

# Prevention Tips for Parents

From the 'Guard Your Eyes' Organization



***GYE Support Hotline:  
(646) 600-8100***

**[www.GuardYourEyes.org](http://www.GuardYourEyes.org)**

***THIS HANDBOOK IS NOT MEANT FOR CHILDREN***



**Guardyour<sup>e</sup>yes**

Maintaining Moral Purity in Today's World

## **Comments From Rabbanim & Professionals**

*"Surfing without a filter violates the prohibition of 'Yichud'. There is absolutely no excuse not to have an Internet surfing filter on one's home computer. Not to do so is to violate the commandment, "You shall not put a stumbling block in front of a blind person."*

**Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner**

*"It is perfectly possible that while monkeying around with the Internet, you hit a button and there's a pop-up of an inappropriate scene. You weren't looking for it, but it happened. You have exactly 3/10ths of a second to turn it off. And if you wait for 4/10ths of a second, you may become addicted. That's how severe it is. It's one of the most powerful addictions. Day after day after day - I get letters and calls from people who say, "what can I do to save myself?" because they have fallen into this addiction and it has taken them all the way down. It has ruined more marriages than anything, ruined families. It's been terribly destructive."*

**Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, MD, advisory board of GYE**

*"There is no single problem facing the individual in Klal Yisrael and communities at large than this. I hate to sound pessimistic – but if you have unrestricted Internet in the house – Internet that is not **both** filtered **and** reported, I would say there's a higher than 90% chance that people have already stumbled in your house. And if it hasn't happened yet, there's more than a 90% chance it will happen."*

**Rav Yosef Viener, Rav of Kehillas Shaar Shamayim, Monsey**

*"Being open-minded and on the cutting edge of technology has a certain value, but let's be honest: would anyone bring a prostitute into his home to tutor his children, even if she were a talented math teacher?"*

**Rabbi Yehoshua Shapira, Rosh Yeshiva Ramat Gan**

*The Internet is filled with immoral and decadent sites which have the capability of destroying one's yiraas shomayim and tzenius rapidly, before one even realizes how entrapped he is in their tentacles. It exerts a powerful force over many people that - if left unregulated - has the potential to destroy the fabric of the Jewish home. There are countless horror stories about young people falling prey to online seducers and the tragic consequences of their encounters. There is no need to repeat here that which is well known and documented.*

**Rabbi Doniel Neustadt, Rav of Young Israel, Cleveland Heights**

*"Parents who consider giving their teenager unrestricted and unsupervised Internet access may as well buy them a gun. They're likely to do less damage" ... "There is no full solution, but there are tips, safety features, and vigilance. Parents need to start opening their eyes and embracing these technologies so that they can understand what the dangers are."*

**Philip Rosenthal, former cyber-cop, advisory board of GYE**

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**Dearest Abba and Mommy,**

*Just wanted to thank you for the iPod touch you got me for my birthday. It's the coolest thing! Seriously. I use it all the time to access the most disgusting stuff in the world! You would like totally faint if you knew. Anyway, OMG! It's like the sickest thing ever. And the Internet is WAY fast. It only takes me a few seconds to download the WORST videos and photos imaginable. I can literally get anything I want and talk to anyone I want. Bet you had no idea when you bought it. That's too bad, cuz, you know, I was just an innocent 7th grader full of potential. You probably had high hopes for me - sorry, but that's history now. I don't really care much about learning - or anything else - anymore and I'll probably drop out of school pretty soon. So long and thanks for ruining me. You rule!*

**Love, Chaim (a.k.a. "tank")**

## Initial Notes for Parents

**Remember that Censorship is never a full solution.** The real challenge for parents and educators today, is how to strengthen our children internally so that they are not as strongly affected, emotionally or morally, by what they see in the world around them. Besides for parental controls over Internet use, parents must set a good personal example in the way they dress and in the way they spend their leisure time. We must provide our children with the strength and knowledge of how to resist the temptations of our very open society.

**Emotional vulnerability to the pull of inappropriate material/activities:** The religious clinical psychologist Dr. Benzion Sorotzkin points out in an article, that the problem of addiction to inappropriate material amongst teenagers doesn't always stem from lack of "external control" but rather from factors that make kids emotionally vulnerable to its pull. As Rabbi Leib Kelemen (author of *To Kindle a Soul*) notes:

*Ultimately, restricting Internet access is a necessary but insufficient solution.... What is needed is healing the personality weaknesses that virtually guarantee some individuals will fall victim to Internet temptations. Studies show that those most likely to get into trouble are not deterred by limits on Internet access... Therefore, a key challenge to parents and educators is identifying the risk factors... Researchers describe four pre-existing conditions that put an individual at high risk for getting into trouble on the Internet. They are: 1) lack of family bonds, 2) low self-esteem, 3) inability to express opinions and questions, and 4) the inability to socialize.*

