

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Video Game Industry Makes Push at Self-Policing

By SHARON R. KING

In an attempt to stave off threatened state and Federal regulation of movies and video games, the nation's video rental stores and video game makers, with the cooperation of the motion picture industry, have joined forces in a push toward self-policing.

Their effort, which comes in the wake of high-profile teen-age shootings in Colorado and Georgia last spring, includes a move to beef up restrictions on the sale and rental of some products to minors.

"We want to make it clear this level of parental control is the right vehicle, and home video stores are well equipped to handle this," said Bo Andersen, president of the Video Software Dealers Association, which represents more than 19,000 video

rental stores, about two-thirds of the nation's total.

This week, members of the association — independent video rental stores as well as chains like Blockbuster and Hollywood Video — are beginning to display brightly colored posters highlighting their updated Pledge to Parents campaign. Some posters explain the voluntary movie ratings system that has been administered by the Motion Picture Association of America for the last 30 years. Others highlight video game ratings, created in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Rating Board.

Signs point out that without parental consent, the store will not rent or sell to children under 17 videotapes or video games designated as restricted. In addition, when adults apply for membership at a video store, or at any point thereafter, they can elect to prohibit the sale or rental

of certain types of video games and movies to their children. For some stores, including the Blockbuster chain, such moves supplement optional restrictions already in place.

In about a month, video game makers will begin their own push, which will include ads in national parent and family-oriented magazines as well as posters and pamphlets for retailers, said Doug Lowenstein, president of the Interactive Digital Software Association, a trade group. The group also is asking retailers to restrict to people over 17 sales of video games rated "mature," or "adults only" by the Entertainment Software Rating Board, Mr. Lowenstein said.

"We believe we have a great rating system," Mr. Lowenstein said. "This is

about making it as well known as it possibly can be."

Bowing to concerns raised by the Clinton Administration about how violent games are marketed to children, the video game makers and their ratings board have established guidelines to limit gratuitous violence, sexual content and profanity in advertising video games. The guidelines are to take effect at the end of January.

The moves by these groups follow an announcement in June by the National Association of Theater Owners that theaters would check identification and prohibit minors from viewing adult-rated movies.

Video dealers and game makers are planning to have most of the revised educational material for their campaign in place before the Christmas holiday selling season.

While the video game rating system has been in existence since 1994, and most games now sold include a rating logo, most parents know little about the system and few stores enforce any limits on sales or rentals.

According to the National Institute on Media and the Family's 1998 Video and Computer Game Report Card, only 40 percent of parents surveyed said they routinely checked the ratings of the games their children buy or rent. Only 5 percent of parents could identify a popular mature-rated game, "Duke Nukem," while 80 percent of junior high school students were familiar with the title.

In addition, only 21 percent of the retailers it surveyed enforced ratings policies on the sale of games. Less than half the retail and rental employees understood the rating system and few stores educated employees about it, the report said.

"Although there is a rating system, there's not a lot of knowledge about it," said David Walsh, president and founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family, a nonprofit group based in Minneapolis.

Moreover, he said, "Most adults over the age of 30 have no idea what's in these games because they can't play them."

Anxiety about game violence and about how inappropriate games are marketed to children comes as the video game industry is enjoying its greatest popularity ever.

From their start as two-dimensional blips on a screen in the early 1970's to today's near-movie-quality narratives, video games have grown into a more than \$6 billion industry.

They have spawned movies, toys, clothing lines and even a postage stamp. The Navy has even incorporated a flight simulator game developed by Microsoft into its pilot training program.

Through Oct. 3, video stores rented about 213 million video games this year, compared with about 2.3 billion videotapes, according to the Video Software Dealers Association. Last year, stores took in \$804 million on game rentals, a 50 percent increase over 1997, and \$8.1 billion on videotape rentals, a 9.6 percent rise.

In the wake of the school shootings this year, several states, including New York and Pennsylvania, have proposed legislation to ban the sale, rental or public viewing of violent games to minors, or to establish state-governed rating systems. And an amendment pending in Congress would mandate a universal ratings system and prohibit the rental or sale of any unrated product. But the issue has been around a while, and other states, including Arkansas, Florida and Minnesota, had already proposed similar legislation. None of the bills have become law, according to the Video Software Dealers Association and others watching the issue.

"Education and voluntary compliance with retailers is probably going to get us further," Mr. Walsh said. "As soon as we start passing laws, there are going to be challenges."

Earlier industry efforts to head off government regulation included the original Pledge to Parents campaign, introduced in 1991 and intended largely to limit children's access to sexual content.

Since it was established in 1994, the Entertainment Software Rating Board has rated more than 5,000 computer and video games. More than 70 percent of the products have been rated "E," or suitable for anyone over 6; 7 percent have been rated "M" or mature, and less than 1 percent have been rated "AC" for adults only, Mr. Lowenstein said.

The industry may have a tough time persuading retailers to take bold moves to restrict access to some of the products they sell.

Earlier this year, for example,

F.A.O. Schwarz, the toy emporium, reversed a plan to remove all toy guns from its shelves, saying the toys' bright colors kept them from being mistaken for real weapons, a company spokesman said. But a handful of F.A.O. Schwarz stores, including the flagship Fifth Avenue location in Manhattan, did remove about a dozen video games from shelves because of their violent content.

A Kmart spokesman said the chain had no official restrictions, though it has refused to sell some games it has deemed inappropriate.

And an official for K-B Toys, the retailer based in Pittsfield, Mass., said the company did not have any plans to restrict the sale of adult-rated video games. Employees explain the ratings system to parents and other customers, but there are no pamphlets or educational posters in stores now, he said. "We make parents aware of the ratings," he said, "but we don't make a judgment."

The New York Times

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1999

Doug Lowenstein

Alex French

833-4372

• mostly w/ retailers as exp. policy - buyers, May Rec. & ads announced yesterday - work w/ ground every publisher: rated games only
• PSA

Entertainment Systems Ratings Board

The ratings are conducted by three people who look at “actual product content” and are randomly chosen from more than “100 demographically diverse individuals from all walks of life”. The raters also go through training, though the training procedure is not described in the background piece provided by IDSA. The rating system has several components:

1. Five Age-Based Categories:

- a. Early Childhood (ages 3+)
- b. Everyone (ages 6+)
- c. Teen (ages 13+)
- d. Mature (ages 17+)
- e. Adults Only (18+)

2. Descriptors: Provide content information for consumers in addition to the age-based guidelines. The descriptors include:

- a. Violent Content
- b. Sexual Themes
- c. Language
- d. Alcohol/Tobacco Use
- e. Gaming
- f. Informational
- g. Edutainment

3. Toll-Free Number and Web Site:

- a. Established in 1994, the phone line is available for consumers to call for ratings information.
- b. The web site provides immediate rating access for consumers, as well as links to the companies that use the rating system.

4. Advertising Code of Conduct: The ESRB rating system follows the Advertising Code of Conduct which governs the use of rating icons and descriptors through the regulation of color, size and placement on packages, print and television advertisements.

Consumer and Expert Input and Oversight

The ESRB system was reviewed by a consumer focus group to develop a “user friendly” system. IDSA continues to seek the advice of outside academics, consumer representatives as

well as children's advocates and educators. They also have an Academic and Consumer Advocacy Board to review how the system is working. The membership list is attached.

