# How To Use Parental Controls in Windows 7

The Parental Controls feature is a valuable tool for controlling the amount of time your children spend on the computer and the programs they're using. Today we take a look at how to setup and use Parental Controls in Windows 7.

Parental Controls

To access Parental Controls open the Start Menu and type *parental controls* into the Search box and hit Enter.
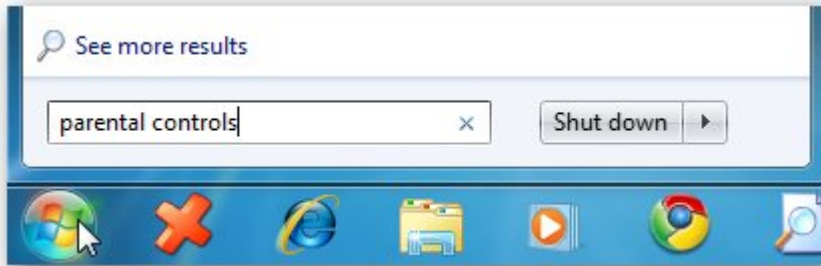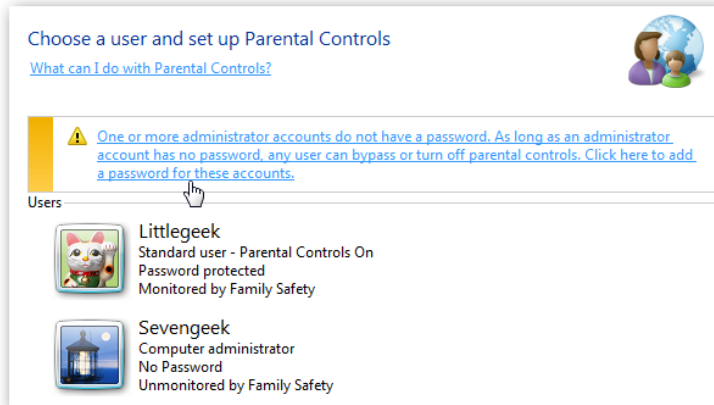

Alternatively you can open Control Panel and click on Parental Controls.
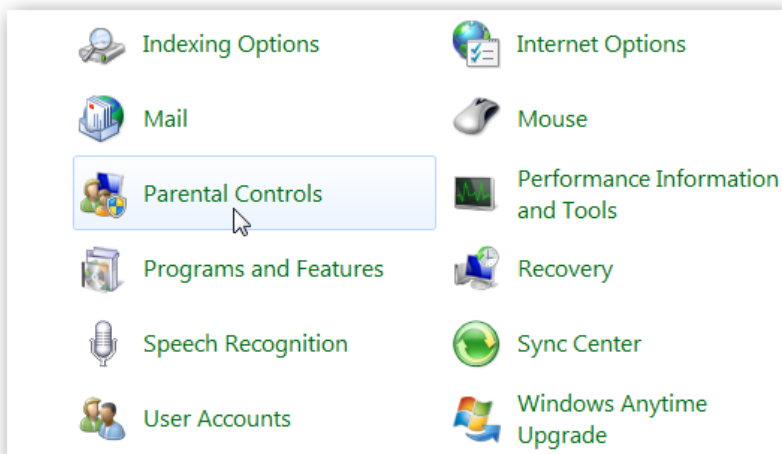
When you open Parental Controls, click on the child's account you want to set up.

Make sure to password protect your Administrator account...otherwise anyone can turn off Parental Controls and use the computer with no restrictions.

If you see a password hasn't been set when you go into Parental Controls, click on the message and you'll be prompted and Ensure Administrator Passwords.


