

Parental controls 101

What are they?

Parental controls are tools to help you manage your child's internet use. There are lots of different types – you can set them at network level, on your child's device or in an individual app or service. And there's a lot you can do with them. Parental controls can:

- Block and filter inappropriate content.
- Restrict what information your child can share.
- Control when and for how long your children can go online.
- Be customised for each family member.

Should you use them?

Parental controls can be really useful, especially for parents of young or vulnerable children. They can help stop your kids seeing upsetting or inappropriate content before they're ready. But you may want to consider a few things before you set them up.

No tool is perfect

Children can be very tech savvy, and might well figure out a way to get around controls. But even if they're not trying, in the digital age a child is only as protected as their least restricted friend. Going online using someone else's device or in a home without broadband filters could expose your child to content you were hoping to block.

Under – and over – blocking

Parental controls might not block everything you think is inappropriate. Many children, for instance, find common news stories upsetting – but your parental controls might not automatically block the BBC. And they could also filter out some content you'd be happy for your child to see, depending on the type of system you're using.

Long term wellbeing

Research out of the Oxford Internet Institute suggests that controlling your children's internet use too much could actually make them more vulnerable in the long term. Children who are very restricted when they go online tend to be less confident and able to deal with risk.

Find out more

You can find explanations and how-to guides for some of the most common parental controls in Digital Parenting, a free online safety resource produced by Vodafone and Parent Zone.

<http://vodafonedigitalparenting.co.uk/>