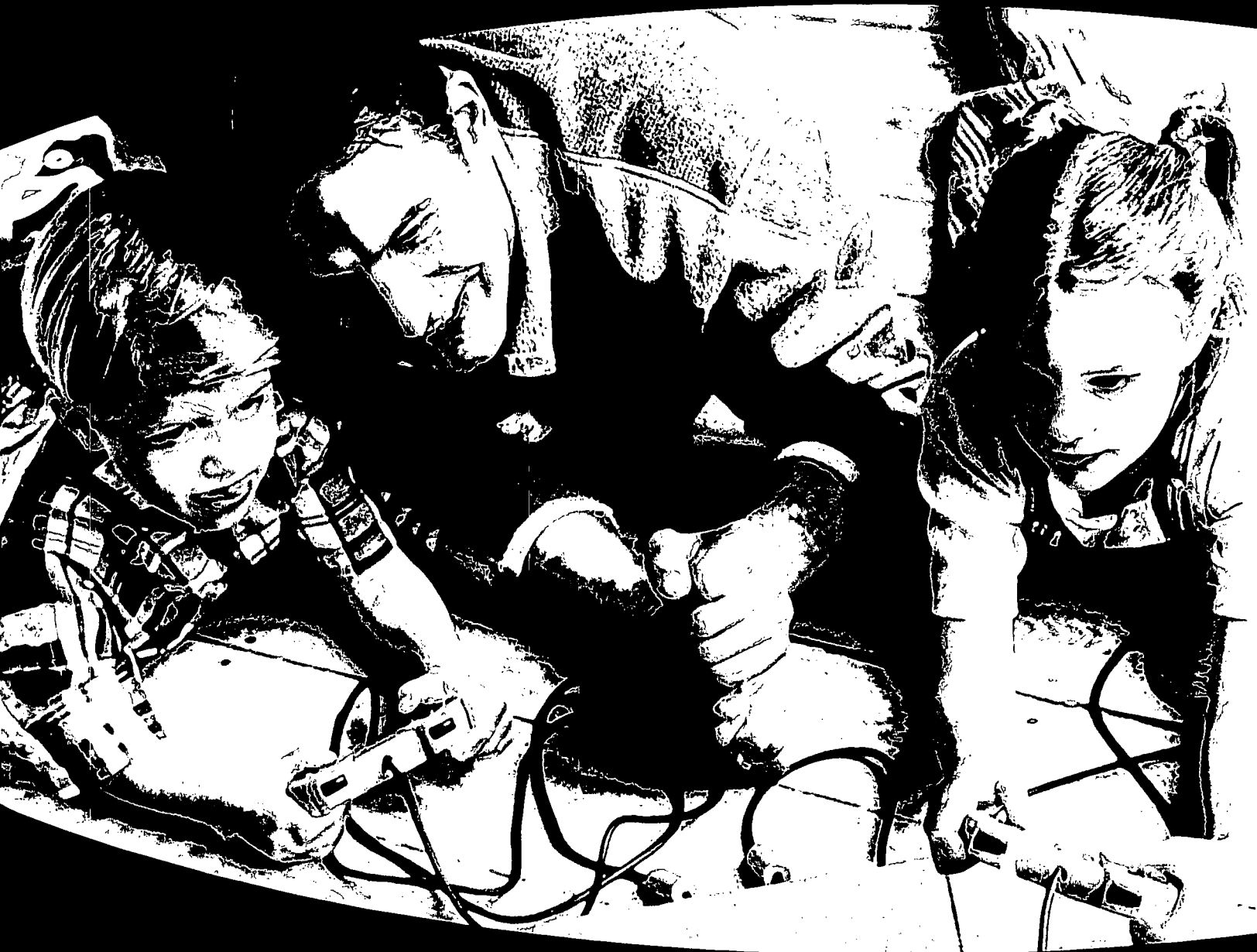
Enforcement

The rating icons are registered trademarks, which help ensure that the icons are used properly and the Video Software Dealers Association, which represents 25,000 video stores nation-wide, applies the ESRB to their Pledge to Parents Program. Some retailers that use the ESRB rating system include:

- Wal*Mart;
- Toys "R" Us;
- Blockbuster;
- Target;
- Best Buy;
- Babbages;
- Funcoland;
- Egghead;
- Electronics Boutique; and
- Movie Gallery.

Several of these organizations also provide ratings on their websites.

The control is in your hands.



Check the rating.

Your kids are begging you for the latest new video game. But how do you know if it's right for them? Check the rating. That's right. Almost every computer and video game has a rating symbol and a content descriptor right on the box. The rating symbol tells you what age group the game is appropriate for. The content descriptor tells

you if the game has particular content elements you may want to know about. It's a detailed and objective guide for parents designed by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). So the next time your kids ask for that great new game, the control is in your hands. **Just check the rating.** 



Content suitable for
persons ages 3 and older.



Content suitable for persons
ages 6 and older.



Content suitable for
persons ages 13 and older.



Content suitable for
persons ages 17 and older.



Content suitable
only for adults.



Product is awaiting
final rating.

For up-to-date rating information on computer and video games, as well as Internet products, call 1-800-771-ESRB, or go to www.esrb.org.



Interactive
Digital
Software
Association

TM

ABOUT THE INTERACTIVE DIGITAL SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION

CHARTER:

Formed in April 1994, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) is the only U.S. trade association exclusively dedicated to serving the business and public affairs interests of companies that publish video and computer games for video game consoles (such as Nintendo 64, Sega Dreamcast, and Sony PlayStation), personal computers, and the Internet. Our members collectively account for more than 85 percent of the \$6.3 billion in entertainment software revenue in the U.S. in 1998, and billions more in export sales of U.S.-made entertainment software.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP:

Acclaim Entertainment, Activision, Inc., Capcom, Disney Interactive, Eidos Interactive, Electronic Arts, Fox Interactive, Hasbro Interactive, Havas Interactive/Sierra Online, Inc., Infogrames North America, Interplay Productions, Kesmai Corporation, Konami of America, Inc., Lego Media International, LucasArts Entertainment, Mattel Media, MGM Interactive, Microsoft Corporation, Midway Home, Namco Hometek, Inc., Nintendo of America, NovaLogic, Inc., Psygnosis, Red Storm Entertainment, Ripcord Games, Sega of America, Sony Computer Entertainment, SouthPeak Interactive, Take 2 Interactive, The 3DO Company, THQ, Inc., Titus Software Corporation, UBI Soft, Inc.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

■ Presenting E³, the World's Premier Trade Show Focused on Interactive Entertainment

Every year, the IDSA presents the highly acclaimed Electronic Entertainment Expo (E³), the world's largest trade show dedicated exclusively to the interactive entertainment industry. Wholly owned by the IDSA, E³ attracts nearly 60,000 industry professionals from around the world to see the latest in interactive entertainment software and related products, and to participate in three days of thought-provoking sessions and seminars. In 2000, E³ will be held from May 11- 13 in Los Angeles.

■ **Conducting a Worldwide Anti-Piracy Program**

The IDSA's Anti-Piracy Program is designed to combat entertainment software piracy both in the U.S. and around the world. Worldwide piracy is estimated to have cost the U.S. entertainment software industry \$3.2 billion in 1997. IDSA anti-piracy efforts include investigative and enforcement activities in the U.S., foreign markets and the Internet. The program works closely with government agencies such as the Justice Department, the FBI, and U.S. Customs on copyright and related policy issues, and also conducts education and training activities around the world.

■ **Working with Government on Policy Issues**

The IDSA works with government at all levels to make the voice of its members heard on a wide range of crucial legislative and public policy issues ranging from copyright to First Amendment protection and Internet regulation.

■ **Providing Current Information about the Industry**

The IDSA is a leading source of consumer, economic and other industry data, as well as information on related market trends. Recent projects include the IDSA's annual consumer usage and buying habits survey, a survey of consumers' online game usage, an analysis of the interactive entertainment industry's impact on the U.S. economy, and a report on the State of the Entertainment Software Industry.

■ **Providing the Nation's Pre-eminent Entertainment Software Rating System**

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), created by the IDSA, is the nation's pre-eminent entertainment software rating system for all platforms. The ESRB has rated over 5,800 titles submitted by more than 335 of the industry's leading publishers.



ABOUT THE INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE INDUSTRY

- **The video and PC game industry is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. entertainment industry, generating more than \$5.5 billion in software sales in 1998, and \$800 million in video game rental sales.**

Video and PC game sales jumped 25 percent in 1998 (on a dollar basis), far outpacing movies (9.2 percent), records (12.3 percent), and books (6.4 percent). In fact, nearly 200 million video and PC game software units were sold in 1998, the equivalent of almost two games for every household in America. Sales in the first eight months of 1999 were up 26.5 percent according to the NPD Group.

- **Video and computer games are mass market entertainment; in fact, the majority are used by adults.**

70 percent of the most frequent users of PC games are over 18, and 38 percent of these are over 36. The picture is similar for video game consoles: 57 percent of the most frequent users are over 18, and 20 percent are over 36. In other words, the majority of those who most frequently use video and computer games are adults, not adolescents.

- **The vast majority of video and PC games are appropriate for everyone.**

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), which rates video and PC games in terms of age appropriateness and content, has rated more than 5,800 titles since it was established in 1994. Seventy-one percent have been rated in the Everyone category; nineteen percent in the Teen category; and only seven percent in the Mature category. In 1998, only two of the top 20 best selling video games were rated mature and only three of the top 20 selling PC games carried that rating. Of the 20 best selling entertainment software games in 1998, 15 were rated in the Everyone category, three were rated in the Teen category, and two were rated in the Mature category. (The ESRB's web site can be found at www.esrb.org) In the first six months of 1999, 17 of the top 20 selling video games were rated "Everyone", while 2 carried the "Teen" rating. Only one video game in the top 20 was rated for "Mature" audiences.

- **Nine out of 10 video games are purchased by adults.**

Nearly all (97 percent) PC games are purchased by people 18 and older, and 90 percent of video games for dedicated consoles are purchased by adults. Thus, these adult buyers can, if they use the ESRB ratings, effectively regulate the games that come into their homes. In other words, children under 18 are mostly playing games purchased for them by parents or other adults.



ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON VIDEO GAMES

Introduction

Why do people find themselves engrossed in a strategy game or trying to guide an onscreen Cessna to a perfect landing? The answer is undeniably simple: It's fun or challenging, or some of both. That is, after all, why anyone plays games of any sort. But behind the façade of game play, researchers have shown that interactive entertainment can have a host of benefits that go well beyond the mere chance to beat a live or computer-generated opponent. A 1997 cover story in *Business Week* offers examples of "Why video games may actually help your children learn."

"Video games and computers are not inherently positive or negative," writes Dr. Jeffery Goldstein of University of Utrecht (Netherlands) Department of Social and Organizational Behavior. "Like all technology, they are neutral. Their effects depend on how they are used. As with other toys, video games can be used by children in many ways – for purposeful learning, incidental learning, for the sheer enjoyment, to alter their own emotional states by playing at a suitable pace, to become more popular, to set and achieve goals, gain a sense of competence, or to play the role of expert."

Video Games and General Performance Skills

It has become apparent that video-based gaming can be used to develop a wide variety of general performance skills. Though some have touted the development of hand-eye coordination via games that require quick reaction, more important talents and skills may benefit even more. "Students of human perception and human performance may benefit from a serious consideration of video games in terms of information processing and motor skills," wrote Brown, Brown, & Reid in *Perceptual and Motor Skills*.

For example, Subramanyam and Greenfield, in the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, reported on a study in which 10- and 11-year-olds were tested for aptitude in spatial skills before being randomly placed in one of two groups. The first played a highly spatial game, *Marble Madness* which involves moving a marble through a constantly changing 3D environment), for more than two hours spread over three sessions, being tested for spatial skills before and after each session. The other group played a game focused on verbal puzzle solving for the same amounts of time. The tests revealed "significant and substantial" improvement in spatial skills among the *Marble Madness* players, particularly those who showed the weakest skills beforehand.

