



# Linewize Filter

## Common Filtering Rule Pitfalls and How to Fix Them



# Summary

Filtering rule queries are among the most frequent support requests we receive each week.

To help schools configure effective and sustainable policies, we've outlined some of the most common mistakes and misconceptions. These examples are designed to help you strike the right balance between maintaining online safety and supporting meaningful learning experiences in your school environment.

## Example 1: Using Network Range Criteria Inappropriately

**Rule Context:** Social Media Block

**Rule Name:** Block - Social Media - Students

**Rule Type:** Network Range

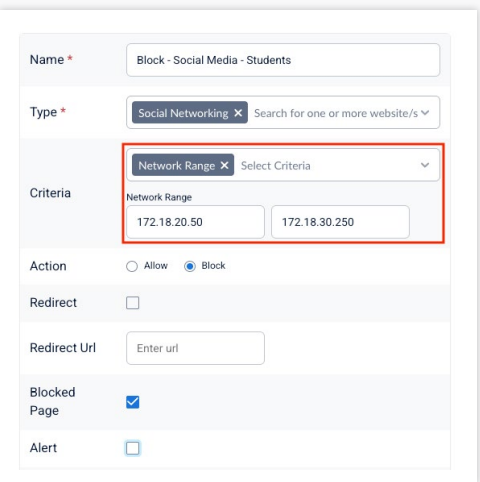
**Criteria Used:** IP range

**Problem:** This rule won't work effectively in most Linewize environments. The Connect agent does not interpret network-based criteria such as IP ranges. Therefore, unless:

- a) your school is using a Linewize Filter (School Manager) hardware appliance, and
- b) student devices do not have the Linewize Connect agent installed, ...the rule will not apply to the intended users.

**Impact:** The filtering rule is ineffective for schools with Connect-installed devices and no Linewize hardware appliance in place, leaving social media unblocked for targeted users.

### Example of What to Avoid



The screenshot shows a rule configuration form. The 'Name' field is 'Block - Social Media - Students'. The 'Type' is 'Social Networking'. The 'Criteria' section is highlighted with a red box and contains 'Network Range' with two input fields: '172.18.20.50' and '172.18.30.250'. Below this, the 'Action' is set to 'Block', 'Redirect' is unchecked, 'Redirect Url' is empty, 'Blocked Page' is checked, and 'Alert' is unchecked.

**Recommendation:** Use identity-based criteria instead. These are supported by the Connect agent and are more reliable for device-specific filtering.

### Well-Configured Example:

**Updated Criteria:** Use *User*, *Group*, or *Exclude Group*.

Example:

- Group: Students
- Exclude Group: Year 9

This approach ensures the rule applies accurately to the right users, regardless of network location.

# Example 2: Inconsistent / Unintuitive Rule Naming Conventions

**Rule Context:** Block or Allow specific content for targeted student groups

**Rule Name:** Various - as below

**Rule Type:** Block




**Criteria Used:** N/A

**Problem:** Rules use inconsistent or unclear naming conventions, making it difficult to quickly identify their purpose or who they apply to.

**Impact:**

- Causes confusion when reviewing or updating rules
- Increases the risk of duplicating or incorrectly applying filtering rules
- Reduces the clarity of reporting for school leaders and wellbeing teams
- Makes troubleshooting and auditing more time-consuming

Example of What to Avoid

 Block	VPNS
 Block	Gaming
 Allow	eSports Club

**Recommendation:** Adopt a clear and consistent naming convention across all filtering rules. Well-structured names help with filtering management, improve visibility across teams, and enhance the accuracy of reports.

Well-Configured Example

 Allow	Allow - eSports - Extra Curricular Students
 Block	Block - Video Games - Students
 Block	Block (& Alert) Anime Manga - Dean Robinson

Well-Configured Example:

**[Action] - [Category/Content] - [Target Group]**

This format clearly communicates what the rule does, what content it affects, and who it applies to.

