nice tutorial here: <http://www.laptopmag.com/articles/parental-controls-windows-10>).

Once a guest/child account has been setup, you can also use Internet Explorer to configure content filters: <http://www.wikihow.com/Restrict-Web-Browsing-Using-Internet-Explorer>

For Exede and Hughes users, Parental controls can also be used to set usage limits. Maybe watched YouTube videos after school is for homework, but we've all learned, satellite internet does not translate to unlimited streaming.

How about those Android phones? Thank you Google: <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738/?hl=en>

Parental Controls are available for your Android devices as well.

Apple, not to be undone: <http://www.imore.com/restrictions> allows you to control all aspects of your child's “i” life.

As a parent, we strive to raise self-sufficient, self-aware, contributing members of society. They will all have a digital footprint, and with proper planning, you can keep track of them without being obvious. Help protect your child by working with them to create their first Google or Apple or Microsoft account. Don't cave in to “cute” email addresses, if at all possible, get them an account with their fullname: bobby.s.johnstone@gmail.com outlook.com or apple.com. If bobby.s.johnstone is taken, try bobby.steven.johnstone, or mr.robert.s.johnstone. If the name is taken, do NOT add birthday, zipcode, or any other unique identifier. Example: bobby.s.johnstone.california@

With parental controls in place (account, browser filters, smartphone filters), an occasional review of their Google activity (login as the parent), you will be able to fine tune content, and educate accordingly, if your child has discovered territory you'd prefer avoided. Teach them never to share any personal information with any website or individual, unless expressly approved by you.

Keep control of those things you can control.