Video Games and Use Patterns

Surveys consistently have shown that children's reaction to video games falls within the realm of their reaction to other activities that require equal amounts of concentration or enjoyment. Though there have been many attempts by researchers to define the personality profile of the frequent video game player, no clear pattern has emerged. In one study, 280 video game players were given tests to measure personality traits such as self-esteem, social deviance, hostility, social withdrawal, obsessiveness/compulsiveness and the need for achievement. As published in the *Journal of Psychology*, "no significant relationships were found between these measures of personality and the amount of time spent playing video games."

Dr. Kevin Durkin, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Australia, in a 1995 survey of academic research on computer and video games commissioned by the Government of Australia reported regarding the state of research into the role of video games in children's lives that researchers have concluded that, "with few exceptions, playing computer games is a minor part of children's and adolescents' lives, and usually, held in perspective with other activities."

Video Games and Social Behavior

At the same time, video games and computer games have become such a part of mainstream culture and social patterns that they represent a common ground for kids. Bonnafont reported in a 1992 paper that games actually increase social contact among the boys studied, who consider games to be "a major topic of schoolboy interest," fodder for playing, trading, discussions and recommendations. A study by Kubey and Larson found that while video games are often played alone nearly half the time, they were played with friends more than twice as often (35.6% of the time) than was the case with any other kind of media activity, such as watching TV or listening to music. Other anecdotal evidence suggests that a new video game system, particularly if placed in a central location in the home, becomes a family entertainment focal point, drawing interest from all members of the family, leading to more group play and involvement.

Durkin concluded that: "Contrary to some fears that computers inevitably draw people into solitary activities, one major study has found that social play with computer games is twice as high as social involvement in other media use. Studies of home life indicate that computer game play appears to have improved relations within some families, and brought together in enjoyable joint activities on a scale rarely experienced in many Western homes since the advent of television."

Video Games and Violent Behavior

The concern most often expressed about video games relates to violent content and the presumption that violent video game play will lead to more aggressive behavior. Though results in some studies vary, most studies seeking possible links have found no such connection. In the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, for example, J. Cooper and D. Mackie reported on a study in which 84 boys and girls ages 10-11 were randomly assigned to play or observe a violent video game, a non-violent video game, or a pen-and-paper game for eight minutes, then offered a free play period with a variety of toys. Boys exhibited more aggressive tendencies than did the girls during the play period, but that effect was independent of which game they played. The violent video game was found to have no effect on aggression. As Durkin writes in his review of the study: "This experiment may suggest that the dramatic consequences sometimes anticipated for children playing aggressive video games are not readily obtained."

A 1995 study by D. Scott, published in the *Journal of Psychology*, "The Effects of Video Games on Feelings of Aggression", measured aggressiveness levels between students after playing a non-aggressive, a moderately aggressive, and a highly aggressive video game. Scott concluded that his findings indicate that there is a "general lack of support for the commonly held view that playing aggressive computer games causes an individual to feel more aggressive." A 1997 Dutch "peer nomination: study children indicating which children in their class exhibit certain aggressive behaviors) found virtually no correlation between the amount of time spent playing video games and aggressive behavior.

It is true that some studies have suggested a link. But typically, such studies suffer from a basic methodological flaw: they make no distinction between fantasy play aggression, i.e. pretending to fight, and actual aggressive behavior, i.e. trying to harm someone. Where studies do make this crucial distinction, they fail to find any effects of video games on aggressive behavior. According to J. Saxe, presenting a paper on violence in video games at the International Conference on Violence in the Media at St. John's University in New York, "researchers considering the relationship between simulated violent video game play and attitudes toward aggression find little evidence to conclude any links."

Summarizing the research on violence, Durkin writes, "Overall, evidence is limited, but so far does not lend strong support to the claims that computer play promotes aggressive behavior."

Video Games and Television

Some public figures have suggested that because there is research concluding that television violence affects behavior, the same must be true for video games. In fact, there is virtually no research that supports that claim. As Durkin writes after his exhaustive

review of research “caution should be exercised in assuming that the effects, if any, of computer games upon children can be extrapolated from research into effects of television upon children.” He further writes that it would be “misguided” to assume that children’s experiences of computer games can be understood on the basis of what we know about children and television.”

The fundamental reason such caution is urged is that there are key differences between the two media. TV viewing is passive and video game play is interactive. The very interactive nature of video game play may well mute any potential for promoting aggression in that the game itself serves as an outlet for these emotions. In one of the most complete studies of the issue, Turkle notes that while adults may see TV and game play in similar terms, kids do not and from their perspective a very different experience is involved.

Indeed, there is research that lends weight to this view, e.g. that playing violent video games may produce a cathartic effect, easing pre-existing violent patterns of behavior. Silvern reports on research in which 4-7 year-olds were placed in one of three situations: alone, with no games being played; two children playing an aggressive video game as a pair, depending on teamwork to defend themselves against invaders; or two children playing against each other in an aggressive video game. The children were then observed in a playroom for ten minutes afterwards. Though Silvern expected that those who’d been playing the games would exhibit the most aggressive tendencies particularly those who had played head-to-head and were thus condition to an attacking mode), the opposite occurred, with Silvern noting that ‘competitive video play significantly reduced the number of incidents of object aggression.’ Though the study isn’t conclusive, it suggests that the intense play between the two children had a cathartic effect.

Conclusion

This survey of research is neither exhaustive nor conclusive. But at this point, as Australia’s Durkin writes, “It is concluded that the most dramatic anxieties about the negative effects of computer games have not been supported by the research to date.” Indeed, a considerable body of highly credible research points to video games having a positive and beneficial impact on users.



THE EFFECT OF VIDEO GAMES ON CHILDREN: A FACT-BASED RESPONSE

Ever since the tragic shootings at Columbine High School, questions have been raised about the impact that violence in the media has on our nation's children. Many individuals have engaged in this national discourse. The motives of the participants are well-intentioned. But when their comments are based on unsupported assertions and accusations, they detract from, and do not enhance, the serious national debate that events such as the Columbine tragedy should foster.

One writer, retired Army Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman, has received considerable media attention for his assertion that video games teach kids to kill. The record does not support his allegations. Upon examination, many of the basic claims Mr. Grossman makes to support his view are contradicted by the facts.

Mr. Grossman, a M.Ed in counseling psychology, taught psychology at the United States Military Academy and is the Director of the Killology Research Group in Jonesboro, Arkansas. He is entitled to his opinions, but in order to evaluate the validity of those opinions, it is important to review the facts. This paper addresses many statements by Mr. Grossman in recent months.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that the rising popularity of video games translates directly into increasing violent crime.¹

The Facts: **Violent crime, particularly among the young, has decreased dramatically during the 1990's while video games have steadily increased in popularity and use.**

The homicide rate in this country has steadily declined throughout the decade and is now at its lowest point since 1968, well before video games were on the market.² Aggravated assaults have also declined and the number of such incidents are lower than it has been since 1973.³ Violent crime among juveniles, including homicides, is down by 40 percent since 1993.⁴

¹ Grossman, Testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Page 3.

² U.S. Department of Justice, *Crime Facts at a Glance*, from the Bureau of Health Statistics, Vital Statistics.

³ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁴ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, pp. 41, 96.

There is no positive relationship between video games and violence in America. In fact, there is a negative correlation: As video game use has gone up, all violent crimes, including those committed by youngsters, have gone down.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman states that academic research conclusively demonstrates a link between violence in video games and violent behavior.⁵

The Facts: **Mr. Grossman cites no research involving video games and has conducted none.**

Mr. Grossman cites a 1972 report by the U.S. Surgeon General as evidence to bolster his claimed link between video games and real-world violent behavior, but video games did not exist in 1972. To support his claim, he also cites a 1982 study by the National Institute of Mental Health and a 1992 report by the American Psychiatric Association. But neither document includes evidence about video games.

More importantly, numerous academic researchers who have studied this issue have concluded that violent video games do not lead to aggressive behavior. Dr. Kevin Durkin, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Australia wrote a survey of academic research on computer and video games commissioned by the Government of Australia regarding the state of research into the role of video games in children's lives. In that survey, Durkin concluded, "Overall, evidence is limited, but so far does not lend strong support to the claims that computer game play promotes aggression in children or adults."

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims "The video game 'Doom' is being marketed and has been licensed to the United States Marine Corps...as an excellent tactical training device."⁶

The Facts: **Simulators used by the military are dramatically different than the average video game and could never serve as a substitute for the experience gained by firing a real weapon. The simulator Mr. Grossman cites was meant to build teamwork and in no way replaced the rigorous training that Marines go through.**

⁵ Grossman testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Page 3.

⁶ Grossman testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Pages 1-2.

Colonel (Ret.) Ron Krisak, ran the training technology battle labs at Fort Dix from 1995-97. He has publicly stated that the simulations could not teach a person to shoot a gun effectively. "I don't see how anyone would learn how to fire a weapon accurately from these games without some form of mentoring," says Krisak.⁷

The Marine Corps Modeling and Simulation Management Office (McMISMO) stated that the game was an interesting way for Marines to practice teamwork tactics. But the game is not part of any regulation training.

According to Army Secretary Louis Caldera "We don't use simulators primarily to teach people how to fight and fire weapons. We use (them) to teach people to work as a team, to work together as crews."⁸

Moreover, the retail video game cited by Mr. Grossman, Doom II, was radically altered by two Marine programmers to create the Marine version. The makers of the game were not involved in the development and no licensing agreement was entered into.