## Example 3: Blocking top-level categories

**Rule Context:** Using broad block categories to restrict user access to (example) Entertainment

**Rule Name:** Block - Entertainment - All

**Rule Type:** Block

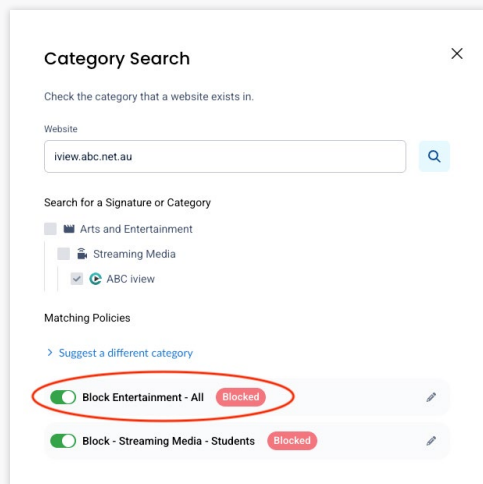
**Criteria Used:** Group/s

**Problem:** Although the rule is named appropriately, it is too broad. Blocking an entire top-level category like Entertainment may restrict access to both non-educational and educationally valuable content.

**Impact:** This type of rule can have unintended consequences, including:

- Preventing access to legitimate educational resources hosted on sites within the blocked category
- Disrupting teaching and learning activities for both students and staff
- Creating frustration among educators trying to use multimedia content for lessons

### Example of What to Avoid



**Recommendation:** Instead of blocking the entire top-level category, consider targeting specific sub-categories that more accurately reflect the type of content you want to restrict (e.g. Streaming Media, Video Games, or Celebrity).

## Example 4: Using Multiple Criteria Incorrectly

**Rule Context:** Attempting to apply a rule to unrelated criteria (example - Group and User)

**Rule Name:** N/A

**Rule Type:** Block or Allow with multiple criteria

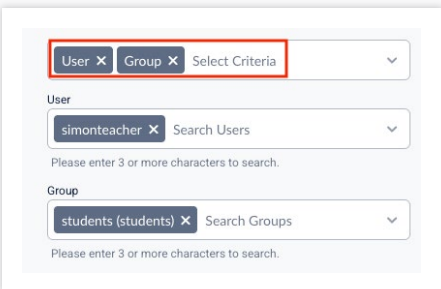
**Criteria Used:** User and Group

**Problem:** Multiple criteria are being applied in a single rule without understanding how they are evaluated.

**Impact:** When multiple criteria are used in a single filtering rule, all conditions must be met simultaneously (i.e., the logic is AND, not OR). For this reason the rule example below may not apply as intended - leading to users or groups being incorrectly filtered. This can result in:

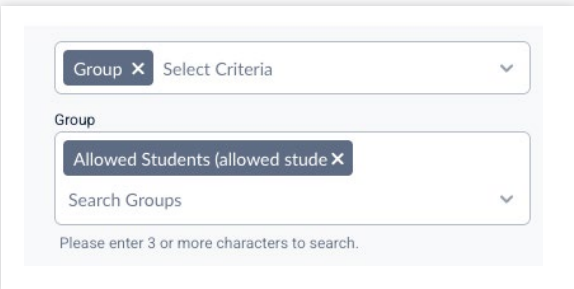
- Unintended access to restricted content
- Overblocking that disrupts teaching or learning
- Confusion when troubleshooting rule behaviour

### Example of What to Avoid



The screenshot shows a rule configuration interface. At the top, a dropdown menu is open, displaying three selected criteria: 'User', 'Group', and 'Select Criteria'. Below this, there are two search fields. The first is labeled 'User' and contains the text 'simonteacher'. The second is labeled 'Group' and contains the text 'students (students)'. Both search fields have a placeholder text 'Please enter 3 or more characters to search.'

### Well-Configured Example



The screenshot shows a rule configuration interface. At the top, a dropdown menu is open, displaying a single selected criterion: 'Group'. Below this, there is a search field labeled 'Group' containing the text 'Allowed Students (allowed stude'. There is a placeholder text 'Please enter 3 or more characters to search.'

**Recommendation:** Use only one criteria per rule unless you specifically need to target users who meet all selected criteria. For broader coverage, create separate rules for each group or user you want to include.

## Example 5: Creating a rule with a large list of URLs instead of using Object Lists

**Rule Context:** Blocking or allowing multiple websites as a collective group

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**Rule Name:** Block - Blacklist Sites - Students

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**Rule Type:** Custom Website List (e.g. manual list of URLs within a rule)

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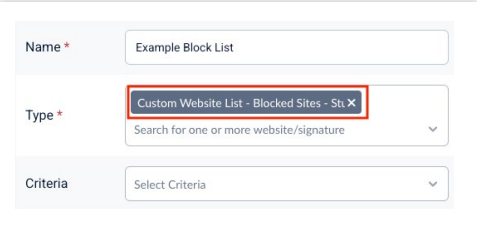
**Criteria Used:** N/A

**Problem:** Manually adding a long list of URLs directly into an individual filtering rule creates unnecessary clutter and complexity. Over time, these rules become difficult to manage, audit, and update.

