



American Association of School Librarians
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How School Librarians Can Assist You: Internet Safety and Filtering

Insafe, a network of national nodes that coordinate Internet safety awareness in Europe makes the case for empowerment as the key to online safety. Safety risks are increased ...”in the online environment by the fact that we can’t usually see whom we are communicating with, probably don’t know who provided the data we are accessing, and online content comes without any quality assurance from a reputable publisher or editor. In order to compensate for this, we need to develop our information literacy skills and behave in a more discriminating manner when online.”

The following resources for parents should help you to better understand the complexities of the online environment and provide you with the tools to keep your child safe when online.

[Bullying.org](#)

Created by Bill Belsey, [bullying.org](#)'s purpose is to eliminate bullying in our society by supporting individuals and organizations to take positive actions against bullying through the sharing of resources, and to guide and champion them in creating non-violent solutions to the challenges and problems associated with bullying.

[Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use \(CSRIU\)](#)

This site hopes to mobilize educators, parents, students, and others to combat online social aggression. Cyberbullying is sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices. Cyberbullying is emerging as one of the more challenging issues facing educators and parents as young people embrace the Internet and other mobile communication technologies.

[Children's Internet Protection Act](#)

The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) is a federal law enacted by Congress to address concerns about access to offensive content over the Internet on school and library computers. CIPA imposes certain types of requirements on any school or library that receives funding for Internet access or internal connections from the E-rate program – a program that makes certain communications technology more affordable for eligible schools and libraries. In early 2001, the FCC issued rules implementing CIPA. More recently, Congress enacted additional protections for children using the Internet.

[CyberSmart! Student Curriculum](#)

CyberSmart! fosters 21st century skills to increase student engagement and prepare students to achieve in today's digital society. In this way we are very different—and substantially more effective—than organizations that only promote messages alerting educators, students, and parents to the dangers of the Internet. While we do directly address online safety and security issues, we do so with a clear focus on the broader educational objective.

Standards-based—focused on 21st century skills Standards-based lessons are aligned with national and state technology and information literacy standards. CyberSmart! prepares students to use the Internet for communication, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving—the new basic skills for 21st century learning.

[Digizen.org](#)

What makes you such a good digizen? Digital citizenship isn't just about recognizing and dealing with online hazards. It's about building safe spaces and communities, understanding how to manage personal information, and about being internet savvy - using your online presence to grow and shape your world in a safe, creative way, and inspiring others to do the same.

[ED Technology Internet Safety](#)

The Office of Educational Technology (OET) is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of the Department's educational technology policies, research projects and national technology summits.

[iKeepSafe Internet Safety Coalition](#)

The Internet Keep Safe Coalition is a broad partnership of governors and/or first spouses, attorneys general, public health and educational professionals, law enforcement, and industry leaders working together for the health and safety of youth online. iKeepSafe® uses these unique partnerships to disseminate safety resources to families worldwide.

[Internet Safety Technical Task Force: The Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University](#)

The final report was released in January, 2009 from the Internet Safety Technical Task Force, a group of 29 leading Internet businesses, non-profit organizations, academics, and technology companies that joined together for a year-long investigation of tools and technologies to create a safer environment on the Internet for youth.

[Internet Safety Video & Guide](#)

The Internet Safety Video & Guide: What You Don't Know Can Hurt Your Child was created by the North Carolina Department of Justice. The video illustrates some of the potential dangers found through the Internet and gives advice to parents and educators on safety. A printed resource guide offers details on what to do and where to go for help.

[NetSmartz.org](#)

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) is the national clearinghouse and resource center funded under Cooperative Agreement Number 98-MC-CX-K002 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

[StopBullying.Gov](#)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has created a user-friendly resource for both adults and kids to use in dealing with bullying and cyberbullying.

To Filter or Not: The Pros and Cons of Using Parental Control Software


Besides setting guidelines for use of the Internet, there is one more action for families to consider in their quest for child safety on the Internet- installing parental control or filtering software to limit exposure to adult materials that may be considered pornographic or harmful to children. The software can be installed on a personal home computer, or some Internet service providers offer filtering as an option.

Parental control software, such as CyberPatrol, Net Nanny, and GuardiaNet, is designed to restrict Internet access in several ways. First, the software will block access to web sites with content deemed inappropriate for children by the software company. Most software will also filter and restrict access to web pages based on key words such as "sex." Each company's software works from a unique and highly guarded database of blocked sites and key words based on selected criteria of what constitutes inappropriate materials. General categories for blocking websites often include text and/or photos of an adult sexual nature, drugs and drug culture, violence and hate, racism and intolerance, gambling, tobacco, alcohol, and cruelty to animals. Adult users can select some or all the categories to activate blocking of sites on those topics.

Most parental control software programs include other types of options allowing users to customize Internet access to fit family needs and circumstances. For example, the software may allow parents to set the time of day or number of hours per week the Internet will be available to children. Adults can also expand or subtract the list of blocked sites. Some programs allow parents to create different levels of Internet access based on the varying ages of children in the family. Some programs report the addresses of websites children have visited and restrict the sending of personal information such as name, address, and telephone number, known as "outgoing filtering." With yet other programs, local applications, such as games, can also be restricted. Settings are password protected.

There are various ways in which software can be purchased, and it is important to remember that new sites with the potential for inappropriate material are being added to the Internet each day. Some parental control programs can be obtained with a single purchase ranging from forty to fifty dollars and updating of blocked sites is included in the initial fee. Others are purchased with an annual subscription of around fifty dollars for the first year and approximately thirty dollars for the renewal. Parental control software purchased on a subscription basis includes updating of blocked sites with a frequency ranging from daily to monthly. Trial versions of parental control software can be downloaded (brought through the telephone line to your computer's hard drive) from the companies' web sites on the Internet and used for a short period of time to allow families to review features and see which will fit their needs.

Installing parental control software is a personal, family decision, and there are several important points to understand. It is critical to recognize that filtering software cannot guarantee that children or other family members will never see inappropriate material on the Internet. While blocking pornography and explicit adult sexual material, the software may also block access to useful information related to personal health issues and other topics. NO program is one hundred percent effective, and new sites are added to the Internet daily. Most of all, it is essential to realize that parental control software is not a substitute for active parent interaction with your children and supervision of their Internet use.

There is intense debate across the country relating to the use of filtering software programs in libraries and schools. One side feels children should not be exposed to pornography and other adult material found on the Internet and support filtering. For example, the website, [Filtering Facts](#)  promotes use of filtering software in libraries. Those on the other side of the debate, including the American Library Association and its Office of Intellectual Freedom, want to protect the First Amendment rights of children on the Internet. Legislation has been introduced at the national level and in many state legislatures to require the use of filtering software to block access to information or sites on the Internet deemed inappropriate for minors.

If you are interested in parental control software and the issues surrounding it, visit the following sites or enter the terms "filtering software" or "parental control software" into your favorite search engine:

[GetNetWise](#) 

A resource "to help kids have safe, educational, and entertaining online experiences," the site has a lengthy list of tools for filtering explicit content, to monitor a minor's access, or limit time online. Enter the type of content you are concerned with (i.e. sex, hate, violence, etc.), the type of technology (i.e., www, email, FTP), and the type of operating system of your computer, and a possible list of matching parental control software products will be listed with links.