It is therefore incorrect for Mr. Grossman to claim the game has been marketed or licensed to the Marines for any purpose, or that there is a correlation between the military's use of video game technology and its impact on users in the home.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that violent video games are "mass murder simulators that can teach you how to commit mass murder before you even put your hands on a gun."⁹

The Facts: **Because they do not replicate real world experiences, computer simulations are not effective substitutes for real life practice.**

Mr. Grossman states that flight simulators can teach you how to fly without touching an airplane; drive without using a car; and kill without touching a gun. The assertion is ludicrous on its face. Pilots must fly real planes and drivers must drive real cars before they are licensed -- and for good reason. Games may simulate the real world; they do not re-create it.

A 14-year old who has played Mario Andretti's racing game would likely be horribly injured if he tried to compete in an actual car race; as would a child who tried to fly a jet after playing Falcon 4.0 on his video game. Likewise, a child who

⁷ *USA Today*, June 23, 1999.

⁸ *United Press International*, Aug. 18, 1999

⁹ Grossman testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Page2.

played Doom with a joystick, controller or mouse would not gain the experience needed to become a marksman.

According to Dr. Stuart Fischhoff, Professor of Media Psychology at Cal State – Los Angeles, “When you are in the military, you’re in what is called ‘total institution,’ where everything around you is supporting that ideology; when you are a kid [playing a video game] in the mall, you go home,” he noted. “There’s a whole complex thing called ‘society,’ and social forces that intervene between the time you stop the game and get on with your life.”¹⁰

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that Michael Carneal, who shot students at Paducah West High School in Paducah, Kentucky, is a perfect example of a violent game enthusiast who himself turns to violence.

The Facts: While Michael Carneal owned several mature-rated games, he owned multiple games rated in the "Teen" and "Everyone" categories. He also told psychologists that he, “prefers more thinking than fighting games.”¹¹

Carneal further stated that his favorite game was Monster Truck Madness, which is rated by The ESRB for play by “Everyone”. His close friend, Matt Neamon, told police Carneal preferred less violent civilization and driving-style games to violent ones.¹²

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that Carneal must have learned to shoot from video games because he “had never fired a gun before in his life.”¹³

The Facts: Carneal had extensive experience handling and shooting rifles and handguns.

Carneal spent several summers, including the one before the Paducah shooting, at a 4-H facility where he was taught how to shoot a gun.¹⁴ His next door neighbor was an avid shooter who had tutored Carneal in the use of handguns and rifles.¹⁵ The neighbor's son, Toby Nace, told police that he and Carneal had shot the murder weapon before the Paducah attack.¹⁶ Finally, the weekend before the shooting, Carneal and another

¹⁰ Los Angeles Times

¹¹ Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell Page 17.

¹² Matt Neamon Interview by Det. Carl Baker on 12.3.97, Page 28.

¹³ Grossman testimony before House Judiciary Committee, Page 4.

¹⁴ 1. Police Report, McCracken Co. Sheriff's Department, 9.21.98.

2. Dr. Schetky's Report, Page 4.

3. Benedek and Weitzel and Clark report, Page 14.

4. Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Page 14.

¹⁵ 1. Dr. Schetky's Report, Page 21.

2. Benedek and Weitzel and Clark report, Page 14.

¹⁶ Toby Nace Interview, Det. Carl Baker, 12.1.97, Page 9.

friend had fired at least two clips of ammunition in the friend's backyard.¹⁷

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that because Michael Carneal had been trained by video games, Carneal methodically aimed and fired at his classmates' heads.¹⁸

The Facts: **By his own acknowledgement, Carneal shot with his eyes closed and did not aim at specific individuals.**

Carneal told psychologists said remembered "pulling the trigger the first time, but I had my eyes closed."¹⁹ He also said he aimed "straight across [the] room at [the] wall on [the] other side of [the] crowd and not at individual people."²⁰ Unfortunately, 50 kids were packed in a tight prayer circle, ensuring that Carneal's blind shots would hit human targets.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that Carneal was profoundly influenced by the video games he played.²¹

The Facts: **Psychologists who evaluated Carneal said he had serious psychological problems, including strong paranoid schizophrenic tendencies and mild psychotic delusions.**

Carneal stated that he had covered bathroom vents so no one could see him shower, and that he was afraid someone lived under his bed and was going to cut off his feet. Carneal kept an array of knives under his mattress, and a Rorschach test showed that he had shown signs of clinical depression for years prior to the shooting. His junior high school paper spread a rumor that Carneal was homosexual, and as a result Carneal said he was repeatedly called "gay" and hit by schoolmates. He used to feel that everyone was talking about him and calling him stupid. There is evidence that Carneal imagined much of this torment, with friends reporting that he was teased no more than any other kid at the school.²²

Carneal thought about death extensively and considered suicide.²³ And he associated guns with popularity and power. He fantasized that classmates would join him in taking over the school if he brought guns to school.²⁴

¹⁷ 1. Michael Alonso Interview by Det. Carl Baker on 12.7. 97, Page 16.
2. Police Report, 5.27.98.

¹⁸ Grossman testimony before Senate Commerce Committee, Page 1.

¹⁹ Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Page 16.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Grossman testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee, Page 1.

²² James O'Nan interview by Det. Carl Baker dated 12. 6. 1997, Page 4

²³ 1. Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Page 10.
2. Dr. Schetky's Report, Pages 17-18

²⁴ 1. Michael Carneal interview by Det. Carl Baker 12. 4. 97, pp. 10-15.
2. Benedek and Weitzel and Clark report, Page 2.
3. Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Pages 13-15.
4. Dr. Schetky's report; Pages 12 & 15.



JUVENILE VIOLENCE DECREASED IN THE 1990'S AS VIDEO GAME SALES ROSE

Because of the intense media attention they generated, tragic shootings committed by teenagers at several schools in recent years have made youth violence a major concern in this country and also given rise to a perception of growing violent activity by America's youth. Video games have been cited by some as a major cause of the upsurge in youth violence.

But the fact is that violent crime overall, and violent crime committed by juveniles, has declined steadily since the early 1990's. According to Federal Government reports released in July 1999:

- **Violent crime decreased by almost 20 percent between 1991-97**
- **Juvenile violence declined by 40 percent from 1993-97**

Violent juvenile crime DECREASED EVEN FASTER within this period.

Violent crime among juveniles fell from 52 incidents for every 1,000 juveniles in 1993 to 31 incidents per 1,000 juveniles in 1997, **a decline of more than 40 percent**, according to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice the number of serious violent crimes committed by juveniles fell from 1.1 million in 1993 to 706,000 in 1997, **a decline of more than 36 percent.**

Video Game Use Has INCREASED Throughout the 1990's

Video games have surged in popularity and sales in the 1990's. Between 1991 and 1997, software sales increased by 128 percent. Moreover, the vast majority of video games are not violent. In 1998, for example, only two of the top 20 best selling video games, and only three of the top 20 best selling PC games were rated "Mature." For the first six months of 1999, only one of the top twenty selling video games is rated "Mature."

Moreover, many of the games sold in the U.S., as well as games with considerable more violence are sold in foreign markets. Yet, the incidence of youth violence in these markets is far below U.S. levels. If video games are a proximate cause of violence in America, one would expect them to have the same impact on young players around the world, but this is demonstrably not the case.

Conclusion

Although video game playing increased dramatically and juvenile violence decreased dramatically in the 1990's, no one could credibly assert that the two conditions are linked by cause and effect.

However, since the assertion that video game playing promotes violent behavior is not borne out by scientific studies done to date; and since youth violence is on the decline in this nation during this period of surging growth in video game use. It is equally unsupportable to assert that video games can be blamed for the upsurge in youth violence.

About the ratings

The ESRB rating system is unique because it provides information about both age-appropriateness AND content elements that may be of interest or concern. The ratings and content descriptors are designed to help parents exercise control over the computer and video games their children play.

HOW DOES THE ESRB RATING SYSTEM WORK?

Games and other interactive products (such as Internet websites, online games, chat rooms) are each reviewed by three separate raters. These raters are typical consumers who come from all walks of life and have undergone extensive training by the ESRB. They review each product frame by frame and then assign a rating and appropriate content descriptors. When the raters finish their review, their results are tabulated by computer and reviewed by an ESRB staff member to determine the product's final rating.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE RATING SYSTEM?

The ESRB rating system has been praised by Congress, leading child advocacy organizations, and national retailers. One leading Member of Congress called ESRB ratings "the most comprehensive system of any entertainment medium in this country."

About the ESRB

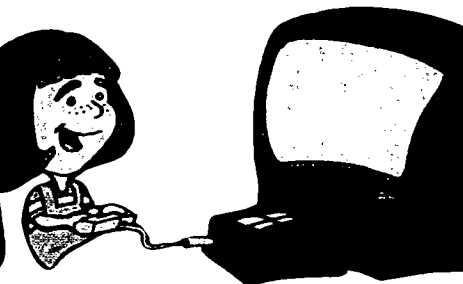
ESRB also offers ratings and content descriptors for Internet products (websites, online games, chat rooms).

To access up-to-date rating information for computer games, video games and Internet products, please contact us at:

ESRB
845 3rd Avenue
New York, NY
10022
www.esrb.com
e-mail: info@esrb.org
1-800-771-ESRB (3772)



Is this computer or video game right for your home?



WHAT IS THE ESRB?

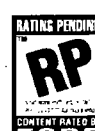
The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is an independent rating system that was established in September of 1994 by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), the trade association for the interactive entertainment software industry.

WHO'S ON THE ADVISORY BOARD?