**Show lots of love and be a good example in everything.** The issue really boils down to *parenting*. If we're good parents and do what we're supposed to do, loving and trusting our children in the right way, they'll feel comfortable to come back to us and work with us. You can never hug and kiss your children enough. Say, "I love you unconditionally. I will never judge you. You can share anything with me." Speak daily to your kids and ask how their day went. In short, **be part of their lives.**

One parent shared some wise advice:

*When children learn by example that our lifestyle is one of joy and serenity, they will be much less likely to consider the alternatives. Mitzva Gedola li'hiyos besimcha tomid. Why? Because Torah without simcha just doesn't sell. The life of tum'ah and taivah all around us, seems like a veritable Gan Eden to sad, depressed and bored youth. How does our Shabbos table look? In what tone of voice do we talk to our kids about Yeshiva, cheider, learning and rabbeim? How do we teach our children to daven, and how do we react when they don't meet our standards? How do we present tznius: "Wear that and I'll kill you!" or "a special package comes in a special wrapper"?*

We recommend taking advantage of some of the excellent resources available today, like Rabbi Dov Brezak's parenting line (**Project Kavey**, [www.kavey.org](http://www.kavey.org), 415-639-3002) and Mrs. Dina Friedman's parenting course ([www.clparenting.com](http://www.clparenting.com), 732-901-6884).

**Be intellectually honest.** Unfiltered Internet access is not safe for adults either, especially for the males of the household. Don't expect to start lecturing kids about Internet standards if you don't set standards for yourself. Tell your kids about your own precautions with Internet use, and talk to them from time to time about how the dangers of the Internet can be much worse than eating non-kosher.

Parents who are having their own difficulties with Internet use are urged to seek help, if only to be more effective parents for their children. Visit [www.GuardYourEyes.org](http://www.GuardYourEyes.org), contact [eyes.guard@gmail.com](mailto:eyes.guard@gmail.com), or call our support hotline at (646) 600-8100.

*Note: The tips below are suggestions only. You may decide to use some and not others, but please consider the matter carefully. Regardless of which safe-guards you choose to enforce, the following tips can at least provide an appreciation of the serious dangers to your children that you may not have been aware of. We encourage everyone, even those who believe that some of our suggestions are “too extreme”, to at least keep an open eye and deal with extra vigilance when allowing your children access to digital technology.*

### **General Safety Tips**

- **Don't let kids have their own computer in their room or anywhere you can't look over their shoulder anytime.** If they close the screen when you walk by, you may have a problem.
- **Don't get rid of the computer altogether.** This will only encourage kids to go to the library or a friend's house.
- **Assign time limits for being online.** Most Internet filters (discussed below) allow parents to set time limits on surfing. In addition, certain operating systems (e.g. Windows Vista and Windows 7) allow parents to set time limits for using the computer. For the latter to be effective, a parent must have administrator access, while the children must have their own desktops with limited accounts, a setup which is highly recommended in any event.
- **Be careful of content on game devices.** Many of them have Internet access today. Many of the games today also have scenes of violence and moral degeneracy that are far below the standards we want our children to be exposed to. Make sure your children show you all the games they have, and join them when purchasing new games.
- **If you feel your child must have a cell phone, use a voice only cell phone.** Other features, such as Internet access, video clip download (which is sometimes a separate feature) and texting should be blocked.
- **Know who all your kids' friends are — and speak to their parents about your Internet safety and movie rules.** If friends of your children have unrestricted Internet at home or if they watch non-Jewish movies, do not permit your children to go to their house. If this is not possible, make sure your children commit to avoiding these activities and check up on them periodically.
- **Know where your kids are at all times.**
- **Learn about and understand the technology that you allow into your home.** Children are often far more adept at figuring out how new things work. Study the manuals for every electronic gadget you allow your children to have (or speak to someone knowledgeable), to understand its capabilities and ensure that there are no possibilities for Internet access or playback of inappropriate media.
- **Sign yourself and your teenagers up for the Guard Your Eyes daily Chizuk e-mails on Shemiras Ainayim:** Learn practical tools and attitudes for dealing with today's moral challenges. To sign up, see our website at [www.GuardYourEyes.org](http://www.GuardYourEyes.org) or contact: [eyes.guard@gmail.com](mailto:eyes.guard@gmail.com).

## Internet Safety I: Safe-Guards and Filters

*If you do not have Internet, do not get it. And if you have it and it is not absolutely necessary, get rid of it. All the advice in the world is not as good as not having the temptation around in the first place. The first thing you have to ask yourself is, "Is it really necessary, or am I fooling myself?"*

**Rav Yosef Viener, Rav of Kehillas Shaar Shamayim, Monsey**

If you really need Internet in your house, the system for combating the dangers needs to be two tiered. (1) **filters** (2) **reporting software**. A filter blocks sites that are deemed problematic. A reporting system tracks the Internet sites visited and provides a report to another person, such as a parent, friend or Rav.

