

# Child safety online Kitemark®

## Frequently asked questions



### What is the Child Safety Online Kitemark®?

The Kitemark is a certification scheme for internet website filtering software. This software may be bought as a stand alone product or come as part of a computer's operating system or an ISP's package.

### What is the purpose of the Child Safety Online Kitemark®?

The Kitemark is designed to raise the standard of internet filtering, monitoring and blocking applications for the UK market and will be of particular benefit to parents when selecting suitable products and services.

### What organisations are behind the Kitemark®?

The Home Office Hi Tech Crime team and Ofcom have sponsored the development of the Child Safety Online Kitemark®.

The standard was developed by the Home Office, Ofcom and representatives of ISPs and application developers. The Kitemark scheme is based on this standard.

### What is a software 'filter'?

Software 'filters' were developed to block access to inappropriate sites. Typically these work by comparing the website a user wishes to visit against a list of known sites containing extreme content and then blocks or allows access according to a set of defined criteria.

### What are the advantages of a Kitemark® software filter to a parent or carer?

By using a Kitemark certified product or service, parents and carers will have the knowledge that such product has been independently tested, thus giving greater confidence in the ability of the filtering software to:

- Prohibit access to Internet-based content that is not suitable or desirable;
- Prohibit communications via Internet-based services that are not suitable or desirable;
- Prevent unauthorised users from changing or disabling the access control system;
- Provide an appropriate level of protection upon implementation/installation;
- Remain up-to-date (within the terms of any licensing or subscription requirements).

### What sort of inappropriate sites will products be expected to block?

All products or services will be tested by BSI for their ability to block specified categories of websites based on their URL (Uniform Resource Locator).

These are the internet addresses of known, current sites which have inappropriate content for children and categories include:

- Adult (sexually explicit) content;
- Violence (including weapons and bombs);
- Racist and hate material;
- Illegal drug taking and the promotion of illegal drug use;
- Criminal skills / activity;
- Gambling.

### Are social networking sites in the test list for blocking?

The Kitemark scheme is primarily aimed at parents and children but it also considers "all users". It also classes 13+ years as children.

### Filtering products are not new. What is different this time?

Although filters have been available for sometime, only products which have passed an independent and rigorous testing procedure will be able to carry the Kitemark logo.

To put it another way, products with the Child Safety Online Kitemark will have been independently tested and found to be easy to install, easy to use and effective. The Kitemark represents a standard which parents can trust.

Products carrying a Kitemark are a great way of helping parents to ensure that their children can access the internet in safety.

### A lot of parents say their kids are much more internet-savvy than they themselves are. How can a filter help?

Although some children may have great expertise with computers, they may not have the maturity or sophistication that their parents have to cope with or understand some of the content that exists online.

Products carrying the Kitemark have been designed to offer support for all parents from sophisticated users to those with only the most basic understanding of computing. All products with a Kitemark will have clear step by step instructions, use no jargon and include a clear demonstration of how the system works. Parents will be walked through everything they need to do.

### **Will these be 100% effective? Is this enough to keep children safe online?**

There is no perfect solution to this sophisticated technology. With internet technology moving rapidly with new web sites and URLs setup daily, no list of URLs will ever be 100% comprehensive. However, through the ongoing updates, independent review panel and the integrity of BSI and the Kitemark, parents and carers will be able to feel secure that they have access to the best that is available at any given time. A certified product that will be regularly re-assessed to ensure that it is still up to the Kitemark quality sets the threshold today and seeks to raise it.

The only way to ensure that a child does not see content of which a parent does not approve is if the parent bans their child from going online at all or surfs the net alongside them. But internet skills are an increasingly important part of a child's education and will prove invaluable to them in later life – the internet can provide an inquisitive child with a window on the world, broadening their horizons in ways that were previously impossible.

On balance, parents agree that the benefits of the internet outweigh the risks. No computer program can take the place of an interested parent who warns their child about what they may see online, sets sensible rules and who encourages them to talk about anything that troubles them. But a filter can offer support to parents.

Filtering software carrying the Kitemark will not prevent access to all inappropriate sites. Ultimately, a child accessing the internet on a computer without a filter can access all of the pornographic, violent, criminal or hate sites that exist.

The launch of the Standard makes this process of improvement possible and as such gives parents and carers the ability to more easily choose an effective filtering product. Finally, the fact that such software is not a total safety net is not a reason to abandon all such products as useless and such products are not a replacement for responsible parenting.

### **Filters may be able to stop porn, but will they protect children from other inappropriate sites such as hate or racist sites?**

Websites which glorify drug use, criminal activity and racial hatred have fewer easily recognisable characteristics and are therefore more difficult to identify and block than porn and gambling. At the same time, it is worth saying that products carrying the Kitemark have been extensively tested against a list of known, current sites and deemed effective. Again, the software will continue to improve over time – not least because all of the products have an easy-to-use mechanism to enable parents to alert manufacturers to inappropriate content.

### **How can a computer program stop children from being groomed by paedophiles online?**

Children love interacting with one another on the internet through chat rooms and social networking sites. This form of interaction is now a normal part of growing up for children in the 21st Century. However, children mature at different ages and parents will have to make their own minds up as to whether their son or daughter is old enough to use a Myspace or Bebo or any other such sites.

Internet safety software carrying the Kitemark will give parents the opportunity to implement this choice. Parents will easily be able to limit or allow access to such sites to fit the needs of each child to prevent harm.

However, it remains a sad fact that certain people will attempt to lure children into situations which may be inappropriate or harmful. All parents should talk to their children about these dangers before allowing them to use social networking sites and speak regularly to them about their online experiences. All products carrying the Kitemark come with advice to help ensure that a child's online experience is a safe one.

### **I trust my child. Why do I need a filter?**

Parents are more likely to mention trust in their children than any other reason for not using an internet safety program. But the purpose of the software is not to act as a spying tool or to prevent inquisitive children from exploring the web, it is a tool to provide protection for children from inadvertently accessing content which may be inappropriate for them.

In much the same way that parents are familiar with using the 9pm TV watershed or BBFC film and video ratings as a guide to help them determine whether audiovisual content is suitable for their children, so internet safety software can help them make choices to protect their children. Kitemark certified filtering products will give parents tremendous support and offer a level of control that does not compromise parent-child trust.

### **Children mature. How will filter products take account of child development so that they do not become an unreasonable restriction?**

Parents are the best judges of their child's development and all products with the Kitemark have been designed to help parents ensure that it fits their child's internet needs. The products have been tested and shown to be easy to configure and simple to update. For example, with the youngest children, it may be suitable to block access to all but a few selected sites on a 'safe' list. As children get older, this list can be expanded so that children get the internet experience which they are ready for.

For further information please visit [www.Kitemark.com](http://www.Kitemark.com) or call BSI on 08450 765600