Under Parental Controls mark the radio button next to *On, enforce current settings*. Then you can go through and control their computer time, games, and programs.
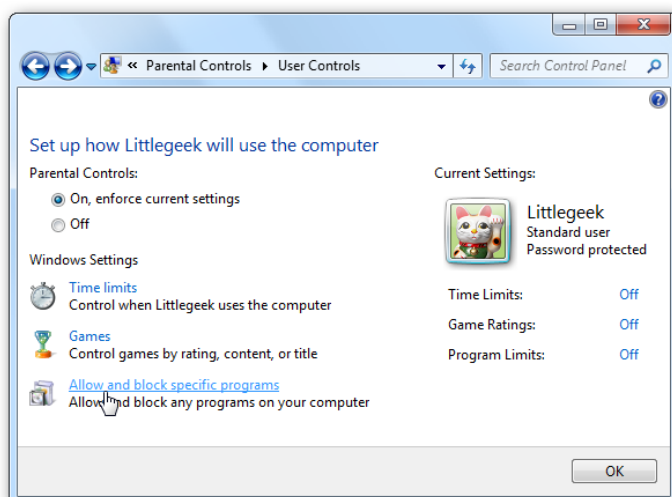
Set Time Limits

Click on Time limits to control when your child has access to the computer. If you want to only allow a few hours each day, it's easiest to left-click and drag the mouse across all of the time slots to block them. Then allow the time blocks when you want to make the computer available.
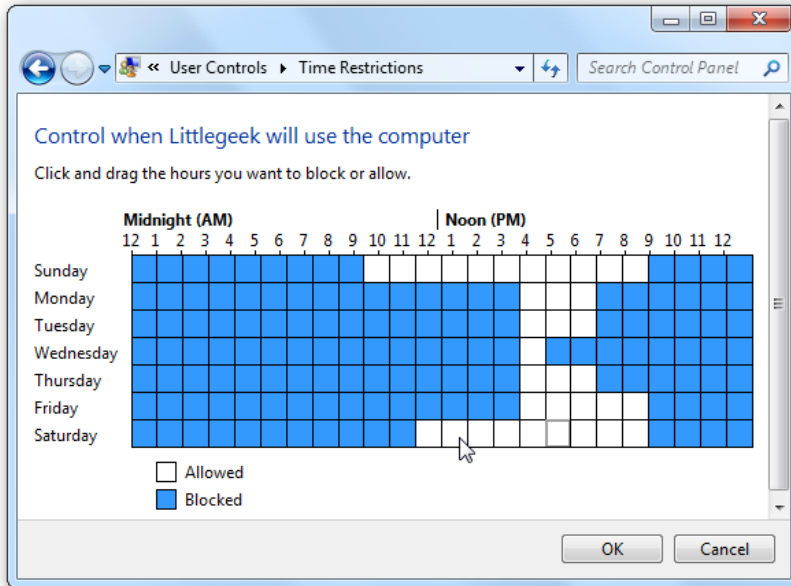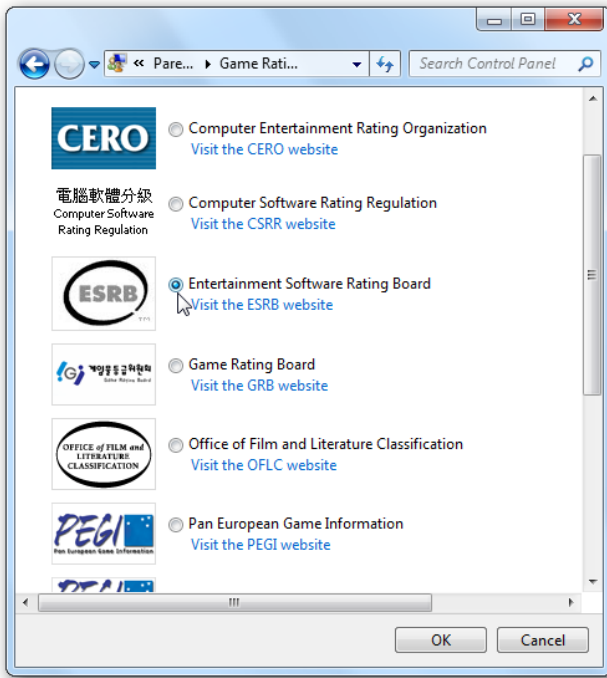

