



Shopping & Services

Find a **Job**, a **Car**,
an **Apartment**,
a **Home**, and more...

Sponsored Links

[AOL for Broadband - Free Trial](#)

Free AOL for Broadband when you upgrade your Internet...
www.aolforbroad...

[Accelerate Your Web Surfing Experience](#)

NetZero HiSpeed requires no additional equipment. It is the...
www.netzero.net

[SBC Yahoo! DSL Official Site - \\$29.95 Mo](#)

Official site. SBC Yahoo! DSL is up to 50X faster than dial up...
sbc.yahoo.com

[Covad For Your Business T1 Lines](#)

Take the T1 challenge. For a limited time, the first 30 days...
www.covad.com

Stocks

- Front Page
- Local & Regional
 - Philadelphia & Suburbs
 - Montgomery County
 - Chester County
 - Bucks County
 - South Jersey
- US & World
- Sports
 - High School
- Business
- Daily Magazine
- Editorials & Commentary
 - Metro Commentary
 - South Jersey
- Commentary
 - Pennsylvania
- Commentary
 - Community Voices
- Columnists
- Personal Finance & Investing
- Tech.life
- Health & Science
- Food & Dining
- Home & Design
- Weekend
- Arts & Entertainment
- Travel
- Sunday Neighbors
- Real Estate
- Education
 - School Report Card
- Religion
- Automotive
- Obituaries
- Photography
- Books
- Currents
- Image
- Special Reports

Posted on Thu, Jan. 29, 2004

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Test Drive | Curbing a child's use of electronics

By John J. Fried
Inquirer Staff Writer

ControlKey

Griffin Technologies. Windows XP. \$59.99.

EyeTimer

EyeTimer.Windows. Software only, \$39.95. Package including software, a PC-based controller and one receiver, \$109.95.

Stop playing that video game already!" "Turn off the television, it's been on for hours!" "For goodness' sake, you've been instant-messaging since dawn."

Sometimes it must seem to many parents that, after working and taking care of household duties, what little energy they have left has to be spent tearing the kids away from the electronic crack to which they have become addicted.

To Griffin Technologies, the answer is to fight electronics with electronics - namely, gadgets that act *in loco parentis* to control how children interact with the entertainment devices available to them.

ControlKey, which is a small device that sits in one of the computer's USB ports, works with the security provisions of Windows XP to supervise a child's access to the Internet, e-mail and chat rooms.

It can also be configured so it makes the PC completely inaccessible when the ControlKey is removed - when the parents leave the house or go to bed, among other occasions.

The ControlKey is a bit of a nuisance to install if you have a PC with more than one USB port.

In that case, you have to insert the ControlKey temporarily in each port and run the accompanying software wizard.

Be prepared, as well, for a complicated and nuisance-riddled procedure to uninstall ControlKey.

EyeTimer, which can also be used to control time spent on television and video games, may be more palatable to all involved. It is devoid

of the tinge of parental authoritarianism and is based on the notion that parents and children should work together to set the limits on the children's time.

Enter symbol/company name

Thus, EyeTimer can be set up to allow children to spend an agreed-upon block of time on the PC, leaving it up to them to decide when, and in what chunks, to use those precious hours.

The EyeTimer can also be configured in Study Mode, which means that the children can sit at the PC around the clock, as long as they are doing something educational. A log, which the parent can check, tracks what the young learners are doing while in Study Mode.

My version of EyeTimer came with lots of material explaining to parents how to introduce EyeTimer to children in a nonthreatening way. There was even a little place mat, explaining to the children that EyeTimer does not mean that Mom and Dad do not trust them anymore.

In its most basic self, the EyeTimer consists of the software used to control time spent at the PC.

A more sophisticated version includes the software, a small radio-frequency (RF) transmitter, and one RF receiver. They can be combined to control use of an electronic entertainment device, such as a television or a gaming device, elsewhere in the house.

On the whole, EyeTimer itself is easy to install and configure. The advice on setting up the satellite receivers, however, is confusing.

On the Web

www.control-key.com

www.eyetimer.com/intro.html

StealthSurfer

StealthSurfer. Windows 98SE and up. 64 megabytes, \$49.95; 256 MB, \$129.95.

At the other end of the Web privacy spectrum, we have the StealthSurfer, a small storage device that docks in a USB port.

Actually, the StealthSurfer is more than just a storage device. It comes loaded with the Netscape Web browser and a password program.

Plug in the StealthSurfer, start Netscape, and activate your password, and you can surf the Web, download data, and even engage in e-mail - and every bit and byte of your activity is stored on the Stealth surfer, not your computer's hard drive. In other words, when you leave your PC and take the StealthSurfer with you, your tracks are covered.

StealthSurfer markets its device as ideal for use in the office, because you may want to engage in a little personal work or in some job-hunting there without leaving telltale information behind for your employer or nosy coworkers.

However, if your office is still on Windows 98SE, you will have to install a driver - which is not required on newer Windows versions.

Whether your office's IT people will let you load the driver is another question. Besides, if your company is really tough on nonwork use of its computers, it may have installed key logging software. And that may do you in, even if you can use StealthSurfer.

The device can also be used as a conventional USB storage device - meaning you can put files on it, as well as anything you download in non-stealth fashion, with Internet Explorer as well as Netscape.

On the Web

www.stealthsurfer.biz



[email this](#)



[print this](#)



[license this](#)



[reprint this](#)



© Media Live.com
All rights reserved.
Do not distribute without
permission.

[Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Archives](#) | [Place an Ad](#) | [Newspaper Subscriptions](#)
[About Philly.com](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [About Knight Ridder](#) |
[Copyright](#)