

Setting up Filtering Software on your Child's Computer

(from Kim Komando)

Keeping children safe is a parent's most important job. The Internet doesn't always make that job easy. Thankfully, Microsoft is offering free tools through Windows Live.

The package is Windows Live OneCare Family Safety. It lets you control your children's surfing. You can also control their online communications through instant messaging and email. You decide with whom they can communicate.

To get started with Family Safety, you'll need a Windows Live ID. Each of your children will also need Windows Live IDs. You and your children must log in to use the Internet. You'll be instructed to create these IDs while setting up the software.

Download the free software from the [Family Safety Web site](#). Just click the "Get started" button. Follow the instructions to install the software. An icon will be installed in the notification area of the desktop.

Control the Internet

To begin, right-click the Family Safety icon. Select "Go to Family Safety website." You'll adjust all settings from this Web site.

Children and adults must each have a profile. Windows Live IDs are included in the profiles. Each profile has its own settings.

First, set up controls for each child. You can use Family Safety to block categories of Web sites. There are 12 categories, including pornography, weapons and hate speech. You can also block sites that are not categorized. That means nearly everything is blocked. Only sites built into the program can be seen. Even they can be blocked when they pop up.

With everything blocked, you can create a list of allowed sites. That list will override the blocks.

You may also be concerned about whom your kids contact online. You can control this as well. You can approve their email and instant messaging contacts. They can only converse with people on your list. Your children must use Hotmail and Windows Live Messenger. To ensure this, you can block other IM and Web mail applications.

Controls are set up for each profile separately. But what if your kids are all different ages? What settings are right for each? Family Safety offers advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics. You'll get recommendations tailored to several age groups.

Log out of your parental profiles when not using the Internet. Adult profiles do not have blocks. You are logged in until you log out. If you stay logged in, your kids surf where they please.

To log out, right-click the icon in the notification area. Then select "Sign out on this computer." They'll have to sign in to access the Internet.

Controls are dynamic

This isn't a "set it and forget it" program. It promotes communication with your children. You'll soon find your family discussing what sites are appropriate and why.

Children have two options if they want to visit a new site. They can ask you. You can see what they want to visit in person. By putting in your password, that site will be unblocked.

Or, your children can submit a permission request. They can even include a note on why they want access. When you next log in, you can review their requests. You can allow or deny each.

This also applies to email and IM contacts. Your children will need your permission to add a contact. You can do it in person or through a permission request.

Monitor their activity

Activity reports can be established for each child's profile. They allow you to monitor your children's online activities. You can set up activity reports for each profile. Here you'll see all of the sites they tried to visit. This includes blocked sites. You can use this tool for discussion about proper surfing habits.

Control your child's Internet access

Windows Live OneCare Family Safety is a great free tool. It's powerful enough to control your children's Internet activity. But it will also help you discuss why certain sites aren't kid-friendly.

More protection for your kids:

- [How family friendly are Web games?](#)
- [Use Facebook? Set up a safe profile](#)
- [Set up parental controls on video game consoles](#)
- [Need help limiting your kid's screen time?](#)