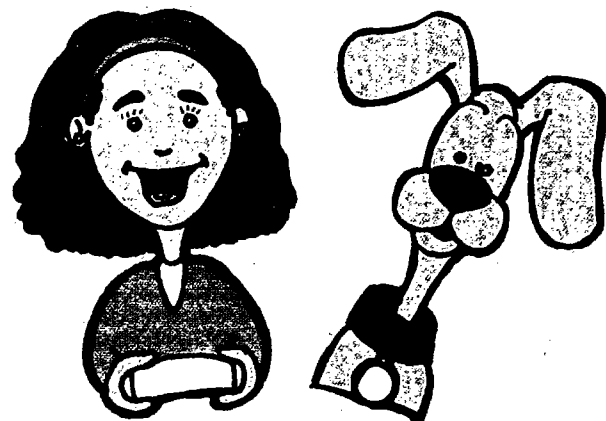
The ESRB receives guidance from nationally-renowned experts in the fields of academia, consumer rights, children's advocacy, and education. Members include:

- Dr. Arthur Pober, Executive Director, Entertainment Software Rating Board
- Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of Greater City Schools
- Dr. Jeffrey I. Cole, Director, Center For Communication Policy, UCLA
- Dr. Vincent Ferandino, Executive Director, National Association of Elementary School Principals
- Mary Ellen Fise, Product Safety Director, Consumer Federation of America
- Charlotte Frank, Senior Vice President, Research & Development, McGraw-Hill
- Dr. Jeffrey Goldstein, Department of Social and Organizational Psychology and the Department of Mass Communication, University of Utrecht
- Karen Jaffe, Executive Director, Kidsnet
- Thomas Koerner, Executive Director, National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Dr. Lewis Lipsitt, Professor of Psychology and Medical Science and the Founding Director of the Child Study Center, Brown University
- Dr. Parker Page, President, Children's Television Resource and Education Center
- Dr. Rosemarie Truglio, Director of Research, Children's Television Workshop

Check the rating.



ESRB
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD



A guide for parents

As a parent today, do you feel like you don't know what's in those computer and video games your kids like to play? Do you need more information about what Internet websites and interactive games are appropriate for your child?

The control is in your hands.

CHECK THE RATING

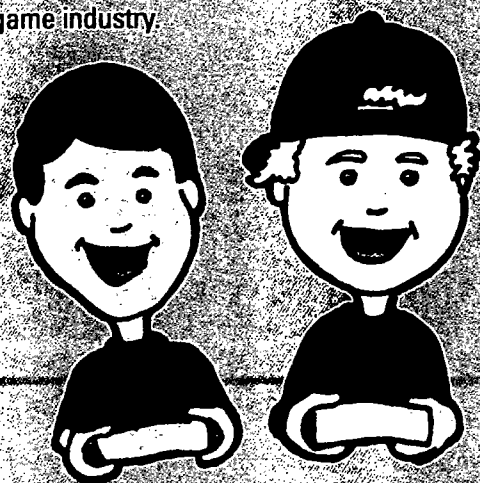
That's right. Almost every computer and video game has a rating symbol and a content descriptor right on the box.

WHAT DO THE RATINGS TELL YOU?

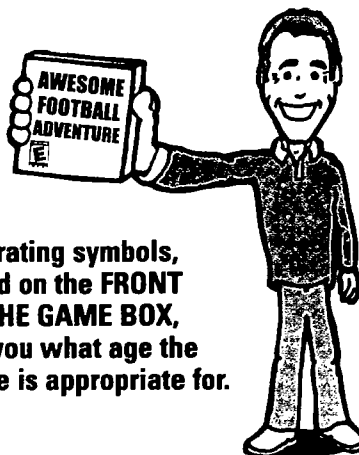
The **RATING SYMBOL** tells you what age group the game is appropriate for. The **CONTENT DESCRIPTOR** tells you whether the game contains violence, sexual themes or other areas of concern.

WHY USE A RATING SYSTEM?

The rating system is an unbiased, standardized way to help you determine whether a game is appropriate for your child. Ratings are determined by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), an independent board developed with the support of the computer and video game industry.



Rating Symbols



The rating symbols, found on the **FRONT OF THE GAME BOX**, tell you what age the game is appropriate for.



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Content may be suitable for persons ages 3 and older. Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.



EVERYONE

Content may be suitable for persons ages 6 and older. May contain minimal violence and some comic mischief or crude language.



TEEN

Content may be suitable for persons ages 13 and older. May contain violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.



MATURE

Content may be suitable for persons ages 17 and older. May contain mature sexual themes or more intense violence or language.



ADULTS ONLY

Content suitable only for adults. May include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence. Not intended for persons under the age of 18.



RATING PENDING

Product has been submitted to the ESRB and is awaiting final rating.

Content Descriptors

The content descriptors, found on the **BACK OF THE GAME BOX**, tell you whether there are particular content elements that may be of interest or concern.

MILD LANGUAGE

Product contains the use of words like "damn".

STRONG LANGUAGE

Commonly referenced four-letter words.

GAMING

The depiction of betting-like behavior.

MILD ANIMATED VIOLENCE

Contains scenes depicting cartoon/animated/pixelated characters in unsafe or hazardous acts or violent situations.

MILD REALISTIC VIOLENCE

Contains scenes depicting characters in unsafe or hazardous acts or violent situations in photographic detail.

COMIC MISCHIEF

Contains scenes depicting activities characterized as slapstick or gross vulgar humor.

ANIMATED VIOLENCE

Contains depictions of aggressive conflict involving cartoon/animated/pixelated characters.

REALISTIC VIOLENCE

Contains realistic or photographic-like depictions of aggressive conflict.

ANIMATED BLOOD AND GORE

Animated/pixelated or cartoon-like depictions of mutilation or dismemberment of body parts.

REALISTIC BLOOD AND GORE

Depictions of mutilation or dismemberment of body parts in realistic or photographic-like detail.

ANIMATED BLOOD

Animated/pixelated or cartoon-like depictions of blood.

REALISTIC BLOOD

Representations of blood in realistic or photographic-like detail.

SUGGESTIVE THEMES

Mild provocative references or materials.

MATURE SEXUAL THEMES

Contains provocative material; including depiction of the human body in either animated or photographic-like formats.

STRONG SEXUAL CONTEXT

Graphic depiction of sexual behavior and/or the human form (i.e., frontal nudity) in either animated or photographic-like detail.

USE OF TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL

Product contains images of the use of tobacco and/or alcohol in a manner which condones or glorifies their use.

USE OF DRUGS

Product contains images of the use of drugs in a manner which condones or glorifies their use.

INFORMATIONAL

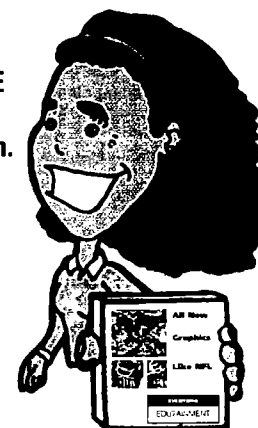
Overall content of product contains data, facts, resource information, reference materials or instructional text.

EDUTAINMENT

Content of product provides user with specific skills development or reinforcement learning within an entertainment setting. Skill development is an integral part of product.

SOME ADULT ASSISTANCE MAY BE NEEDED

Early Childhood Descriptor only.



EVERYONE

EDUTAINMENT



Proactive Steps By Entertainment Software Companies To Address Concerns About Violent Content

While the vast majority of video and computer games are appropriate for persons of all ages, and while the majority of the most frequent game players are adults, the industry has long recognized that some products do contain significant levels of violent content that are not appropriate for younger audiences. Over the years, the industry association, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), has taken significant and meaningful self-regulatory steps to ensure that consumers can make informed purchasing decisions. Following is a summary of voluntary activities we've undertaken.

1994-1997

- In 1994, the IDSA established the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB). ESRB raters, with no ties to industry, generate independent, credible, and reliable ratings to help consumers make informed purchasing decisions. Uniquely, ESRB ratings, which appear both on game packaging and on the games themselves, cover **both** the age appropriateness of a title and carry phrases describing the content of many games. Though voluntary, compliance with the ratings system is nearly 100%, and the few games that do not carry ratings are educational titles lacking controversial content. Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) consistently calls the ESRB "the most comprehensive entertainment ratings system in the country." To date, over 5,800 products have been rated by the ESRB.
- In 1994, IDSA voluntarily created an Advertising Code of Conduct requiring that ratings and content information issued by ESRB be placed on packaging. The Ad Code also established rules for use of ratings information in advertisements and other forms of consumer marketing.
- In 1997, recognizing the emergence of the Internet, the ESRB launched a new rating service called ESRB Interactive, or ESRBi. Through this service, ESRB offers companies the opportunity to rate their websites and video games distributed on line.

1999

- The ESRB, in cooperation with the IDSA, recently launched a major promotional campaign to educate parents about the ESRB. This promotional campaign includes purchase of advertising in major national publications targeted at parents, placement of ESRB pull-out flyers in major parent-oriented publications, such as Child Magazine, production of a PSA, to be offered to networks and cable TV stations, promoting the use of the ESRB ratings featuring a nationally known sports celebrity, redesigned consumer brochures and the production of millions of copies for use by leading national retailers at the point of sale, and outreach to leading national grassroots organizations with ties to schools and parents seeking ways to partner with them to get the word out to consumers, especially parents, about ESRB ratings and how to use them.
- The IDSA has sent letters to major national retailers seeking their commitments to educate consumers about the ESRB ratings and to make a commitment to consumers to use their

best efforts not to sell Mature rated games to persons under 17. Already, several have agreed to sign this commitment and we expect to announce these shortly. In this regard, Toys 'R Us, working with the ESRB, is rolling out in more than 700 stores nationwide, posters and brochures that explain the ESRB ratings. In addition, Toys 'R Us has advised us that it will not sell "Mature" rated software to customers under the age of 17, unless accompanied by an adult and that it has moved all of its "M" rated software packages and games to the top tier of the software display so that small children cannot mistakenly access them.

