BROADBAND PARENTAL CONTROLS
A Guide on How to Control Internet Access at Home

Your child's safety online is as important as their offline safety. In this guide, you will learn all about broadband parental controls and how to make sure they are protected.

According to the 2022 Ofcom report into media attitudes among children and their parents, more than a third of 12-17 year olds (35%) report using the internet in ways that could put them at greater risk.

This includes a fifth who surf in incognito mode (21%) and another fifth (19%) who delete their browsing history, both of which mean no one can check what they're viewing because the information has gone.

How are parents supposed to monitor what their children look at online?

Activating broadband parental controls will help your child stay safe while they browse, study and interact within the digital world. We'll show you how to control internet access, so everyone at home can use broadband with confidence.

What are broadband parental controls?

Broadband parental controls let you decide what your children can and cannot access online, as well as allowing you to monitor their internet usage.

Please keep in mind that broadband parental controls are powerful tools that you should talk to kids about before implementing them at home.

Full guidance for approaching this topic can be found at the NSPCC website.

What features do broadband parental controls typically offer?

Depending on your provider, features of broadband parental controls will vary from household to household. Most networks typically offer the following:

Content filters

These are a common feature of broadband parental controls, helping to reduce the chances of children encountering inappropriate content online.

Some content filters also allow you to set different age limits for different children, so your youngest are better protected from sensitive material.

Website-specific controls

Certain websites and internet platforms, including Google and YouTube, let you switch on a family-friendly filter. If you do this, it will block any content deemed unsuitable for children.

It's a great functionality to use alongside other broadband parental controls. Although, keep in mind that a lot of older children will be able to navigate around this, so use it only if your kids are very young.

Screen time limitation

Whether you've got kids who love playing video games, streaming their favourite shows or just chatting with their friends via social media, some broadband parental controls let you set specific times for internet use.

After this, the internet gets turned off.

You can also restrict access to certain websites at different times of the day with broadband parental controls.

Monitoring

As far as monitoring goes, broadband parental controls let you see exactly which sites your children have been visiting and how they've been using them.

If you suspect that your child has been exposed to material not appropriate for their age bracket, monitoring can be handy to double-check whether a website is suitable or not.

Mandatory filtering

Blocking access to sensitive content by default, the UK Government first introduced mandatory filtering back in 2013.

Since 2020, Ofcom has been the UK regulator for internet censorship. This lets them action the removal of harmful content from social media platforms and websites and is part of their wider commitment to improving online safety.

You should therefore discuss the importance of safe, responsible internet use with them, along with notifying other parents about what they're permitted to do online.

What do broadband parental controls not cover?

It's not just your home computer that gives children access to the internet anymore. Smartphones, tablets and even modern games consoles all allow kids to go online if they want.

For the most part, these devices usually have settings enabling parental controls, so be sure to check that they're activated before letting your little ones hit the power button.

If your child uses the internet regularly while on the move, remember public Wi-Fi probably won't have the same broadband parental controls activated like you have at home. The same goes for if your child is visiting a friend at their home.

You should therefore discuss the importance of safe, responsible internet use with them, along with notifying other parents about what they're permitted to do online.

Staying safe online with broadband parental controls

There are extra steps you can take to ensure your child is safe online with broadband parental controls, including:

Installing security software

Parental controls are sometimes included with security suites like Norton Family, but check your system carefully before installing anything new. You may already have the functionality you need.

Don't over-block

The broadband parental controls you set up through your provider will affect all devices connected to the same network.

If you're too strict, you may end up with blockers on websites you wanted to access yourself, so be sure to check what types of sites you've flagged and why.

Tailoring your controls

Some broadband providers allow you to tailor broadband parental controls for specific users.

How to set up broadband parental controls

In the UK, some broadband providers give customers free parental controls, which can be enabled at any time, please contact your broadband provider.

Key points

- Broadband parental controls help you protect your children against inappropriate websites
- They usually come with several features, to reduce the risk of children discovering potentially harmful content
- Monitoring gives you a much clearer picture of what your child has been viewing online
- Ensure that parental controls are managed appropriately and discuss any important changes to home broadband with your children.