**Impact:**

- Filtering policies become disorganised and harder to maintain
- Risk of duplication or conflicting rules across different user groups
- Increased likelihood of errors when updating or reviewing rules
- Slower response when changes are needed (e.g. allowing or blocking a new site)

### Example of What to Avoid



The screenshot shows a rule configuration form with three fields: Name, Type, and Criteria. The Name field contains 'Example Block List'. The Type field is a dropdown menu with 'Custom Website List - Blocked Sites - Stu X' selected, highlighted by a red box. The Criteria field is a dropdown menu with 'Select Criteria' selected.

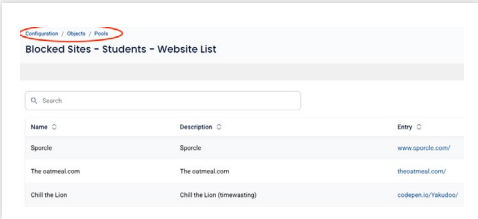
**Recommendation:** Use **Object Lists / Pools** to manage sets of URLs for Allow or Deny actions. An Object List is a reusable collection of URLs that can be referenced in one or more filtering rules. This keeps your filtering policies clean, scalable, and easy to manage.

Instead of embedding multiple URLs directly into a rule:

- Create an Object List called eg Blocked Sites – Students
- Add or remove URLs directly within that list
- Reference the Object List in your filtering rule

This way, if you need to update the list, you only update the Object - not the rule itself.

### Well-Configured Example



The screenshot shows a web interface for managing an Object List. At the top, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'Configuration / Objects / Pools'. Below it, the title is 'Blocked Sites - Students - Website List'. There is a search bar with the placeholder text 'Search'. Below the search bar is a table with three columns: Name, Description, and Entry. The table contains three rows of data.

Name	Description	Entry
Sporcle	Sporcle	www.sporcle.com/
The oatmeal.com	The oatmeal.com	theoatmeal.com/
Chill the Lion	Chill the Lion (streaming)	codepen.io/Yakudoz/

# Example 6: Including WWW, HTTPS, and Trailing Slashes in URLs

**Rule Context:** Policy that includes specific URLs

**Rule Name:** N/A

**Rule Type:** N/A

**Problem:** When URLs are added to a filtering rule with prefixes like `https://`, `http://`, `www.`, or trailing slashes (`/`), the rule may not behave as expected. This often happens when URLs are copied directly from a browser's address bar and pasted into Linewize Filter.

**Impact:** The rule might only apply to one version of the website (e.g. `https://example.com/`)

- Other versions, such as `http://example.com` or `example.com` (without `www` or trailing slash), may not be matched
- This results in inconsistent filtering, where access is unintentionally allowed or blocked

## Example of What to Avoid

Name \*

Example Rule

Type \*

https://example.com/ X

Search for one or more website: v

### Avoid:

- `https://example.com/`
- `http://example.com`
- `www.example.com/`
- `example.com/landing-page`

## Well-Configured Example

Name \*

Example Rule

Type \*

https://example.com/ X

Search for one or more website: v

### Well-Configured Example:

- `example.com`
- `subdomain.example.com`

**Recommendation:** Always use the top-level domain format when adding URLs to filtering rules. (Filtering rules in Linewize are best matched against domains or subdomains.)

# Example 7: Leaving Important Rules as Unlocked

**Rule Context:** Certain rules are not restricted as they should be to protect students

**Rule Name:** N/A

**Rule Type:** Block or Allow Rule

**Problem:** When a rule is not locked, a teacher can unblock websites related to that rule when using Classwize. This risks exposure of risky or harmful content to students.

**Impact:** Students potentially accessing inappropriate content.

**Recommendation:** Lock all rules that your school would consider inappropriate for students to access. It's advisable to review these rules in conjunction with the Leadership and Teaching and Learning heads.

**Example:** the rule below *Block - Proxies and VPNs - All*, is unlocked, meaning a teacher could allow a student to access VPN's, potentially bypassing all school-enabled filtering.

## Example of What to Avoid

Name \*

Block - Proxies VPNs - Students

Type \*

Proxies and VPNs X

Searches for VPN Search X

Search for one or more website/signature

Criteria

Group X

Select Criteria

Group

students (students) X

Search Groups

Please enter 3 or more characters to search.

