

CPL Internet Filtering FAQ

Clinton Public Library values free and equal access to information, even when that information may be controversial, unorthodox or unacceptable to others. With its implementation of filtering software, the Clinton Public Library balances its commitment to patrons' diverse interests and individual rights with the need to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment for all ages.

Why do Clinton Public Library computers have filtering software? As a participant in the Universal Service discount program (commonly known as E-Rate), funded as part of the Library Services and Technology Act and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Clinton Public Library complies with federal law (Children's Internet Protection Act and Neighborhood Internet Protection Act) mandating the use of filtering software in public libraries. In addition, we feel that accessing pornography in a public place is inconsistent with the welcoming and comfortable environment we seek to provide.

How does Clinton Public Library's filtering software work? The filtering software blocks sites that depict pornography, child pornography, or obscenity.

Who decides which sites should be blocked? In conjunction with library administration and staff the filtering software vendor uses a process combining technological and human review to make decisions about which sites are blocked.

Will children be safer using filtered Internet access? That is the goal. However, no filtering software is totally accurate, nor is it a substitute for parental judgment and oversight. Clinton Public Library believes that the reading and viewing activity of children is ultimately the responsibility of parents who guide and oversee their own children's development. The Clinton Public Library does not intrude on that relationship, except when mandated by law.

Will objectionable material based on hate or violence be blocked? No. The filtering software is designed to block content that is pornographic or obscene in nature.

Will information on health and sexuality be blocked? The filtering software is designed to block images and videos that depict pornography, child pornography or obscenity, not medical information or images. However, there may be instances where information has been inappropriately blocked. If this happens, please complete the Request for Reconsideration of Access to a Website form. Clinton Public Library staff will evaluate the request and if deemed appropriate, will forward the site to the filtering software vendor for unblocking. The customer will then be notified of the decision within two weeks.

Does the Clinton Public Library filter social networking sites and blogs? Clinton Public Library does not filter these sites because they cannot be reliably reviewed by filtering software, and because blocking these sites completely would unnecessarily block vast amounts of inoffensive materials. The content of social networking sites has not been found to meet the library's criteria for filtering. Most site vendors have policies regarding appropriate use and display of content. Parents are encouraged to explore the Internet with their children, supervise them, provide clear guidelines regarding what sites and activities are off-limits, and teach their children safety rules for dealing with strangers online.

Does the Clinton Public Library block sites other than those with pornographic or obscene content? Yes. The Library restricts access to some websites with automatic downloads built into the homepage. These sites are not blocked by the CPL, but the downloads may be. If a downloaded file changes the basic configuration of the computer or the browser, the downloads are blocked because it would render the computer unusable for the next patron.

How can patrons request that a site be permanently blocked or unblocked? Patrons may complete and submit a Request for Reconsideration of Access to a Website form. Clinton Public Library staff will evaluate the request and if deemed appropriate, will forward the site to the filtering software vendor for unblocking. The patron will then be notified of the decision within two weeks.

Can the filters be turned off? The filters on computers can be turned off by staff at time of reservation. The filter will be disabled only if the blocked site is appropriate for viewing in a public space. Patrons accessing the Internet on all computers are subject to the requirements outlined in the Computer Use Policy and Internet Access Policy.

Will the Library keep records of my computer use? Clinton Public Library follows state and federal law regarding privacy of library users' records and information. It is the Clinton Public Library's usual practice to erase all customer use records, except those essential for library business operations. When a computer session is ended, all information about that session is ordinarily deleted. The library does not, as part of its regular practice, retrieve any information, including websites visited, passwords, credit card numbers, or any other information a patron has entered. At the end of the business day, all computer use and reservation records are normally erased. However, in any event, the Library will release records, including those relating to Internet usage, as required or authorized by law.

Request for Reconsideration of Access to a Website:

Please use this form if you would like to request that a website be removed from our Internet filters. Please refer to our Internet Access Policy and Computer Use Policy for information about mandatory Internet content filtering at Clinton Public Library. If you have any other questions regarding computer use at the library, please contact us at 563-242-8441.

Name:

Email address:

City/State of Residence:

Phone Number:

Website Address:

I request this website be reviewed because it should be:

A. Blocked

B. Unblocked

Clinton Public Library's Director and supervisory staff will evaluate this request and notify you within two weeks.