

# MediaWise<sup>®</sup> Parental Controls Guide



They play it.  
They connect to it.  
They download it.  
They watch and listen to it.  
They surf on it.  
They converse with it.

## Do you know how to monitor it?

It can be hard to keep up when today's inventions are tomorrow's antiques!

The **MediaWise<sup>®</sup> Parental Controls Guide** gives you what you need to keep track of and manage your kids' screen time.



# INTERNET

## MediaWise Internet Control Tips

1. **Tracking software** is great for older adolescents. Let your teens know that you trust them—but that you will periodically be verifying they are visiting appropriate sites online.
2. **Blockers and filters** are great tools for younger kids, allowing you more control over where they go and what they do online.

Kids are turning to the Internet for everything from shopping to hanging out with friends, making it harder to keep track of all your kids' online activities. That's why most Internet Service Providers (like Comcast, Yahoo! or AOL) provide **FREE blockers, filters and trackers** designed to help you keep track of and manage your kids' online activities.

### HOW DO THEY WORK?

**Content Blocker** – Blocks sites with sexually explicit material or limits a child's search to a predetermined set of sites.

**Content Filter** – Scans sites and images and blocks those that contain certain words, key phrases, or content.

**Content Tracker** – This software enables you to see which sites your children have visited—"tracking" their path online. This tool gives young people more freedom to explore the Web, but allows you to verify they are using the Internet responsibly.

### LIMITS TO BLOCKERS AND TRACKERS

- A lot of kids know how to get around blockers.
- Sometimes these tools over block sites. Blockers sometimes restrict access to sites that may be just fine for your kids—that's why tracking software can be more effective.
- Not all adults sites post an industry rating that can be identified by software.
- Nothing can replace involvement and supervision by adults.

# INTERNET CONTINUED

## MediaWise Internet Safety Tips

1. Keep your computer in a family common space.
2. Establish house Internet rules and consequences.
3. Become familiar with how the Internet works and go online with your child.
4. Limit the amount of time your child spends online.

**Create parent-only and kid-only user accounts.** Most computer systems (like Windows or Macintosh) allow you to create separate user accounts for your kids that have built-in restrictions on Internet use and email options. This means that with a password, your kids can only access one “side” of your computer without being able to access the other “side” designated for adults. Please reference your computer user manual or contact your computer manufacturer for more information.

**Customize your child’s e-mail account.** By customizing your child’s e-mail account you can determine whether your child can send and receive e-mails and attachments to any individual or group of individuals. Parental Controls let you turn off mail features or limit the people with whom your child can exchange -. This is especially helpful for younger kids and early teens. Teach your older adolescents how to manage their e-mail account. Contact your e-mail service provider for specific details.

**Contact your Internet Service Provider for the FREE parental controls available to you.**

**There are also third party commercial products available that offer powerful blocking and tracking control. The following are commercial software packages you can purchase.**

\*These products were given good reviews by critics. They are not officially endorsed by the National Institute on Media and the Family.



CYBERsitter®

CYBERSENTINEL

Net Nanny

Guardian®  
SOFTWARE

# VIDEO GAMES

## MediaWise Video Game Tips

1. Limit game playing time.
2. Check the age rating on the box and become familiar with the game before you buy it. Try renting first.
3. Check [KidScore](#) for parent-generated reviews.
4. Keep video games out of kids' bedrooms.
5. Pick non-lethal games that require the player to come up with strategies, and make decisions in a game environment that is more complex than punch, run, and kill.

Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony are including Parent Controls in all of their newest consoles. Most allow you to manage Internet access and limit your child's access to games based on the rating assigned by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). [Know the ratings.](#)



[Xbox 360 Family Settings \(link\\*\)](#) allow parents to set permission to play based on ratings. Here's how it will work: when a disc is inserted, it will read the content rating encoded on the game discs. If this rating is greater than the system's set age level, the game will not load without a correct password. *Xbox Live* on the Xbox 360 connects players to the Internet and enables them to chat with other players, send and receive voice messages, and play massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MPORGs). The **family settings** will limit ability to establish *Xbox Live* memberships and managing access to *Xbox Live*.

\*Link = <http://www.xbox.com/en-US/support/familysettings/xbox360/familysettings-intro.htm>



Sony's Playstation Portable is also Internet compatible, with built in Wi-Fi compatibility. Not only can kids play games online but they can also surf the Web, chat with friends and download everything from pornography to their favorite movies and music.

[Playstation Portable Parental Controls \(link\\*\)](#) are based on the combination of parental control settings on the UMD™ (the disc developed by Sony for Playstation Portables) and the PSP™ itself. You can block games based on their ratings and disable Internet connectivity. A password is required to change any parental control settings.