## Control Games

Click on Games to control the type of access your child has to games on the computer. You can completely block all games or select games by ratings and game names. These game ratings are based on the Entertainment Software Rating Board.
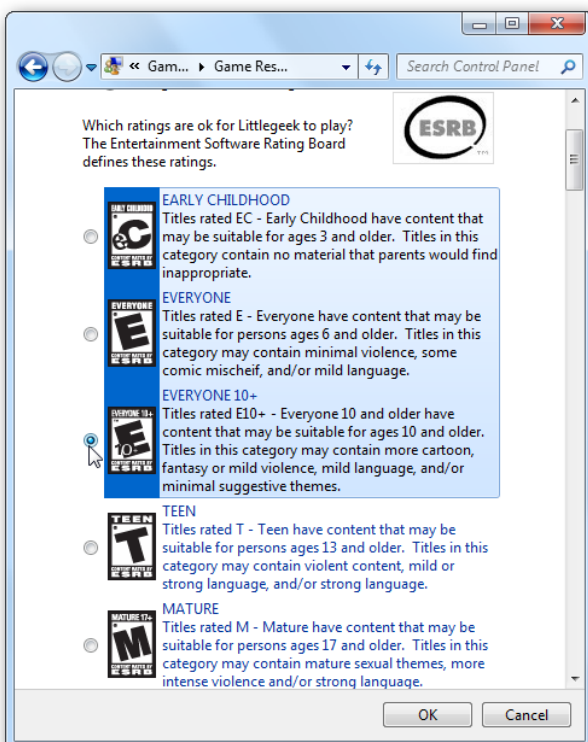
You can also select different game rating systems if it's more appropriate for your location or if you like a certain system better than another.
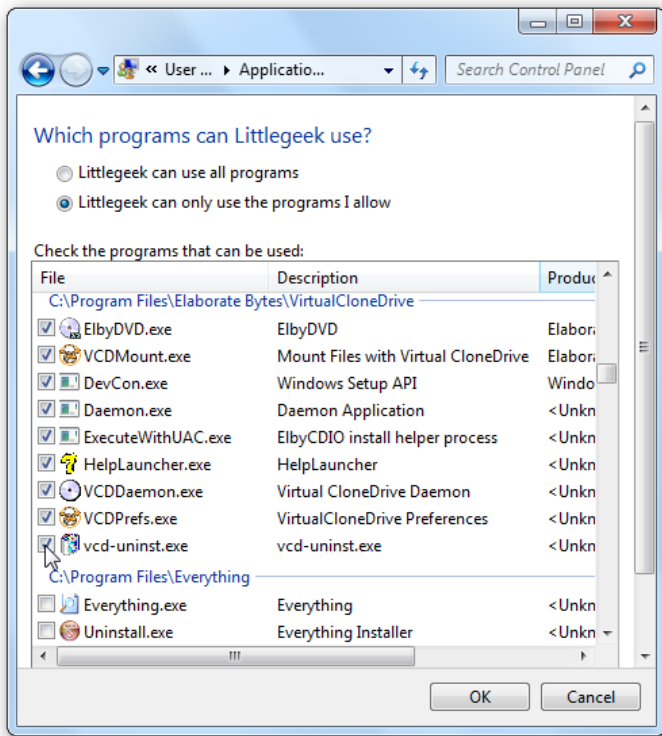
You can also block games based on the type of content it contains...and it gives you a lot of choices.
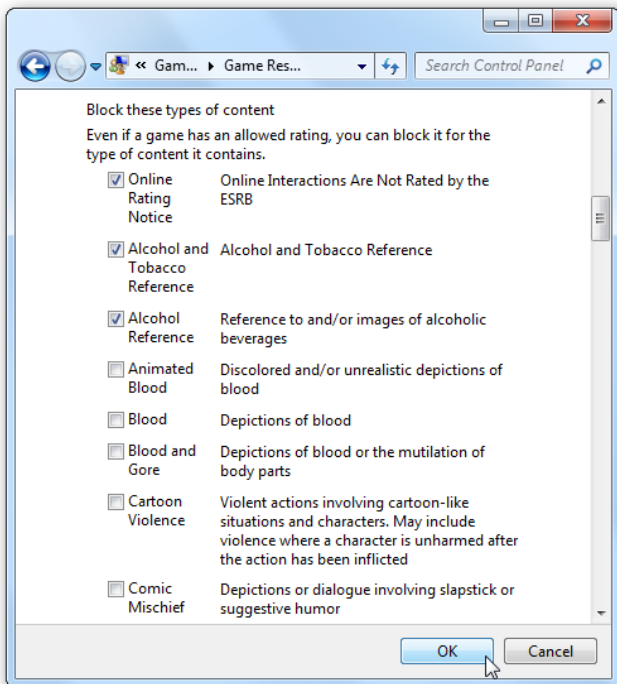