- On September 21, 1999, the three U.S. manufacturers of video game consoles, Nintendo of America, Sony Computer Entertainment America, and Sega of America, all announced that they would package ESRB information with each video game console. As a result, the 5-10 million new buyers of video game console hardware this holiday season will have ratings information in their hands.
- On September 29, 1999, the IDSA Board of Directors took the extraordinary and far reaching step of creating an Advertising Review Council (ARC) within the ESRB. The ARC is empowered to ensure that all advertisements by those who use ESRB ratings adhere to strict content standards covering such areas as violence, sex, and language. In addition, to enhance ad code enforcement, the IDSA has shifted this responsibility to the new ESRB ad unit. This is a major self-regulatory initiative to address concerns about the appropriateness of the content of certain video game ads.
- Entertainment software publishers are working with Microsoft to incorporate a password-protected functionality within the Windows 2000 operating system that would allow parents to ensure that Mature-rated games cannot be played on their computer.
- As a result of discussions which began at the White House Summit on Violence, the IDSA and ESRB are in advanced discussions with a major Internet service provider to utilize ESRB ratings on the Internet.
- Several entertainment software publishers have taken a number of actions on an individual basis to respond to concerns about violent games. For instance, Interplay incorporated a filter within its game "Kingpin" which allows a parent to control the amount of violence in the game.



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Video and PC Games

DID YOU KNOW?

◆ ***MOST VIDEO GAMES ARE PURCHASED BY ADULTS, NOT KIDS.***

Adults purchase nine out of 10 video and PC games sold in the United States. 97 percent of all of all PC games are purchased by people 18 and older, and 90 percent of video games for dedicated consoles are purchased by adults.

◆ ***MOST PEOPLE WHO PLAY VIDEO GAMES ARE ADULTS.***

The majority of video and PC games are played by adults. 70 percent of the most frequent users of PC games are over 18, and 38 percent of these are over 36. For video game consoles, 57 percent of the most frequent users are over 18, and 20 percent are over 36.

◆ ***THERE IS A VIDEO GAME RATING SYSTEM TO INFORM PARENTS ABOUT THE SUITABILITY OF A PARTICULAR GAME.***

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has been rating video and PC games in terms of age appropriateness and content since 1994.

The ERSB has five age-based rating categories, and is unique in that it also supplements the ratings with short phrases, called descriptors, which further explain the content of the product.

The rating categories are: Early Childhood (ages 3+), Everyone (ages 6+), Teen (ages 13+), Mature (ages 17+), and Adults Only (limited to those 18 and older).

The descriptors fall into several categories, including: violent content, sexual themes, language, and others such as drug use and alcohol use. No other rating system provides both age and content information to consumers.

The ratings and descriptors are clear and easily understandable and are displayed on packaging and advertising.

Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), a frequent critic of violence in the media, characterized the ESRB rating system as the “most comprehensive system of any entertainment medium in the country.”

◆ ***THE MAJORITY OF VIDEO AND PC GAMES ARE APPROPRIATE FOR EVERYONE – AND MOST OF THE BEST SELLING GAMES DO NOT CONTAIN VIOLENT CONTENT.***

The majority of video and PC games are appropriate for everyone. Of the more than 5,800 titles the ERSB has rated since 1994, 71 percent have been rated in the Everyone category; 19 percent in the Teen category; and only seven percent in the Mature category.

So far in 1999, only one of the top 20 best selling video games was given a “Mature” rating, and only two of the top 20 carried the rating of “Teen.”

◆ ***VIOLENT CRIME, INCLUDING JUVENILE VIOLENT CRIME, HAS STEADILY DECREASED DURING THE SAME TIME PERIOD VIDEO GAME SALES INCREASED.***

Violent crime has been steadily declining throughout the decade. According to the Department of Justice, the homicide rate in the United States has been steadily declining since 1993 and it is now at its lowest point since 1969, well before video games were created.

Violent crime among juveniles, including homicides and aggravated assaults has steadily decreased since 1993. During this same period of time, popularity of video games increased dramatically.

Moreover, many of the games sold in the U.S., as well as games with considerable more violence are sold in foreign markets. Yet, the incidence of youth violence in these markets is far below U.S. levels. If video games are a proximate cause of violence in America, one would expect them to have the same impact on young players around the world, but this is demonstrably not the case.

Since there is no scientific evidence suggesting that video game playing promotes violent behavior; and since youth violence is on the decline in this nation, it is completely incorrect to assert that video games can be blamed for the upsurge in youth violence.

◆ ***THERE IS NO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT CONCLUSIVELY SHOWS THAT VIDEO GAMES LEAD TO AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR.***

To date, there is no conclusive scientific evidence linking violent video games to violent behavior in children. A 1995 study by D. Scott titled “The Effects of Video games on Feelings and Aggression”, and published in the Journal of Psychology, measured aggressiveness levels between students after playing a non-aggressive, a moderately aggressive, and a highly aggressive video game.

Scott concluded that his findings indicated that there is “a general lack of support for the commonly held view that playing aggressive computer games causes an individual to feel more aggressive.”

Dr. Kevin Durkin, an Associate Professor at the University of Western Australia who reviewed all the research on video game violence for the Government of Australia concluded in 1995 that, “Overall, evidence is limited, but so far does not lend strong support to the claims that computer play promotes aggressive behavior.”



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TOP SELLING HOME VIDEO GAMES JANUARY – JUNE 1999

RANK	TITLE	PRODUCER	RATING
1	Pokemon Blue	Nintendo	Everyone
2	Pokemon Red	Nintendo	Everyone
3	Mario Party	Nintendo	Everyone
4	Syphon Filter	Sony	Teen
5	Zelda: Ocarina Time	Nintendo	Everyone
6	Super Smash Brothers	Nintendo	Everyone
7	WCW/NOW Thunder	THQ	Everyone
8	Frogger	Hasbro	Everyone
9	Goldeneye 007	Nintendo	Teen
10	Gran Turismo Racing	Sony	Everyone
11	Crash Bndicoot 2	Sony	Everyone
12	Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	LucasArts	Everyone
13	SimCity 3000	Electronic Arts	Everyone
14	Star Wars: Racer	LucasArts	Everyone
15	Metal Gear Solid	Konami	Mature
16	Rugrats	THQ	Everyone
17	Need For Speed: Stakes	Electronic Arts	Everyone
18	Zelda: Links Awakening	Nintendo	Everyone
19	Spyro The Dragon	Sony	Everyone
20	Triple Play 2000	Electronic Arts	Everyone



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IDSA MEMBER LIST FALL 1999

Acclaim Entertainment

Activision, Inc.

Capcom

Disney Interactive

Eidos Interactive

Electronic Arts

Fox Interactive

Hasbro Interactive

Havas Interactive/Sierra Online

Infogrames North America

Interplay Productions

Kesmai Corporation

Konami of America, Inc.

Lego Media International

LucasArts Entertainment

Mattel Media

MGM Interactive

Microsoft Corporation

Midway Home Entertainment, Inc.

Namco Hometek, Inc.

Nintendo of America

NovaLogic, Inc.

