



Mac OS X v10.5, 10.6: About the Parental Controls Internet content filter

Last Modified: March 30, 2010 Article: HT2900

<http://support.apple.com/kb/ht2900>

Summary

You can use [Parental Controls](#) in Mac OS X 10.5 and 10.6 to help prevent user accounts from accessing inappropriate content on Internet websites. This article describes how this feature works.

Products Affected

Mac OS X 10.5, Mac OS X 10.6

The Internet content filter is built into the core of the operating system, allowing it to filter Internet access regardless of which Web browser is used.

To enable Internet content filtering:

- 1) From the Apple menu, choose System Preferences.
- 2) From the View menu, choose Parental Controls.
- 3) Select the user account on the left side of the window that you would like to enable filtering for. Note: Parental Controls cannot be enabled for administrator accounts (admin accounts will not appear in the window). Check Accounts preferences in System Preferences to see which account(s) have what level of access (Admin, Managed, and so forth).
- 4) Click "Enable Parental Controls".
- 5) Click the Content tab.
- 6) Chose one of the three modes under Website Restrictions. See below for a description of each.

Repeat steps 3 through 6 for other non-administrator accounts for which you would like to enable filtering.

About Internet content filter's three modes

The Internet content filter can operate in three modes: unrestricted, automatic, and whitelist.

"Allow unrestricted access to websites" (unrestricted)

When "Allow unrestricted access to websites" is selected, the Internet content filter logs websites that the account visits but does not restrict Web browsing. Visited websites are still logged and can be examined in the Logs tab of Parental Controls preferences.

"Try to limit access to adult websites automatically" (automatic)

When "Try to limit access to adult websites automatically" is selected, the Internet content

filter does its best to block websites with inappropriate content. To do this, the Internet content filter uses the same technology that the Mail application uses to identify "junk" mail. The Internet content filter can identify, with a high degree of accuracy, whether a Web page is safe or not by examining various properties of the website including text and structure.

Additionally, the Internet content filter will block a website if the website identifies itself as adult-oriented using RTA (<http://www.rtalabel.org/>) or SafeSurf (<http://www.safesurf.com/ssplan.htm>) rating systems, as well as forcing "safe" searches with some search engines.

In this mode, the Internet content filter logs all visited and blocked websites, and flags them as such in the Logs tab of Parental Controls preferences.

In certain situations, the automatic Internet content filter may mistakenly block a safe website or allow an adult-oriented website. For example, if the website uses an uncommon language or if there is very little text on the page. These websites can be identified in the Log tab of the Parental Controls preference pane and added to the "Always Allow" or the "Never Allow" lists. These lists can also be accessed by clicking the Customize... button in the Content tab of Parental Controls preferences. Websites that are mistakenly blocked can also be allowed by clicking the "Allow..." button on the blocked web page and authenticating as an administrator user.

https note: For websites that use SSL encryption (the URL will usually begin with https), the Internet content filter is unable to examine the encrypted content of the page. For this reason, encrypted websites must be explicitly allowed using the Always Allow list. Encrypted websites that are not on the Always Allow list will be blocked by the automatic Internet content filter.

"Allow access to only these websites" (whitelist)

If "Allow access to only these websites" is selected in Parental Controls, the Internet content filter blocks any website which is not on the list. When the blocking web page is presented, a list of allowed websites is also shown. If using Safari, allowed websites are displayed as bookmarks in the bookmarks bar.

Note: For most websites, the Internet content filter considers the domain name and not the path. For example, if <http://www.example.com> is added to the list, then <http://pictures.example.com> will be allowed, as will <http://www.example.com/movies>.

In whitelist mode, visited and blocked websites are flagged in the Logs tab of Parental Controls preferences and can be added or removed from the whitelist there.

Important: Mention of third-party websites and products is for informational purposes only and constitutes neither an endorsement nor a recommendation. Apple assumes no responsibility with regard to the selection, performance or use of information or products found at third-party websites. Apple provides this only as a convenience to our users. Apple has not tested the information found on these sites and makes no representations regarding its accuracy or reliability. There are risks inherent in the use of any information or products found on the Internet, and Apple assumes no responsibility in this regard. Please understand that a third-party site is independent from Apple and that Apple has no control over the content on that website. Please [contact the vendor](#) for additional information.