Action

☐ Allow

☒ Block

Redirect

☐

Redirect Url

Enter url

Blocked Page

☒

Alert

☐

Quarantine

☐

Locked

☐

## Well-Configured Example

Name \*

Block - Proxies & VPN's - All

Type \*

Proxies and VPNs X

Search for one or more website

Criteria

Group X

Exclude Group X

Select Criteria

Group

students (students) X

Search Groups

Please enter 3 or more characters to search.

Exclude Group

staff members X

Search Groups

Please enter 3 or more characters to search.

Action

☐ Allow

☒ Block

Redirect

☐

Redirect Url

Enter url

Blocked Page

☒



## Example 8: Blocking search terms related to sensitive or high-risk topics (e.g. self-harm, suicide)

**Rule Context:** Sometimes word or phrase searches are mistakenly blocked; which then removes visibility of students at risk for Pastoral and Leadership teams.

**Rule Name:** Block - Self Harm Searches - Students

**Rule Type:** Block

**Problem:** Blocking searches for topics such as self-harm or suicide may seem like a protective measure, but in practice, it removes vital visibility into at-risk student behaviour. These types of searches often represent a cry for help - sometimes made with the hope that a trusted adult will notice and intervene.

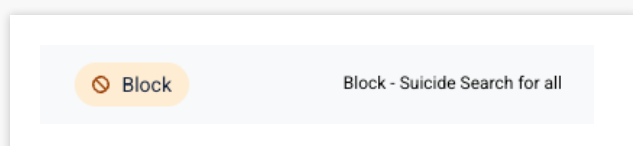
**Impact:**

- Loss of visibility into early warning signs of student wellbeing issues
- Increased risk of missing critical signals from students in distress
- Reduced ability for pastoral care, wellbeing teams, or school leadership to respond quickly and appropriately.

**Recommendation:** Do not block search terms related to self-harm, suicide, or mental health concerns. Instead:

- Allow the search to occur while ensuring appropriate monitoring and alerting mechanisms are in place
- Leverage tools like Linewize Monitor to surface these types of searches to designated staff
- Establish clear wellbeing escalation pathways so the right people are informed and can act swiftly to support the student.

**Example of What to Avoid**



**Best Practice Approach:**

- Allow sensitive search terms
- Configure alerts to notify wellbeing or leadership staff
- Ensure any detection is handled with care, confidentiality, and timely follow-up

# Example 9: Overuse of the Locked Rule Feature

**Rule Context:** Certain block rules are locked when they shouldn't be

**Rule Name:** N/A

**Rule Type:** Block (Locked)

**Problem:** When a filtering rule is locked, teachers are unable to temporarily unblock websites via Classwise - even when the content is relevant to a planned lesson or learning activity.

**Impact:**

- Students may be denied access to valuable learning resources
- Teachers experience frustration and reduced autonomy in the classroom
- Lesson flow and learning outcomes can be disrupted

**Recommendation:** Use locked rules strategically and sparingly, reserving them for categories or sites that pose a clear risk or require non-negotiable restrictions (e.g. explicit content, illegal material).

Instead of locking many rules:

- Collaborate with Teaching & Learning teams to identify which content areas may require flexibility

- Allow teachers to manage exceptions through Classwise where appropriate
- Regularly review locked rules to ensure they align with both cyber safety and curriculum needs

**Example:** A rule blocking websites related to body image prevents students from accessing curated, health-focused resources as part of a PDHPE unit.

Example of What to Avoid

Name \*

Block - Body Imagery - Students

Type \*

Nudity X

Sex Education X

Abortions X

Intimate Apparel and Swimwear X

Deviant Art X

Search for one or more website/signature

Criteria

Select Criteria

Action

Allow

☒ Block

Redirect

☐

Redirect Url

Enter url

Blocked Page

☒

Alert

☐

Quarantine

☐























Locked

☒

Locked Blocked Policies and Classwise

Locking this Policy means teachers can't unblock or Focus on affected resources during class.

Well-Configured Example

Rules			Delete all	+ New Rule
SIGNATURES AND CATEGORIES				
 ABC iview	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 ABCYA	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 AI Tools	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 AI-IP Detected Proxy	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 Chat GPT	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 Microsoft Teams	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 Pinterest	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 Spotify	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 Vimeo	all users	Blocked	Allowed	
 YouTube	Jeremy Browne	Blocked	Allowed	
 YouTube	Olivia Blake	Blocked	Allowed	

## Example 10: Ineffective Use of the Criteria Feature (too many / too few)

**Rule Context:** Filtering rules with poorly configured criteria

**Rule Name:** N/A

**Rule Type:** Block (Locked)

**Criteria:** Various

### Impact:

- Rules may fail to apply to the correct users
- Students may gain access to restricted content or be blocked from essential learning materials
- Increases the risk of inconsistent filtering across year levels, campuses, or device types
- Creates additional work for IT teams trying to troubleshoot or revise ineffective rules

**Problem:** Filtering rules sometimes include too many or too few criteria - resulting in the rule not behaving as intended.