Control Programs

If you want to restrict certain programs on the machine, click on *Allow and block specified programs* then scroll through the list of installed programs and block them.

Additional Controls

Windows 7 doesn't have a Web Filter included like Vista did. If you want additional controls like Web Filtering and activity reports, you'll need to install Windows Live Family Safety which is part of the Window Live Essentials suite. With it you can block access to certain sites and also get access to an activity report that shows you what sites your children have been visiting.
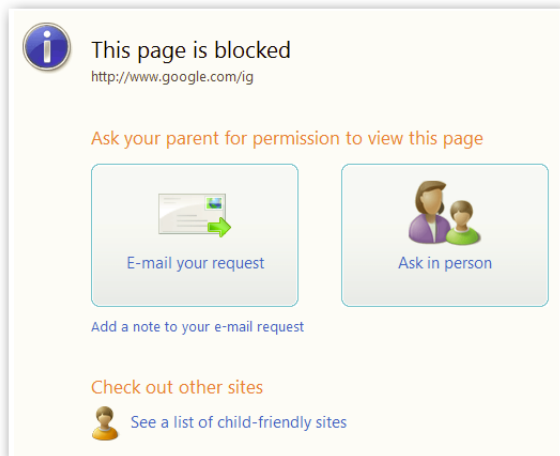
Everything can be controlled online which makes it nice if you want to access a report or change settings while at work.
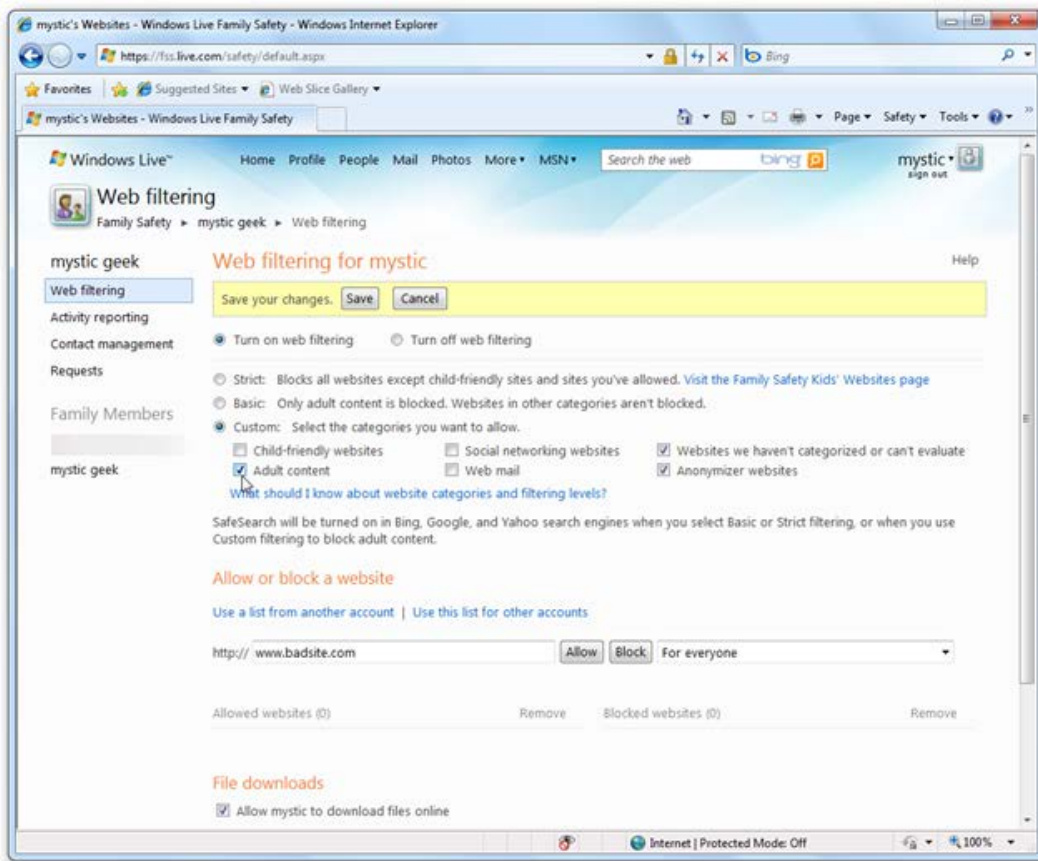
The Parental Controls feature is easy to use and helps you administer how your children use the computer. Of course nothing is perfect or foolproof and the Parental Controls won't replace good old fashioned "real parenting" but it makes it easier.