### **Why do you need both filters and reporting software?**

Rav Viener explains: *"Since no filter is perfect, everyone needs the deterrent of possible embarrassment in order to restrict his viewing to what is kosher. Reporting software reports every website visited. That report is then sent, either daily or weekly, to somebody one would be uncomfortable with if he found out you had engaged in behavior unbefitting a ben-Torah. Maybe a chavrusa, a Rabbi or Rav. If you do not have that, the filter will probably not work for too long. But if you have a filter **AND** a reporting system, you have half a chance. It's still not perfect. Perfect means getting Internet out of your house. But if you must have Internet at home, these two protections **have to be** in place. They are either free or require just a small monthly charge. Most are downloadable and easy to set up on your own."*

### **There are several ways to accomplish such filtering and reporting:**

- **The best option is a white-list filtering system.** If you can use a white-list filter service like Yeshivanet.com, that is the safest. A white-list system only allows websites that you ask the company to open. Everything else is blocked by default.
- **The second best option is Internet filtering software.** Install a filter on every computer at home. Make sure to set the level of your filter's security to "High". For a free and reliable filter, we recommend **K9 Web Protection** from Blue Coat, Inc. (download at k9WebProtection.com). We also suggest **NetNanny** (NetNanny.com) and **SafeEyes** (InternetSafety.com). **Jnet** (Thejnet.com) also has great filter solutions for the computer, Blackberry and other mobile devices, (although Internet access on portable devices, even with a filter, is **not** recommended for children).
- **Don't fall into a false sense of security.** Filtering programs can be and will be defeated. Even if your kids are not tech-savvy, a friend is, and may find a way to turn it off, so just take that into consideration. (This is another reason why monitoring software is so important – see next paragraph).
- **Install a keylogger (monitoring software).** This invisible program lurks unseen on your computer, sending reports of every keystroke, including passwords, to an e-mail of your choice for your review. Your kid can't defeat it — he doesn't know it's there. (It is advisable to let your children know that there is some type of monitoring taking place, in order for this knowledge to serve as a deterrent, without giving them enough information to allow them to override the monitoring). **Get those reports. This software has saved lives.** We recommend **eBlaster** (from spectatorsoft.com). It normally costs \$100 but those ordering through Guard Your Eyes can call 888-598-2788 and give the code 1926 to receive a \$20 discount. **Webchaver** is also a good reporting system ([www.webchaver.org](http://www.webchaver.org)) run by religious Jews for only \$3.95 a month, and it can also be used on cellphones or PDAs (at no additional cost), as well as on the iPhone and iPod Touch.
- **Contact the GYE Filter "Gabai" at [filter.gye@gmail.com](mailto:filter.gye@gmail.com):** Ask him to hold the password for you. This way, no one is tempted to make changes to the filter. The Gabai can make changes

to the filter for you when necessary, by using remote accessing software, such as ShowMyPC or TeamViewer. Also, he can be contacted for advice on what filter to install for different operating systems, such as PC, Mac, iPhone, Blackberry, etc. He can also help you install the filter if you are not “computer savvy”.

## **Internet Safety II: What to Block and Not Allow**

- **No user profiles.** Too many exploited kids are snared by predators reading these useless and dangerous public information posts. Dump them: children should not be providing any identifying information such as names, home addresses, school names, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and photos.
- **No face-to-face meetings with people met online.**
- **Teach your children never to respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or harassing.** A parent or other trusted adult should be shown such messages immediately. If your child tells you that they were exposed to inappropriate communication or websites, compliment them for doing the right thing and letting you know.
- **Never download pictures from unknown sources.**
- **No Buddy List members who your children don't know** — have them identify every person on the list and delete anyone they don't know.
- **No chat rooms.**
- **No MySpace, FaceBook, Twitter, Google Buzz, or other social networking sites.** These networks can be even more dangerous than indecent websites because social networking is where **everybody meets everyone**, with no inhibitions. Even the non-Jewish world has recognized the dangers involved in these sites. (In April 2010, a Ridgewood, New Jersey public school principal sent a letter to parents urging them to block their children from such sites.) If your child **must** have a Facebook account (since all *their* friends have it), parents must make sure they have FULL access rights into the account, and even should have their kids' passwords so they can spot check at any time.
- **No Peer-to-Peer software or Torrents that allow unrestricted file sharing between millions of users online.** Besides for the obvious dangers of exposure to indecent material, downloading music or videos without paying for them is stealing.
- **Be careful what you let your children watch.** Even the so called “kosher” movies today don't meet our standards of modesty.
- **No Video & Image Searches:** Sites such as YouTube, video search engines (e.g. Google Video) and image search engines (e.g. Google Image) should all be blocked by the filter. The potential to access harmful material easily, is simply too great.
- **No Classifieds and Personals websites like Craigslist.** Children may stumble upon inappropriate services offered on these sites.
- **Check up on your children:** Make it a habit to check up on their textings, email accounts (if possible), browsing history and Facebook pages (if applicable). Monitoring software, set up properly, can make this easy to do.

*For more info and support, go to [www.guardyoureyes.org](http://www.guardyoureyes.org), or call the hotline at 646-600-8100.*