

Summer's here and web-surfing is up!

"Millions of young South Africans will soon be experiencing the lazy, hazy days of summer and with them, plenty of free time to surf both the sea and the web," says André van der Walt, chair of South Africa's Internet Service Providers' Association (ISPA).



Source: pixabay.com

With smartphone penetration well over the 100% mark, it's clear that many South African families now have multiple devices in the home. Unfortunately, coupled with the convenience of always-on connectivity is the constant threat of unsavoury web content.

Good news for parents is that Google has fine-tuned SafeSearch to make the latter more effective in blocking content unsuitable for children. Users are now required to enter very specific search queries in order to access adult content. Furthermore, Google users can customise their SafeSearch settings and lock them with passwords.

"The internet's a wonderful place full of information and entertainment perfectly-suited for the sponge-like brains of school children. However, it's reassuring for parents to know that excellent password-protected online safety tools exist," says van der Walt.

Secure settings have also been built into other internet ecosystems often accessed by minors. Examples include parental control settings on YouTube as well as on the Google Play and Apple app stores. Bing and DuckDuckGo are examples of two further popular search engines that offer safe search functionality.

“Safer ways of searching the web are proving especially popular and parents will find a plethora of options to consider. It’s up to them to determine the most suitable tools for securing the web for their own family.

“The fact that search engine algorithms may also block access to some perfectly-acceptable web content once in a while is a small price to pay for preventing children from seeing some truly awful audio-visual content that may forever harm them,” commented van der Walt.

While all safe searching options can’t practically be presented here, this is how Google’s SafeSearch functionality can help filter sexually-explicit content from search results when properly-enabled on an internet browser:

1. Go to Search Settings.
2. Find the "SafeSearch filters" section. To turn on SafeSearch, tap Filter explicit results. ...
3. At the bottom of the screen, tap Save.

“This isn’t censorship, this is ensuring the next generation is best-equipped to take on the challenges we haven’t yet been able to solve,” concluded van der Walt.

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