Family Safety after upgrading to Windows 8.1

If you're using Windows Live Family Safety on a PC running Windows 7, and you upgrade to Windows 8.1, you might see an error that says Windows Live Family Safety isn't compatible with Windows 8.1. That's because the features from Windows Live Family Safety are now part of Microsoft Family Safety in Windows 8.1 (and we've introduced a few new features as well). If you see that compatibility error, do the following:

- Swipe in from the right edge of the screen, and then tap **Search**. (If you're using a mouse, point to the upper-right corner of the screen, and then click Search.)

- Enter **Family Safety** in the search box, click **Settings**, and then tap or click **Family Safety**.

- In the **Select a provider** list at the bottom of the page, switch the provider from **Windows Live Family Safety** to **Microsoft Family Safety**.

- Tap or click **Web filter** settings, and then tap or click the **Switch** button to reset the web filter.

- Tap or click every standard account you want to monitor, or you can add a new account to monitor.

4 Ways to Set Up Parental Controls On Your Home Network

Parental controls can filter the web, blocking inadvertent access to inappropriate websites. There are a variety of ways to do this, from configuring network-wide parental controls on your router to using the parental controls built into Windows or third-party software.

Web filtering is best used to restrict the web for young children, preventing them from accidentally wandering into the seedier corners of the Internet. Teenagers are adept at finding their ways around parental controls if they want to.
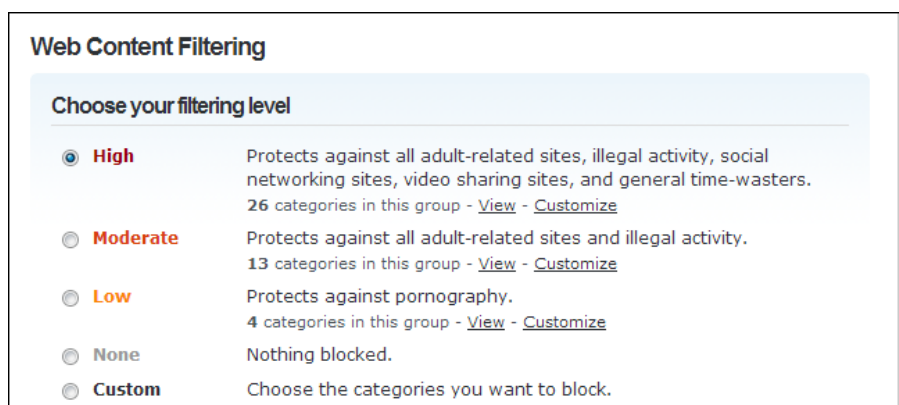
On Your Router

One of the easiest ways to set up parental controls is by configuring them on your router. Your router functions as the choke point where all the Internet traffic for your network flows through. Setting up parental controls here will allow you to perform web filtering for all the devices on your network — computers, smartphones, tablets, and even game consoles with built-in browsers.

