

# FILTER TOBACCO

## What is Filter Tobacco?

Filter Tobacco is a **FREE** software product designed to act as a gatekeeper. It protects children from tobacco marketing on the Internet by blocking access to Web sites that rate themselves (using the Internet Content Rating Association's system) as promoting use of tobacco products or are judged by the developers of Filter Tobacco as promoting the use of tobacco, especially those sites that sell tobacco products.

Filter Tobacco does not seek to remove these sites, or to censor their content. It is a tool to empower parents, helping them to make informed judgments as to whether their child should be exposed to Web sites that market tobacco or promote the use of tobacco products.

Filter Tobacco does not seek to limit speech on the Internet and has been designed with free speech principles at the forefront by Ernest Miller, an expert in First Amendment law and a fellow of the Information Society Project at Yale Law School.

Filter Tobacco is a PICS-compliant template. With Filter Tobacco, parents can customize the tobacco-related filtering categories that they wish to allow and block. Filter Tobacco can be used in conjunction with Microsoft's Internet Explorer or ICRAfilter, the free filtering engine provided by the Internet Content Rating Association (ICRA). ICRAfilter is a powerful, highly-configurable filtering program that enables parents to control access to material they deem offensive or potentially harmful to their children. A unique feature of ICRAfilter is that it was specifically designed to allow third parties to create specialized filters for specific interests. Filter Tobacco is one of the first templates to be designed for this system.

## Why Filter Tobacco?

Every year, more than 400,000 Americans die prematurely because of tobacco use. Most of them began smoking as adolescents, making youth tobacco use our nation's most preventable threat to life and health.

Of all people who have ever tried a cigarette, 88 percent tried their first cigarette by age 18. We know that if tobacco companies don't get people to start smoking as teenagers, chances are they will never be smokers. We also know that states with more extensive tobacco-control policies, such as New York, Connecticut, California, and Rhode Island, had significantly lower youth smoking rates than states with fewer such policies.

Unfortunately, state-based control policies may become much less effective. According to a study released in December 2001, minors can easily purchase cigarettes from Internet vendors. A survey of minors who purchased cigarettes on the Internet revealed that fewer than 25 percent of these vendors asked minors for identification or refused to sell them cigarettes in the past month. 94 percent of these minors reported that it would be "easy" or "very easy" for them to obtain a cigarette through the Internet.

Furthermore, the study suggested "the Internet may become a source of cigarettes for youth as retail access becomes increasingly difficult for youth, while internet tobacco sales remain largely unregulated." The study also cites sting operations conducted by at least 15 states which found that children as young as 9 years old were easily able to purchase tobacco products from Internet vendors.

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