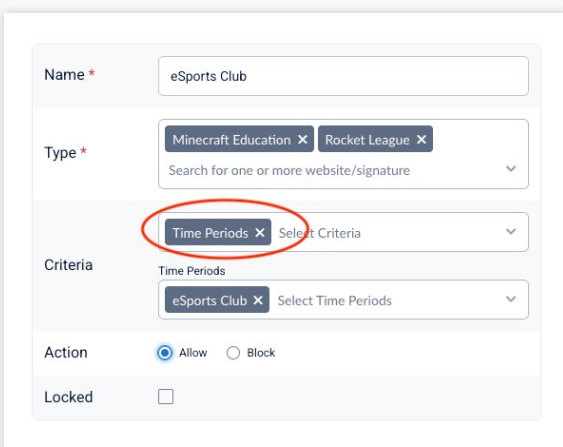
- Using too many criteria can make rules overly restrictive and limit their application to only very specific users (often unintentionally excluding the intended targets).
- Using too few or overly broad criteria can make a rule apply too widely, unintentionally affecting users or groups it wasn't meant to.

**Recommendation:** Use clear, intentional, and well-scoped criteria for each rule.

### Review whether the rule should apply to:

- A specific User, Group, or Organisational Unit
- A particular Year Level, Device Type, or Campus

### Example of What to Avoid



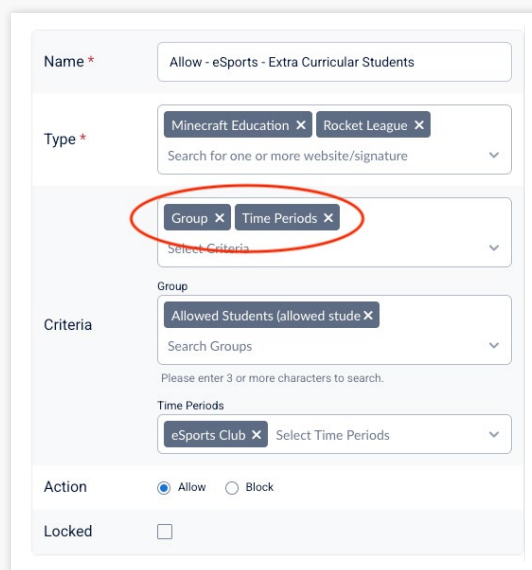
The screenshot shows a rule configuration form with the following fields:

- Name \***: eSports Club
- Type \***: Minecraft Education X Rocket League X (with a search bar below it)
- Criteria**: Time Periods X Select Criteria (with a search bar below it)
- Action**: ☒ Allow ☐ Block
- Locked**: ☐

The 'Time Periods X Select Criteria' and 'Time Periods' fields are circled in red, indicating that adding too many criteria is an ineffective practice.

**Avoid stacking multiple criteria unless you specifically want the rule to apply only when all conditions are met (AND logic).**

### Well-Configured Example



The screenshot shows a rule configuration form with the following fields:

- Name \***: Allow - eSports - Extra Curricular Students
- Type \***: Minecraft Education X Rocket League X (with a search bar below it)
- Criteria**: Group X Time Periods X (with a search bar below it)
- Action**: ☒ Allow ☐ Block
- Locked**: ☐

The 'Group X Time Periods X' fields are circled in red, indicating that using a few well-scoped criteria is a better practice.



We combine digital safeguarding technology, child psychology expertise, in-depth educational material and awareness initiatives to help schools build positive digital cultures – where students can thrive. Linewize solutions are constantly evolving to meet the requirements of global regulations and guidelines while ensuring schools' unique requirements.

Find out more [www.linewize.io](http://www.linewize.io)  
Email: [inquiries@linewize.io](mailto:inquiries@linewize.io)



Linewize is part of Qoria, a global technology company, dedicated to keeping children safe and well in their digital lives. We harness the power of connection to close the gaps that children fall through, and to seamlessly support them on all sides - at school, at home and everywhere in between.

Find out more [www.qoria.com](http://www.qoria.com)