Some routers ship with built-in parental controls. If your router has this feature, it will often be advertised on the box and will generally be explained in the manual. You can go to the router's web-based configuration pages and set up the parental controls for your network.

Many routers don't include parental controls, but you can use OpenDNS to set up parental controls on any router. To do this, you'll just need to change your router's DNS server settings to use OpenDNS. OpenDNS allows you to set up an account and configure web filtering — you can select different types of categories of websites to block. Websites you block will redirect to a "This site is blocked" message when visited on your network.

For more information about changing your router's settings, refer to its manual.

If you would like a device on your network not to be filtered, you can change its DNS server manually so it won't use OpenDNS. Of course, this means that anyone on your network can change their DNS server and bypass the filtering. Like we said, such filters can be helpful for your children, but a teenager can get around it.

On Windows 7

Windows 7 has some built-in parental controls that allow you to control what time a user account can log into the computer and what programs it can use. This is helpful if your kids use separate user accounts on your computer.
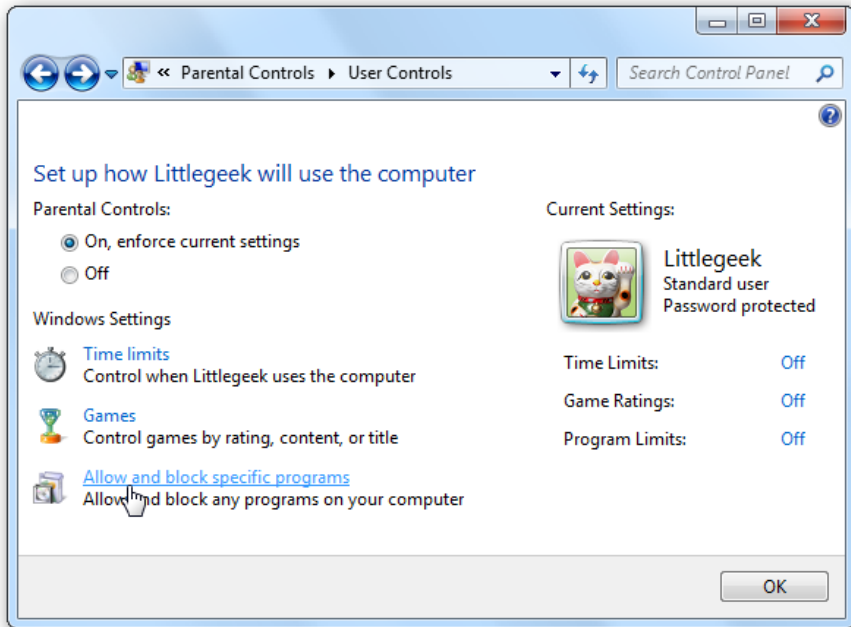
However, Windows 7 doesn't include a web filter. Microsoft does still offer Family Safety, a free program that allows you to set up web filtering on Windows 7. Install the Family Safety program on your Windows 7 computer and you'll be able to manage its settings from Microsoft's Family Safety website. The program is available as part of Microsoft's Windows Essentials package.
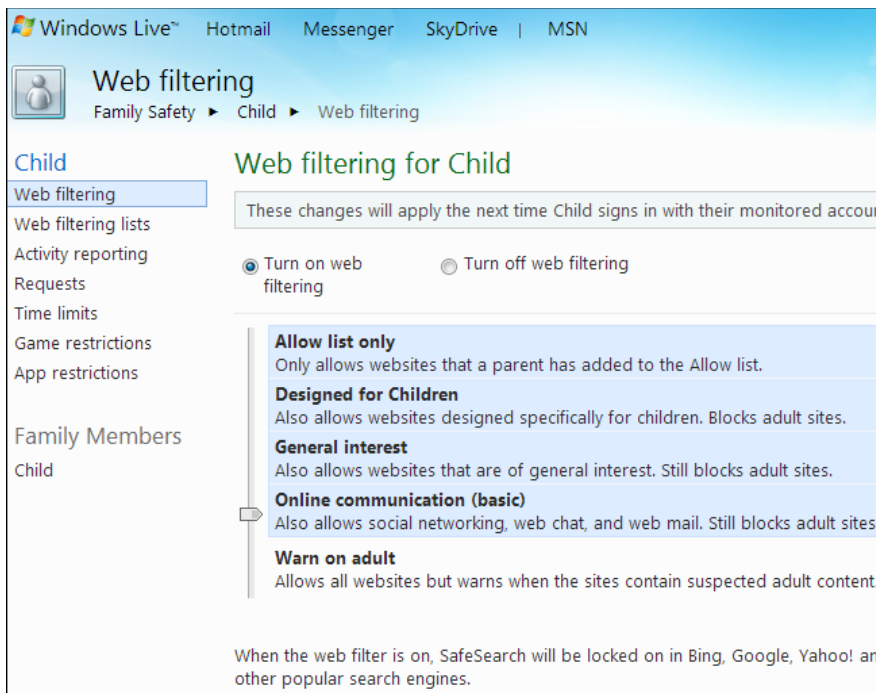
On Windows 8 or Windows 10