Psygnosis

Red Storm Entertainment

Ripcord Games

Sega of America

Sony Computer Entertainment

SouthPeak Interactive

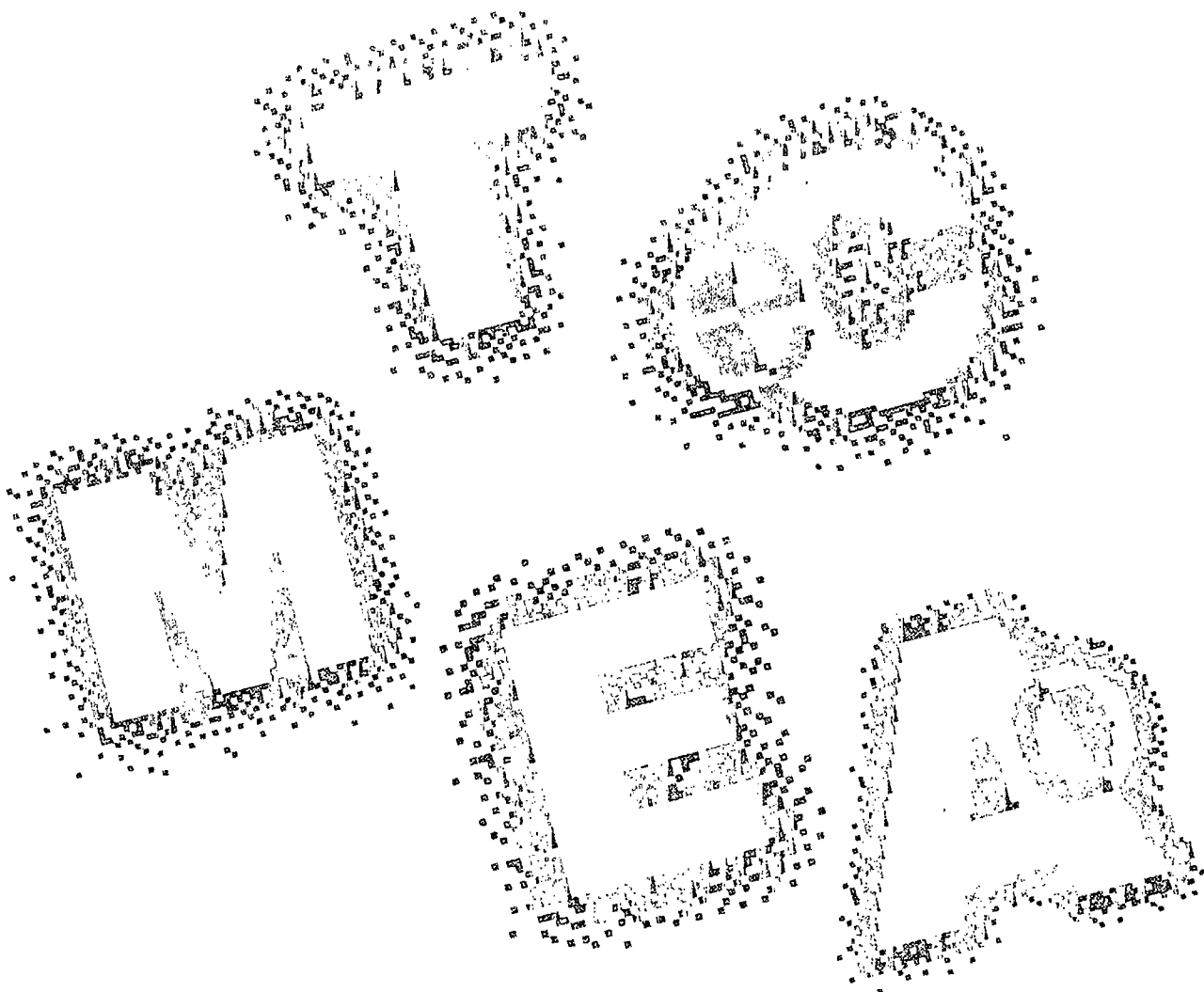
Take 2 Interactive

The 3DO Company

THQ, Inc.

Titus Software, Corp.

Ubi Soft, Inc.



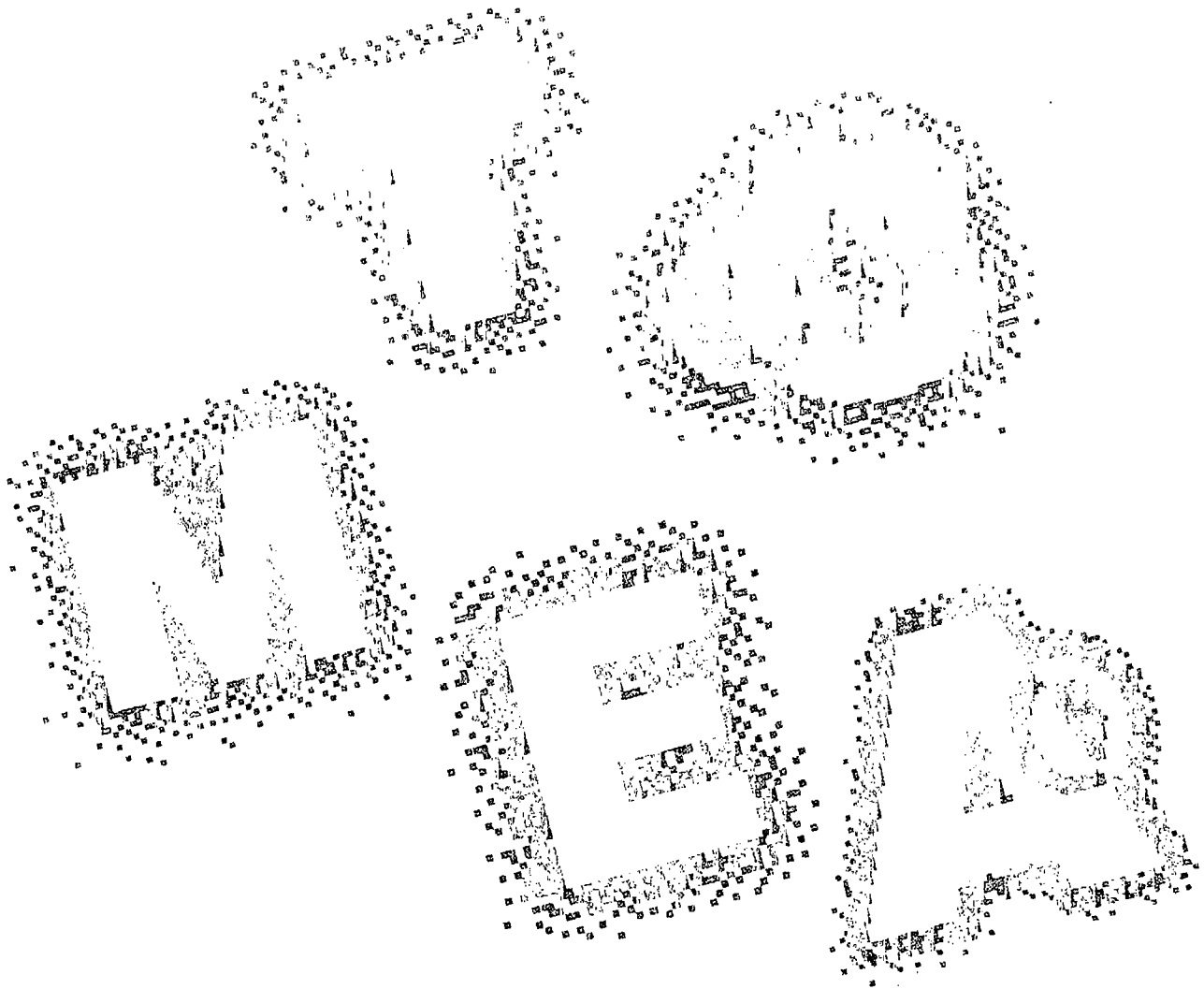
PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

**Entertainment Software Rating Board
ESRB**
845 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022
Tel: 212-759-0700 • Fax 212-759-2223
E-Mail: info@esrb.org • Web: <http://www.esrb.org>

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOARD
E3-13

335 West 42nd Street, New York, New York 10022

Tel: 212-759-9700 • Fax 212-759-2223

E-mail: info@ibp.org • Web: <http://www.ibp.org>

Fact Sheet

What Is The ESRB?

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is an independent, non-profit rating system for computer and video games. It was established in September, 1994 by the Interactive Digital Software Association, the trade association for the interactive entertainment software industry.

What Is the ESRB Rating System?

The ESRB rating system is unique because it is designed to give consumers information about both age-appropriateness *and* content elements that may be of interest. The ratings and content descriptors are designed to help parents and consumers exercise control over the computer and video games their children play.

What to Look For...

Rating Symbols. The ESRB *rating symbol*, located on the lower front of the game box, tells consumers what age groups the product is appropriate for. There are five rating symbol categories:

- **Early Childhood (EC)** – content may be suitable for ages 3 and older
- **Everyone (E)** – content may be suitable for ages 6 and older
- **Teen (T)** – content may be suitable for ages 13 and older
- **Mature (M)** – content may be suitable for ages 17 and older
- **Adults Only (A)** – content suitable only for adults

Content Descriptors. The *content descriptors*, located in the black-and-white box on the back of the package, give consumers detailed information about the product in terms of violence, sexual themes, language, and other areas that may be of interest. If there is no content descriptor on the back of the package, the Rating Board believes that the product does not include content that should be highlighted.

How Are the Products Rated?

Each product is rated by three independent, trained raters. The raters represent a wide range of backgrounds, races, and ages and have no ties to the computer or video game entertainment industry. Raters include retired school principals, parents, professionals, and other individuals from all walks of life.

ESRB Advisory Board

The ESRB Advisory Board is composed of experts in the fields of academia, consumer rights, children's advocacy, and education. They provide guidance and insight to reflect concerns and issues regarding the efficacy of the system.

Other ESRB Initiatives

In addition to its rating system, the ESRB developed the **Advertising Review Council (ARC)** to help assure responsible, appropriate, truthful and accurate advertising of computer and video games. All games that are rated by the ESRB and carry the ESRB rating symbols will subscribe to the guidelines and principles of the ARC. The ESRB also developed the **Privacy Online Program** to assist the interactive entertainment software industry in protecting consumers' personal information that is exchanged over the Internet.

For more information about the ESRB, the rating system, and other ESRB initiatives, please call 212-759-0700 or log onto www.esrb.com.





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ABOUT THE INTERACTIVE DIGITAL SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION

CHARTER:

Formed in April 1994, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) is the only U.S. trade association exclusively dedicated to serving the business and public affairs interests of companies that publish video and computer games for video game consoles (such as Nintendo 64, Sega Dreamcast, and Sony PlayStation), personal computers, and the Internet. Our members collectively account for more than 85 percent of the \$6.3 billion in entertainment software revenue in the U.S. in 1998, and billions more in export sales of U.S.-made entertainment software.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP:

Acclaim Entertainment, Activision, Inc., Capcom, Disney Interactive, Eidos Interactive, Electronic Arts, Fox Interactive, Hasbro Interactive, Havas Interactive/Sierra Online, Inc., Infogrames North America, Interplay Productions, Kesmai Corporation, Konami of America, Inc., Lego Media International, LucasArts Entertainment, Mattel Media, MGM Interactive, Microsoft Corporation, Midway Home, Namco Hometek, Inc., Nintendo of America, NovaLogic, Inc., Psygnosis, Red Storm Entertainment, Ripcord Games, Sega of America, Sony Computer Entertainment, SouthPeak Interactive, Take 2 Interactive, The 3DO Company, THQ, Inc., Titus Software Corporation, UBI Soft, Inc.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

■ Presenting E³, the World's Premier Trade Show Focused on Interactive Entertainment

Every year, the IDSA presents the highly acclaimed Electronic Entertainment Expo (E³), the world's largest trade show dedicated exclusively to the interactive entertainment industry. Wholly owned by the IDSA, E³ attracts nearly 60,000 industry professionals from around the world to see the latest in interactive entertainment software and related products, and to participate in three days of thought-provoking sessions and seminars. In 2000, E³ will be held from May 11- 13 in Los Angeles.

