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JUST CAN'T RESIST THE URGE TO PEEK AT FACEBOOK? HERE'S HOW TO BLOCK IT, OR ANY OTHER WEBSITE

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We’ve all been there. You’re sitting at your desk at work, fiddling with some spreadsheets or documents online when you get a sudden urge to take a peek at Facebook. A harmless mistake, sure, but you’re not feeling so productive once an hour rolls by and you’ve gotten absolutely nothing done. And what about those kids of yours? Staying up all night perusing Facebook, YouTube, and god knows what else certainly isn’t conducive to a healthy lifestyle. Fear not, though! There are plenty of ways to block access to certain time-consuming or explicit websites, whether you want to restrict access altogether or only during specified hours of the day. Here’s how.

ALTERING HOST FILES

Block using Windows hosts file

Blocking specific websites in Windows is child’s play — and usually childproof. It’s completely free, doesn’t require any additional software, and just takes a few quick alterations to the Windows hosts file on your computer. The hosts file, a plain text file your operating system utilizes for mapping IP addresses and hostnames, can be used to redirect a domain name back to the local computer, essentially blocking the desired website. It’s a simple process and a great way to restrict users from seeing content you don’t want them to see, regardless the browser and the time of day. Keep in mind, however, that you must have administrator privileges in order to change the file, and you can always undo the change if need be.

Disclaimer: Altering your computer’s hosts file to block a website can be a little technical. Avoid doing so unless you feel comfortable making the modifications and taking the risk.

Step 1: Enter “C:WindowsSystem32driversetc” in the Windows search bar, or navigate to the folder by clicking your way through Windows Explorer.

Step 2: Double-click *hosts* and select Notepad when prompted to choose a program to open the file with. Alternatively, you can launch Notepad and navigate to the host file by choosing *File > Open*, and locating the C:WindowsSystem32driversetc folder in your computer’s directory.

Step 3: In Notepad, you will see several lines of text used for mapping purposes. Underneath the last line of text — it should say something regarding a local host — enter “127.0.0.1” and press the spacebar. Next, type the IP address of the website you want to block on the same line. For example, type “127.0.0.1 www.youtube.com” to block all traffic from the popular video-sharing site.

Continue to add websites you wish to block in this manner, each beginning with “127.0.0.1.” followed by a space and the appropriate website. Make sure to only use “www” and avoid adding “http,” unless you want to render the entry invalid, and do not alter any other text in the hosts file.

Once you’ve added the sites you want to block, click the *File* option in the upper-left corner, choose *Save* — do not change the name or save location — and ignore any warnings regarding editing the hosts file. Then, close Notepad when finished.

Now, open your favorite browser and test the results! You should automatically get a blank page whenever you attempt to access any of the sites on your blocked list. You may have to restart your browser and wait several minutes for the changes to take effect.

Using MacOS hosts file

Blocking websites using MacOS works in a similar fashion to blocking them using Windows. The process is free, relatively quick, and requires altering your Mac’s hosts file to redirect a specified domain name. It’s a simple process that will prevent users from seeing content you deem block-worthy across browsers, but one that can be reversed if you want to grant access to the sites in the future.

Disclaimer: Altering your computer’s hosts file to block a website can be a little technical. Avoid doing so unless you feel comfortable making the modifications and taking the risk.

Launch Terminal by accessing the main applications folder, clicking *Utilities*, and selecting the program from the resulting list. You can also do so by searching for the program in Spotlight.

Now it's time to make a copy of the hosts file just in case something goes awry. Type “`sudo /bin/cp /etc/hosts /etc/hosts-original`” on the Terminal command line to make a backup of the file in question. Afterward, hit *Enter* and type in your administrative password when prompted. It may appear as though the keystrokes aren't being registered properly — i.e., your cursor won't move — but rest assured that they are.

Next, type “`sudo nano /etc/hosts`” and hit *Enter* on the Terminal command line to open up your hosts file in a nano box. Then, enter your administrative password when prompted.


Once the hosts file is opened, you will see several lines of text used for mapping purposes. Underneath the last line of text — it should say something regarding a local host — enter “`127.0.0.1`” and press the spacebar. Next, type the IP address of the website you want to block on the same line. For example, type “`127.0.0.1 www.youtube.com`” to block all traffic from the popular video-sharing site.

Continue to add websites you wish to block in this manner, each beginning with “`127.0.0.1`” followed by a space and the appropriate website. Make sure to only use “`www`” and avoid adding “`http`”, unless you want to render the entry invalid, and do not alter any other text in the hosts file.

When finished, hold down the *Control* key and press “`O`” to save the changes. Then, hold down the *Control* key and press “`X`” to exit the hosts file.

Next, type “`sudo dscacheutil -flushcache`” and press *Enter* to flush your existing cache and put the changes into effect. Alternatively, you can restart your computer.

Once you're back up and running, open your favorite browser and test the results! You should automatically get a



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