Windows 8 and Windows 10 have integrated parental controls that combine Windows 7's time limits and program access controls with Family Safety's web filtering and more new features. You can manage your settings and view reports from the same Family Safety website. All you need to do is check the "Is this a child's account?" box when setting up a new user account on Windows 8. The account will be marked as a child's account and can be managed from the Family Safety website online.

Read more about using parental controls on Windows 8.

With Third-Party Software

You can also turn to third-party parental controls. Many Internet security suites come with built-in parental controls. If you have a security suite installed on your computer, check if it has built-in parental controls.

There are also dedicated parental control solutions you can pay for, like the famous Net Nanny that everyone has heard of. However, you don't need to pay for a parental control solution. There are many other free web filtering solutions you can use. For example, Norton offers a free Norton Family parental control application that seems to be widely recommended. Try doing a search online and you'll find many other options that may fit your needs.
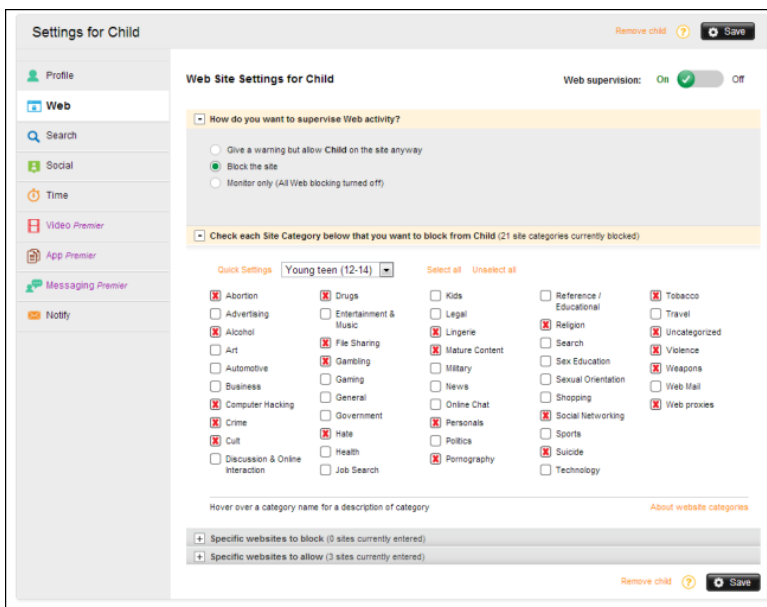
Of course, no parental controls are perfect. They won't block everything bad and may occasionally block something good. Sufficiently motivated teenagers can also get around them, if only by leaving your house and accessing the Internet elsewhere or using their smartphone.