

# Implementing usage restrictions on iDevices



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Years ago my wife and I agreed not to let our young daughters have computers in the bedrooms where we could not easily see what was on the screens. To accomplish that goal, I set two Windows PCs up on both sides of Beth's iMac so all three of them can surf the web together.

When they hit high school odds are they will have laptops out of necessity which will make the no-computer-in-bedroom rule difficult to enforce. With the rollout of the iPad and its massive appeal to educational entities, I bet physical school books will be replaced by tablet computers like the iPad in less than three years in the colleges and within five years in the high schools.

Until then the desktops in our family room does the trick so we can monitor their internet usage to make sure they do not violate our computer usage protocols. Our restrictions are basic and reasonable which keeps them from bad sites and divulging personal information which attracts online predators.

For Internet content filtering we are still using the free service OpenDNS.com that I wrote about two Septembers ago that you can review at [www.DeansConsulting.com](http://www.DeansConsulting.com). A new complicating factor has risen now that both girls each

have an iPod Touch and they use their mom's iPad from time to time. These small, yet Internet-capable, devices end up in their rooms since they are constantly using them.

Even though they are not laptops or desktops these little gadgets have just as much connectivity power as the Windows PCs along with

being able to easily download apps, music, TV shows, and even movies. Keeping out the Internet-borne filth and other negative digital influences available through these iDevices can be a new challenge for parents.

With the combination of the Catholic guilt thing from their mother and the threat of a shoe flying across the room from me, our girls are pretty good at staying away from the bad stuff on the Net. But with those same powerful devices in a 12-year old boy's hand in another home, parents my have a pipeline of problems to deal with from unrestricted iPod Touches, iPhones and iPads.

Most can be filtered out by the previously mentioned OpenDNS.com on the home wireless network, but once kids fire up the independent 3G connection on their iPhone or iPad all those content filtering safeguards are gone.

Same thing goes for their WiFi-enabled iPod Touch when they go to a friend's house and jump on the remote unfiltered home network.

Apple has addressed these valid web content concerns by implementing usage restrictions on all their iDevices. Since the settings of the operating system between the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch are almost identical, we'll cover the iPhone restrictions configuration and that will be pretty much the same as the other two.

First touch on the Settings utility and then choose the General button. Scroll down a bit and you will see Restrictions in the default 'Off' configuration. Touch on Restrictions and it will take you to that settings menu.

By choosing the Enable Restrictions you will be prompted for a four digit code to act as a password for managing the iDevice access restrictions from that point on so pick a number series your kid does not know but you will remember.

The first section includes the actions that are all enabled and working by default with restrictions not activated. So for example, if you do not want little Johnny to have unfiltered access to YouTube on his iPod Touch then simple turn off that app by toggling it from On to Off.

The same disabling procedure can be done with the web browser Safari,

iTunes and Installing apps. The Installing Apps is probably one of the most important function you may want to totally disable if you have had a problem with your little angel installing non-appropriate apps from the iTunes AppStore.

Another critical capability you will need to think about restricting is the Location function. If you are using the Find My iPhone app coupled with the MobileMe service that we talked about in July, you will want to keep that enabled so you can locate that device and maybe even your kid if the need arises.

If you are not utilizing that location service, then it may be a good idea to disable it to protect your kids' privacy and increase their security from online deviants. That may be especially important now that Facebook has launched their Places function which can log your kid's location on their Facebook page via GPS enabled smartphones. Yikes!

The next section of the Restrictions page concerns the Allowed Content able to flow into the iDevice. The most important setting here is to choose the level of restriction for the type of music and podcasts to be downloaded and played.

By default it is set to ALLOW explicit material. I recommend immediately toggling that setting to OFF which then

only allow 'Clean' music and podcasts.

Under the Movies button it is set to allow all ratings for downloaded movies. If you do not allow you child to see rated 'R' movies then touch on that button and choose the movie rating your family has previously agreed on just like you were going to Westwood Cinema.

Under the Movies restrictions you first uncheck the 'Allow All Movies' then you can uncheck the ratings like NC-17, R, and maybe even PG-13. Similar settings are available to restrict your kids from downloading and viewing nasty TV shows by locking out TV-MA and TV-14.

Finally, the Restrictions can let you block non-appropriate Apps from the iTunes AppStore by un-checking "17+" apps. This way you can keep those new soft porn apps off of little Johnny's iPod Touch.

Bottom Line: It's a jungle out there on the Internet, but Apple's Restriction capabilities can help parents keep the wild side from infecting their kids' iDevices.

Next week's column: Online ID theft services.

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