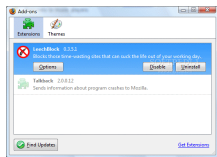


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LeechBlock

## Pleasures of the Web Get Turned Off

### *Add restrictions to opening time consuming websites*

Imposing restrictions on your computer may be a bit baffling; especially if you are an average computer user that does not really like tinkering with pretty hard to swallow options, there are some easier solutions on the market available to you for a certain price. But few are those that allow the blocking of specific websites from loading in the browser. When restricting access to certain websites, it is just a matter of parental controls or, if you are working on a shared computer as administrator, it's just a protection measure against locations crawling with all sorts of nasties. Prevention is often much less than repair costs, and implementing and configuring the protection elements generally take little of your time. Leaving complicated matters aside, here's something to teach you a lesson whenever you have a pile of work and yet your mind flies towards God knows what Web location.

LeechBlock is specially designed to permit you total dedication to your work, without being influenced in any way by anything else, no matter how appealing it would get. Its purpose is to block all Internet locations that might steal your concentration during work hours. As it is a Firefox extension, it is extremely easy to install (a simple drag and drop of the XPI file will suffice), but this also limits its restrictive benefits to one web browser only. This is one huge downside, as it allows an easy bypass of the restriction to certain websites by simply installing a different web browser. So you have to comply to several conditions in order to be able to successfully "benefit" from the restrictions of LeechBlock: first of all, Firefox needs to be the only web browser installed on the computer; next, the computer account you are working on needs no administrative rights and installation of software needs to be cut off. The extension fits perfectly in the list of Firefox add-ons and can be easily configured through its Options panel. Although at a first look configuring it may seem a bit scary due to the seven tabs available, you should know that actually only two of them are different (the first and the last one). Adding the websites to be blocked can be done manually or automatically loaded from an URL. The flexibility of the application is demonstrated by the fact that it supports wildcards to cover sub-domains as well. The use of prefixes for marking exceptions is also supported, so you can basically control which parts of a larger website can be accessed and which should be placed under restriction. For security reasons, the access to LeechBlock options can be cut off automatically, as well as to the configuration of Firefox (about:config) while the curfew to the websites is in vigor. This ensures that there is no easy way to modify the restrictions and, combined with security settings under General tab, really make it difficult to reach to them. Restriction periods are flexible in LeechBlock, allowing the user to define multiple time intervals for blocking the sites or you can also set up a limit for blocking them automatically at a specific time interval (hourly, every two hours, three hours, etc.). The option may seem trivial but it actually comes in pretty handy when you want to clear your eyes with something else then work documents and need a tiny break. It allows automatic access to restricted locations at a specific time interval. Restriction period benefits from extended options permitting the user to define the days when access to certain web locations is limited. More than this, you can define a default address location to redirect the user in case one of the time-wasting websites are accessed. There are six tabs containing all these options and you can name them according to the type of web permission granted. Thus you can create up to six sets of restricted access websites during specific time intervals. The use of wildcards and prefix function for marking exceptions makes it easy for you to close the door on entire websites, regardless of the number of pages and sub-domains it has. Configuring the entire application is not much different than what I've mentioned earlier, although there aren't so many fields to fill in and the options are

slightly less numerous. Accessing Options area of the app can be prevented more than one way and judging by the alternatives you can see developer's sense of humor. First is the regular protection via a user-defined password but what follows is pure evil; you can enable the app to show the password so that the user can type it in, but the trick is that the password is composed of 32 or 64 random characters and copy/paste is not allowed. For me this would be pretty discouraging as care must be taken to introduce the characters right and I suggest verification afterwards. Disabling the extension may lead you into thinking that all restrictions will be annulled, but it sure is not so as long the "curfew" is enabled. Only uninstalling the app will lead to the desired results and release the full power of the Internet, but this can be taken care of by the administrator as well by disabling the button from General tab of Options menu. The same is available for disabling the application. For easy management of the application, LeechBlock permits exporting all your settings to a TXT file for later import or simply for backing them up. The operation is as simple as can be and your only worry is to put it to a safe place. Application's flaws and qualities are easily revealed through the simple fact that it works as a Firefox extension only. But it does what it has been created to do and, during our testing, there was no mishap in its behavior. However, there are minor faults in that its restrictions are not foolproof. For instance, videos from a restricted location embedded into another website are perfectly viewable and there is no limitation in this direction. **The Good** LeechBlock brings a wonderful set of options for automatic restriction of certain web locations. It supports daily restrictions and by specific time intervals defined by the user. You can define a web page the user to be redirected to whenever the access to a restricted web location is attempted. Protection of your settings can be ensured by a user defined password or by visible 32 or 64 random characters long keys (composed of numbers and lower and upper case characters). The buttons for disabling and uninstalling the extension can be grayed out for more precaution. **The Bad** Access to a video from a restricted site but embedded into an unrestricted one is available. LeechBlock is limited to one browser only, Firefox, and it sure won't have the full effect on the users unless some conditions are met: only Firefox is used and you do not have administrator rights to install applications. **The Truth** The application comes in great if you want to eliminate productivity killers and get on with your work without distractions. Entering the 64 random characters passkey is a painstaking activity that provides better results if you use the software on your own self. It is good for getting rid of procrastination issues, but there must be set some limits in order to prevent an eventual bypass of restriction settings. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*