

It's all Geek to Me!!

Kids on the Internet, how do you protect them?



A few of years ago, I set up the computer used by my oldest son to have Internet access. I was concerned as to how to best protect him from inappropriate content and knew that I couldn't be looking over his shoulder all the time.

I settled on Norton Internet Security by Symantec and haven't regretted it since. This package includes many functions, Personal Firewall, Antivirus, Intrusion Detection and Parental Controls. The install is fairly simple considering the included content, with wizards to walk you through each step.

When you enable Parental Controls you have the ability to create different levels of access to the Internet (starting with no access and ending with unrestricted access). These levels are set up as No Access, Child, Teenager, Parent & Supervisor. I set it so that when the computer was started it would default to No Access (so my other kids couldn't do anything without my wife or me). I also set up a Parent and Child account leaving the Supervisor account there by default.

Out of the box, it worked well and blocked sites that I tried to get to. You have the option to block classes of content (Sex, Religion, etc.) and when I tried to get to some of these sites I got an error message. I made sure to download the updates and to enable the Automatic update function to keep it up to date. Then I let my son have fun.

I kept an eye on him for awhile to be sure that the blocks were working and was quite satisfied. After awhile I stopped checking in on him knowing that I had done everything I could to keep him from stuff I didn't want him to go to. I didn't realize how well it worked until he had a friend over. The friend was trying to coach him to bypass the parental controls. I was on my way past his room to get something upstairs and I heard the friend saying that he could get to stuff at his house easily.

His parents had utilized some other parental control software and he was able to bypass it and access content anyway. The friend tried to get him past Norton Internet Security and he gave up a couple minutes later. I just smiled.

The real fun came up a couple months after when his parents wanted to buy a computer for him and share their Internet connection. They asked me what they could do and how they could best protect their son. I helped them set up a home network and share their Broadband connection and then installed Norton Internet Security on the son's computer.

I have used this package for many of my clients since then. We renew the subscriptions yearly so that the blocking and Antivirus functions stay up to date.

My son (now 15) uses his computer more than ever now. He Instant Messages with his friends the way I used the phone at that age. I still have Norton Internet Security on it but have increased his access to Teenager now. He argues that he doesn't need it anymore, but I'm not ready to let go yet, so it's still there. I also have a 9 and 11 year old and they are using the Internet too. Their computers also have

Norton Internet Security on them and will continue to have limited access for years to come.

If you have questions or ideas for articles, please send me an e-mail and I'll look into writing a column about it. I've already received a few questions and some future columns will be directed to answer in more detail.

Steve Cote is the owner of Copper Beech Technology Services, located in Salem, NH. He has been involved in the computer industry since 1982. Started in March of 2003, Copper Beech Technology provides onsite computer support services to residential and small business customers in the Merrimack Valley and surrounding communities. These services include PC installation, repairs, upgrades, network installations, virus detection/removal as well as web and e-mail hosting services. You can contact Copper Beech Technology by e-mail at contact@cbtechserv.com. Appointments can also be scheduled by calling 866-SOS-GEEK.