Advice - Safe Search Engines

Although we endeavour to filter as much of the internet content as we can using technology to scan and assess the content of websites it can never be guaranteed as 100% effective. We choose to operate a managed filter system whereby sites and pages are categorised based on their content, rather than a restricted filter system which simply states what websites you can and can't use. The managed filter system is used highlighted as being the option of choice by schools rated as outstanding in relation to e-safety by Ofsted as it helps children to learn correct practices and make appropriate choices about internet use *(Feb 2010, The Safe Use of New Technologies, Ofsted)*.

Therefore when children search the internet, our filtering *sometimes* struggles, particular as children can choose to intentionally put in words which will produce unwanted sites and images. Additionally some images and sites have innocently sounding names to a child but actually portray potentially offensive material. Although our filters are updated regularly with new data, the internet is updated with new content with equal regularity.

The following sites have been looked at as a benchmark for safe searching. We would recommend schools use these or similar in order to avoid unnecessary problems. Please note that, as with all search engines, they are not 100% effective unless the content has been pre-approved, i.e. a human has checked it first.

KidRex   http://www.kidrex.org/

KidRex is a custom Google search engine for kids. The interface is just like a child's crayon drawing (the dinosaur stands guard). It uses SafeSearch and tries to keep all the results as antiseptic as possible.

KidRex also has its own database of inappropriate websites and keywords which further help to keep the results clean.

Google Safe Images   http://www.google.safesearchkids.com/

This safe image search tool is text based. This provides additional safety by filtering Image Titles and Descriptions using SafeSearch. This also allows for safe searching of images without worrying about individual computer settings because safe search is locked on this website, as explained on the Google SafeSearch page for regular web results.

When searching for images on this site, smaller images appear beside most of the search terms. Images and their descriptions are listed in search results individually. After selecting an image to view, click the back button to return to the search results. This Safe Search box overrides your computer settings to ensure strict filtering for all results.

Important Note

When you undertake a Google Image Search you are searching files stored on Google servers. They have harvested these images from the internet and hold thumbnail copies of them. Therefore all search results are based on Google's assessment of whether these are 'safe' or not even under Strict Safe Search mode.

Our filters will block websites that have been deemed inappropriate. However, in order to ensure that 100% of inappropriate *images* do not get passed through we would have to block Google Images. We do not believe that school's would appreciate this and therefore we rely on Google's assessment of Strict Safe Search. This is not 100% reliable and therefore we would recommend staff follow these simple rules:

- Always use two or more words as search parameters
- Always check your search parameters at most 1 hour before you wish to undertake this with pupils to make you aware of any possible issues, i.e. do a dummy run yourself including making some spelling mistakes or missing/adding plurals
- Always monitor pupil's use of the internet when undertaking "free" searches

If inappropriate thumbnail images are generated from a Google image search the underlying link to the website should not work.

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