

## Protecting your family online

The internet is a fantastic resource for all sorts of reasons, but we all know that it very dark areas, unfortunately information and images that shouldn't be for the eyes of children are all too readily available. So how can you make sure to protect your family from going where they shouldn't online?

There are a couple of different options you can choose, or even opt for more than one;

- Use you computers own operating controls
- Use your internet service providers filters
- Download specific software

### **On your Computer**

Most modern PCs (Windows Vista and above) now come with inbuilt parental controls. These are also built into the Windows User Account Control (UAC), so effectively you can set different controls for different users, should you wish.

PC parental controls will allow you to;

- Set Time limits – preventing logging on during certain times of day and for set amounts of time.
- Game content filters – allows you to set appropriate age levels and content type that you wish to block
- Web Access – allowing you to restrict the websites that children visit and choose if you want to allow file transfers.
- Program specific controls – allows you to stop the running of specific programs on the computer.

The other advantage on Windows parental controls is that it allows you to log what users are doing and it will give you an activity report, should you wish.

If you are a mac users, there are in fact even more options through Yosemite; you can restrict the contact to specific people, block the use of the built-in camera, dictation and CD/DVD burning or block the ability to change passwords or printer settings.

### **Through your Internet Service Provider (ISP)**

Your ISP is likely to have its own software that can be installed on to your machine for parental controls settings, which may offer similar or more features than windows does.

Setting up parental controls with your ISP is the best option since you can stop the content from ever reaching your network or machine. When not doing it through your ISP the content typically has to get to you before it can be blocked or routed to a different website.

Your ISP has a list of sites that are safe for different ages, so you can enable what type of content to allow (i.e. only block pornographic sites, or blocking Drugs and Sex, or anything obscene) You can also block all or limited sites, and allow only sites you choose to let through such as Google and Facebook.

If you decide to use your ISPs parental settings then they will block it for everything on your network, it might be a little trickier but it may be worth logging on to your router and see if you can use any settings. Your ISPs router and other routers may offer you settings to limit machine internet access, when to turn off and on the router.

Your ISP should be able to offer you:

- predefined filter levels (such as strict, moderate and light)
- Personalise your own filter levels
- No software required
- 'Always allow' specific sites
- 'Always block' sites that you feel are inappropriate.
- Set a time for filters to be on/off

### **Software/ Domain Name Servers (DNS)**

Finally, you can also use custom domain name servers to block sites, this is similar to what your ISP can do, but if you block sites yourself by setting up a custom DNS on the individual devices then only that device will be affected. You can add a custom DNS to your smartphones, laptops, desktops allowing you to control what sites your family members can use.

Some DNS filters provide extra features so you can choose what type of content is blocked. For example, one that we would recommend is, OpenDNS, which allows you to set custom filter levels, and is also free!

### **Ad Blocking**

Something else to consider is using an ad blocker on your web browser (Explorer, firefox, chrome etc.), not only is it safer for keeping private information private, it also stops you from getting a lot of annoying adverts and pop-up, which can prevent you or your family from clicking on to anything undesirable and ending up where you don't want to be, or downloading something harmful.

Websites track your activities online mostly through web cookies. They can track things like what time you viewed the site; how long you're on the site and what you viewed; what time of day you viewed it and where you are viewing it.

Websites that track you often sell the information to companies who can use it for marketing. This is why sites like amazon can recommend you items based on things you have searched.

Because of this, this is one of the main reason people use Ad blockers and the other being to remove adverts from websites.

How it works

Adblockers use a filter list, a list which tells it what to block (remove from the websites code). You can add your own rules to it or download rules provided online.

Web pages have containers which contain objects like text or images, and Adblock will look though the websites code and look for anything that's on its filter list and then remove it.

## **Why you should use it**

It's totally free and legal. You get to protect your privacy online and you don't get to see annoying adverts.

Because we use the internet so often in our everyday lives, we do frequently forget the dangers it can pose, especially to the younger generation and in fairness no one should have to constantly worry about the dangers, which is why we would recommend putting at least one if not a couple of these procedures in place to give you that peace of mind.

At Browns IT we like helping people get back in control of their technology, for any more help and advice, please give us a call.