You can restrict access to DVDs but not games on Playstation 2. However, the Playstation 3, set to be released in November 2006, will have parental controls designed to restrict game play based on rating and manage Internet settings.



Wii (pronounced we), Nintendo's long-awaited successor to the Gamecube, set for release in the fourth quarter of 2006. Wii will have built-in Wi-Fi connectivity. An attachment will also be sold that will enable the Wii to play DVDs. The Wii will have Parental Controls to restrict game play based on ratings.



# CELL PHONES

## MediaWise Cell Phone Tips

1. Choose a plan with reasonable limits.
2. Review the bill with your child.
3. Make sure your child has consequences, financial or otherwise, if limits are exceeded.
4. Support school policies on cell phone use.
5. Talk about “phone bullying.” Ask your kids to let you know if they get harassing text or phone calls. Conversely, tell them that phone bullying will not be tolerated.
6. No compliance, no cell.

What makes cell phones so challenging is that they are no longer *just* cell phones. Most are cameras, computers, and video cameras all in one hard-to-keep-track-of package. In addition to being able to talk with friends, online features are increasingly favorites among kids—giving them access to e-mail, Web pages, games and more.

Most carriers have a set of Parental Controls that enable you to:

- **Filter content** in text messages and downloads.
- **Block the purchase** of ring tones, graphics, and games online.
- **Disable Internet connectivity** so there is no Internet access at all.

A few carriers have also developed cell phones specifically for kids, allowing you to control who they can talk to and for how long. Many cell phone companies allow parents to only disable Internet connectivity. Others are leading the way, giving parents tools to filter content and create personalized parent settings.

### A leader in the industry – Cingular MEdia Net

Cingular Wireless allows you to filter content and block purchases from their online program, *MEdia Net*, for free—all you need to do is create a personal identification number (PIN). Go to [http://www.cingular.com/media/media\\_net\\_controls](http://www.cingular.com/media/media_net_controls) for details.

**Contact your service provider to see what Parental Controls are available to you.**

# TV



## MediaWise Television Tips

1. Try having screen-free bedrooms.
2. Practice appointment TV. Decide ahead of time when to watch and plan for it.
3. Talk to your kids about what they are watching.
4. Turn off the TV during meals.
5. Watch what your kids watch.

You can prevent your kids from watching shows with certain ratings or content, or from watching entire channels.

**V-Chip.** All televisions made in the U.S. since January of 2000 are required to have V-Chip technology. The V-chip is a technology that lets parents block programs they don't want their children to watch. Most television shows now include a rating, as established by the broadcasting industry. This rating is encoded into the programs, and the V-chip technology reads the encoded information and blocks shows accordingly. The setup process for your V-chip can be found in the on-screen menu options or in the television instruction manual. It is controlled through your TV set's remote.

**Digital Cable.** If you have hundreds of channels and many setup options, you probably have digital cable. Digital set-top boxes (the cable boxes placed on top of your television) provide advanced parental control capabilities. Features may vary by manufacturer and model, but these boxes typically allow you to block programming based on rating, channel, or program with a password. Specific instructions for the use of the parental controls on your digital set-top box can vary but all are accessed through onscreen menus controlled by your remote control.

**Basic cable.** If you have the basic package of cable services, you most likely have an analog set-top box. While the controls are not as sophisticated as those of digital cable, most analog boxes allow you to block channels you do not want to view. To block a channel, you create a Personal Identification Number (PIN) code using the set-top box's remote control or keypad. Your children will not be able to view the blocked channel(s) or change the control settings without entering the PIN code. You'll need to repeat the control procedure for every TV set/set-top box combination in your home.

**There are also third party commercial products available designed to help you manage the amount of TIME your kids spend in front of the TV. The following are commercial products you can purchase.**

\*These products were given good reviews by critics. They are not officially endorsed by the National Institute on Media and the Family.



# Take advantage of other **FREE** MediaWise Network resources!

## **MediaWise Summer Guide**

Fun summer activity ideas, family-friendly media tips, alternatives to television and more!

## **Take the MediaWise MySpace Parent Tutorial**

Don't be surprised if your kids want to spend more time on MySpace.com than at the local park. Keep track of what they are up to online.

## **Download MediaWise Internet Respect Plans**

The Internet can be a great resource and source of entertainment during the summer, but be sure to get off to a good, healthy start.

## **Host a MediaWise House Party**

Spread the MediaWise message to your friends, neighbors or coworkers.

## **Tell your friends about the Network**

Connect with others, get access to **FREE** tools, resources, and ideas. Create positive change for your family and community!

## **Make a gift to the Institute**

A tax-deductible gift to the National Institute of Media and the Family will help us bring tools and resources to more families who need them.

