

How can I Filter Internet Content?

The technology we use daily has had some very incredible advances just within the last few years. Your computer can read to you, there is voice recognition in our phones and cars, some cars can even park themselves, just to name a few of these advancements. But with all this advancement, there is still one thing that still takes a human touch - blocking undesirable content[1] from reaching your child.

There are two major points that support this statement:

A machine can break, can be circumvented, can be compromised, etc. For example, many cell phones can now understand your voice and make a call based on voice recognition, but remember that you can always circumvent the voice recognition and use the touch pad.

The second, and most important issue is that defining what is and isn't "undesirable content" has too many variables involved. It takes real intelligence to handle all the different variables.

If you want to filter out the undesirable content, then the best way is still the human touch. There are a number of technological tools to help, but they should not be relied upon as the only filter.

The Human Touch Approach to Filtering

The only, truly reliable filtering is the Human Touch. There are some things you can do on a technical level to make it easier, but content filtering still requires a set of eyes, and a human's brain to truly filter the Internet. Some things you can do to employ the Human Touch to filtering the web:

Keep the computer in a visible area of the house.

(And putting the computer in the child's room with the door open does not count.) Best place is in the corner of a high traffic area, and make sure that you can see the front of the monitor. Putting it in a high traffic area will allow you to "peek in" and see what your child is doing while making trips between the washing machine, the stove, the mail box, and all your other daily chores. During your trips, make sure to stop once and a while and ask some questions. This will show your child that you are interested in what he/she is doing, while reminding him/her that you are watching. The nice thing, is that your child will not feel like he/she is being watched.

Talk to your child about what is and isn't allowed.

Don't just tell your child what is and isn't allowed. Turn this talk into a discussion. Discuss things like why the undesired content conflicts with your families morals, or how this content makes him/her feel. This will help you child become his/her own filter.

Let them come to you when something comes up.

This is particularly true for the younger kids. If you have talked to your child, and

they have a good understanding what is and isn't acceptable, then when they find something unacceptable they will tell you about it. It is important to keep your tone simple and to the point when they do. They have actually done a good thing in telling you, don't let them think they did something wrong by finding this unacceptable material (even if they have). Find out what happened, maybe discuss what they saw or read, and then thank them for bringing it to your attention. If they did do something they were not allowed to do, make sure you isolate that event from the fact that they told you about it. Think about it this way, even a judge will take pity on a person when they do something illegal if that person has turned him/her self in and has been cooperative with the police.

Footnotes

1. As noted in the article above, defining undesirable content is a very tricky thing. In this article I am simply referring to any material; video, audio, written text, pictures, etc, that relates to things that you would not want to have in your house. I am only limiting my definition in regards to the delivery of that medium (be it written, visual, audio). In this article, I am only looking at content that is delivered with the aid of the Internet.

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