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Children Online 2007 - 2008 Research

During the 2007 - 2008 academic year we surveyed nearly 2500 students in grades 4 - 12. This is what the students told us:

- 66% of all students claim to have internet access from their bedrooms. (ANY expert on Internet safety will agree that this is not a good idea for kids under 16 or 17.)
- Only 33% of students stated that their parents had installed some type of web filter on the family computer(s).
- 20% of all students reported that they had virtual friends online whom they had never met in person.
- 30% of all students said that they had felt uncomfortable online by something that had happened to them or something they saw. High on the list of things that made them feel uncomfortable were:
 - Offensive pictures/videos
 - Contact from strangers
 - Being made fun of
 - Being tricked
- 55% of all students reported playing a multiplayer game online in which they could chat with the other player(s)
- Children and young teens are using adult social networks in greater numbers than ever before. The percentage that reported having accounts at social networks such as Facebook and MySpace are as follows:

12th Edition of the Children Online Newsletter.

Warm weather turns our thoughts to summer. In just a few weeks our children will have a lot more free time on their hands and we're certain that a lot of that time will be spent in front of a screen. The Center for Media Research says that children/teens spend an average of 6.5 hours per day in front of electronic screens.



Parents already a bit nervous about what their children are doing online may become even more anxious about the time spent on the Internet. In anticipation of summer we thought it would be a good time to describe some of the many software tools available to parents to help control Internet access when they cannot be watching over their child's internet activities 24/7.

Please understand that no software can take the place of quality parent-child discussions about family values and good choices versus poor choices. Also web filters and computer time-limiters are not perfect. Nonetheless, they are a valuable tool in a parents' arsenal to provide structures and boundaries in a world where there are none.

Please note that ChildrenOnline has not had first-hand experience with most of the products mentioned in this newsletter. We recommend them because of reviews and comments we hear from parents at schools we visit as well as research we conduct on the Internet.

- o 3% of 4th graders
- o 7% of 5th graders
- o 12% of 6th graders
- o 23% of 7th graders
- o 48% of 8th graders
- o 77% of 9th graders

It has generally been our experience that children and teens under-report behaviors they think their parents would not want them doing. One extreme example of this occurred when we visited a school this past winter and spoke to seventh graders.

The Internet surveys the students had completed some weeks earlier left us feeling that they were hiding the truth. Their survey responses indicated only 17% of them had social network accounts. We know that this is not typical of the majority of 7th graders.

During our visit with the students an interesting thing happened. Very soon into the conversation we asked them if they had a Facebook or MySpace account. Three students very hesitantly raised their hands and there was a whole lot of "checking each other out" and "looking at the floor" behavior. Not only did we feel something was up but so did their teacher who was present in the room. He stood up and asked the students if they would feel more comfortable talking with us if he left. They said "yes." After he left we asked the question again and we estimate that 60-70% of the class raised their hands.

SAMPLING OF SOFTWARE PRODUCTS:

What follows is a sampling of products and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Web Filtering Software (includes many other features as well):

Mac

[Content Barrier](#)
[Safe Eyes](#)

PC

[CyberPatrol](#)
[NetNanny](#)
[Safe Eyes](#)

Time Limiting Software:

Mac

Also, we are currently reserving dates in our 2008 - 2009 schedule for school and church/synagogue visits to give workshops to children/teens, faculty/administrators and parents. If you would like to inquire about our workshops, please drop us an email! (DFodeman@Brookwood.edu)

As always, we welcome your comments and questions.

Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman

PARENTAL CONTROL SOFTWARE

All parental control software generally falls into one of three categories:

- **Content Filtering software**
- **Time Limiting software**
- **Key Logging software**

Content filters attempt to review the content of a web page and, depending on a child's filter settings, either block or allow the web page to be seen. Most quality products offer 15 - 25 different categories of web pages that parents can allow their child to see or be blocked e.g. racism, pornography, online auctions, hacking, violence, gambling, etc.

Time limiting software attempts to do exactly what it sounds like... Limit the hours in a day that a child has to use the Internet or certain software on the Internet such as massive multi-player games like World of Warcraft. Some parents have asked us if we know of software that will allow Internet access or game-playing for a set amount of time per day and then shut down Internet or game-play once that accumulated limit is reached. Not too many products have this specific ability.

A Key Logger is software that will record every single keystroke that is made on a computer and report that back to the person who installed it, even by emailing log files every day. This type of software is also very successfully used by scammers to capture personal information such as online credit card and bank login IDs and passwords. That's one good reason why it is NEVER a good idea to access personal private accounts from public computers and why it is so

MacMinder

NOTE: MacMinder went out of business but its software is still around and was last updated in August, 2007. [Read a review of MacMinder.](#)

[Tutorial on setting up Time-limiting parental controls in Apple's OS X Leopard.](#)

PC

[PC Home Software](#) They produce:
Kids PC Time Administrator
Parental Control Tool

[PC Time Limit](#)
[PC Time Manager](#)

Key Loggers:

Mac

[Mac Keylogger](#)
[Perfect Key Logger](#)
[Spector](#)

PC

[Perfect Key Logger](#)
[Various types of loggers from Spectorsoft](#)

Additional controls worth noting:

iTunes

Were you aware that iTunes includes parental controls? For example these controls prevent children from accessing music with explicit lyrics or tv programs rated PG-14. To find out more, visit [Apple's website for directions.](#)

Turn on the built-in content filters found on most search engines:
www.childrenonline.org/articles/Safe_Search.html
Note: Savvy older children can easily turn off the filters you turn on.

important to have anti-spyware software installed on our home PCs. (Apple's Macs are not susceptible to this type of spyware.) Keep in mind that key loggers may cause a great deal of anxiety for teenagers who may think of using this software as akin to spying on them. It is far easier with younger children to install a key logger and then explain to your child "I am your mother/father and it is my job to keep you safe. This software helps me do just that".

Some products combine aspects of two or all three of the above types of software. In addition to the features described above many quality products also provide additional safeguards such as:

1. Monitoring chat conversations for certain phrases or words
2. Locking up access and use of certain computer programs
3. Preventing use of "peer to peer" (P2P) file sharing software such as Limewire or KaZaA
4. Preventing access to certain types of streaming media across the internet such as video

Quality products also enable parents to set up accounts differently for each child who has a login account on a computer. This makes sense since the rules set up for sixteen year old, for example, will need to be different from a twelve year old or seven year old. However, it does a parent no good if the 7 year old knows how to get into the 16 year old's computer account. Or if any of the children know how to bypass the filters by logging in as mom or dad! Remember too that each computer in your house that has Internet access will need to have protective software installed. Some software companies will offer a discount for multiple purchases.

If you would like to see another description and general review of parental control software, try these links:

[How Stuff Works](#)
[Top Parental Control Software](#)
[Internet Filter Review](#)

Don't be scared off if you have no computer skills! You can call any quality company and tell them that you want to buy their software but don't have the skills to install it or set it up properly. Ask them to

help you download the software, install it and then set it up for your children!

Finally, Apple's new operating system 10.5 and Windows Vista both include some type of parental controls. However, it is our opinion that the parental controls available are not as good as a product designed for this purpose. They can, however, provide another layer of protection.

**½ ChildrenOnline 2008
Doug Fodeman & Marje Monroe.
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