■ **Conducting a Worldwide Anti-Piracy Program**

The IDSA's Anti-Piracy Program is designed to combat entertainment software piracy both in the U.S. and around the world. Worldwide piracy is estimated to have cost the U.S. entertainment software industry \$3.2 billion in 1997. IDSA anti-piracy efforts include investigative and enforcement activities in the U.S., foreign markets and the Internet. The program works closely with government agencies such as the Justice Department, the FBI, and U.S. Customs on copyright and related policy issues, and also conducts education and training activities around the world.

■ **Working with Government on Policy Issues**

The IDSA works with government at all levels to make the voice of its members heard on a wide range of crucial legislative and public policy issues ranging from copyright to First Amendment protection and Internet regulation.

■ **Providing Current Information about the Industry**

The IDSA is a leading source of consumer, economic and other industry data, as well as information on related market trends. Recent projects include the IDSA's annual consumer usage and buying habits survey, a survey of consumers' online game usage, an analysis of the interactive entertainment industry's impact on the U.S. economy, and a report on the State of the Entertainment Software Industry.

■ **Providing the Nation's Pre-eminent Entertainment Software Rating System**

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), created by the IDSA, is the nation's pre-eminent entertainment software rating system for all platforms. The ESRB has rated over 5,800 titles submitted by more than 335 of the industry's leading publishers.



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ABOUT THE INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE INDUSTRY

- **The video and PC game industry is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. entertainment industry, generating more than \$5.5 billion in software sales in 1998, and \$800 million in video game rental sales.**

Video and PC game sales jumped 25 percent in 1998 (on a dollar basis), far out-pacing movies (9.2 percent), records (12.3 percent), and books (6.4 percent). In fact, nearly 200 million video and PC game software units were sold in 1998, the equivalent of almost two games for every household in America. Sales in the first eight months of 1999 were up 26.5 percent according to the NPD Group.

- **Video and computer games are mass market entertainment; in fact, the majority are used by adults.**

70 percent of the most frequent users of PC games are over 18, and 38 percent of these are over 36. The picture is similar for video game consoles: 57 percent of the most frequent users are over 18, and 20 percent are over 36. In other words, the majority of those who most frequently use video and computer games are adults, not adolescents.

- **The vast majority of video and PC games are appropriate for everyone.**

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), which rates video and PC games in terms of age appropriateness and content, has rated more than 5,800 titles since it was established in 1994. Seventy-one percent have been rated in the Everyone category; nineteen percent in the Teen category; and only seven percent in the Mature category. In 1998, only two of the top 20 best selling video games were rated mature and only three of the top 20 selling PC games carried that rating. Of the 20 best selling entertainment software games in 1998, 15 were rated in the Everyone category, three were rated in the Teen category, and two were rated in the Mature category. (The ESRB's web site can be found at www.esrb.org) In the first six months of 1999, 17 of the top 20 selling video games were rated "Everyone", while 2 carried the "Teen" rating. Only one video game in the top 20 was rated for "Mature" audiences.

- **Nine out of 10 video games are purchased by adults.**

Nearly all (97 percent) PC games are purchased by people 18 and older, and 90 percent of video games for dedicated consoles are purchased by adults. Thus, these adult buyers can, if they use the ESRB ratings, effectively regulate the games that come into their homes. In other words, children under 18 are mostly playing games purchased for them by parents or other adults.



Interactive
Digital
Software
Association

TM

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999**

**Contact: Dan Sweet
(202) 739-0221**

VIDEO GAME CONSOLE MANUFACTURERS TO PROVIDE RATINGS INFORMATION WITH PURCHASE OF ALL HARDWARE

Washington, D.C. – In an action which will put video game ratings information in the hands of millions of American consumers this holiday season, all three video game console manufacturers jointly announced today that they will start including educational material about the Entertainment Software Rating Board in every unit they ship in the United States.

The commitment by Nintendo of America, Sega of America, and Sony Computer Entertainment America, to include simple background information on the game ratings provided by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) in their hardware packaging is part of a stepped-up effort by the entertainment software industry to ensure that parents choose appropriate games for their children. In 1998, between 6.5 and 7.5 million next generation video game consoles were sold in the September-December period. Industry analysts estimate that this number will be equaled and probably surpassed over the same four months in 1999.

The ratings will be included in the hardware packaging in time for the holiday shopping season. Industry experts expect that millions of game systems will be sold this holiday season.

"The ESRB system, which includes age-related letter ratings and written descriptions of a game's contents, is the most comprehensive ratings system in the entertainment industry," said Douglas Lowenstein, President of the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), the trade association representing U.S. entertainment software publishers. "This action reflects the industry's continuing commitment to spreading the word about video game ratings."

"I am pleased that Nintendo of America, Sega of America, and Sony Computer Entertainment America have taken this important step to promote the ESRB rating system," said ESRB Executive Director Dr. Arthur Pober. "This means that millions of new video game console owners will know to look for ESRB ratings when buying games for their new systems. The console manufacturers have taken an important step to ensure that America's parents know both about ESRB ratings and how to use them."

The console manufacturers will place the information about the ratings system in each package, either in the hardware manuals or on a separate informational card or flyer.

"Nintendo is committed to providing parents with the best possible information, while creating top-quality, family fun," said Howard Lincoln, chairman of Nintendo of America.

-MORE-

"Since the ESRB began in 1994, every Nintendo video game has carried a rating because, ultimately, parents play the most vital role in the monitoring the activities of their children. To that end, we will make ESRB rating information available with the Nintendo 64 video game system and the Game Boy Color, so that parents can purchase the best, most appropriate entertainment for their families."

"The video game industry has the best rating system in entertainment. Sega supports the ESRB and the IDSA's efforts in educating the consumer and ultimately helping parents choose games that appropriate for their children," said Peter Moore, senior vice president, Sega of America, Inc. "We are launching Dreamcast on 9.9.99 and Sega is taking responsible action by including information on ESRB ratings inside the box of every new Dreamcast system as well as our Sega and third-party games."

"Gaming has become a legitimate form of entertainment and a popular leisure pastime enjoyed by millions of people," said Kaz Hirai, president and chief operating officer, Sony Computer Entertainment America. "With that, the video game industry has a responsibility to continue to educate the market about the ESRB ratings system and how to use the ratings when choosing gaming software. We are backing up our commitment to consumers and the industry as a whole by including the ESRB ratings and descriptors in all PlayStation hardware packages beginning this holiday season. This move will provide all PlayStation purchasers with the tools enabling them to make appropriate decisions on gaming content."

About 90 percent of all video game software, and an even higher percentage of hardware, is purchased by adults. By including the information on ESRB ratings in hardware packaging, the manufacturers are ensuring that every parent who buys a video game console for home use will have access to the ratings.

The ESRB was established in 1994 to create a voluntary video and PC game rating system so parents and consumers could make informed decisions about the nature of games before buying or renting them. Ratings and content descriptions have been displayed on the outer packaging of almost all video and PC game software packages since the ESRB was established.

Each game is assigned one of five ratings: Early Childhood, Everyone, Teen, Mature and Adults Only. Of the more than 5,000 games rated by the ESRB, 71 percent have received an "Everyone" rating; 19 percent carry a "Teen" rating; and only 7 percent carried a "Mature" rating. Games are also assigned one or more content descriptors, short phrases that describe game content of which parents should be aware.

###

Contacts:

Dr. Arthur Pober, ESRB, 212-759-0700, www.esrb.org

Perrin Kaplan, Nintendo of America, 425- 861-2509

Charles Bellfield, Sega of America, 415-701-3825

Molly Smith, Sony Computer Entertainment America, 650-655-6044

The IDSA is the U.S. association exclusively dedicated to serving the business and public affairs needs of companies that publish video and computer games for video game consoles, personal computers, and the Internet. IDSA members collectively account for more than 90 percent of the \$5.5 billion in entertainment software sales in the United States in 1998, and billions more in export sales of American-made entertainment software. The IDSA offers services to entertainment software publishers including a global anti-piracy program, staging the Electronic Entertainment Expo trade show, business and consumer research, government relations and First Amendment and intellectual property protection efforts.

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Interactive
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TM

For Immediate Release

ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE GROUP CREATES INDEPENDENT COUNCIL TO OVERSEE VIDEO GAME ADVERTISING

LEADING VIDEO GAME MAGAZINES AGREE TO ADOPT INDUSTRY STANDARDS.

**Contact: Dan Sweet
(202) 739-0221**

Washington, D.C. – (October 13, 1999) The Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) announced today the creation of an Advertising Review Council (ARC) to ensure that advertisements placed by U.S. computer and video game software makers are appropriate, responsible, truthful and accurate.

The new ad unit will become a division of the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), the widely-praised organization created by the video game industry in 1994 to independently rate video games for age appropriateness and content. ESRB will monitor and enforce the new advertising principles and guidelines.

In announcing the major new self-regulatory initiative, the IDSA also disclosed that the leading game enthusiast magazine publishers have agreed to adopt and implement the new advertising Principles and Guidelines.

“The creation of ARC is a far reaching initiative to ensure that video games are marketed appropriately to all audiences,” said Doug Lowenstein, President of the IDSA. “Our goal in developing this advertising review council is to strike a balance between preserving creative freedom and meeting our responsibilities to consumers.”

The Advertising Review Council was founded on four key principles, and will hold video games manufacturers accountable if it is determined that any advertising or promotion of a video game violates any one of these principles. These principles are:

- An advertisement should accurately reflect the nature and content of the product it represents and the rating issued (i.e., an advertisement should not mislead the consumer as to the product's true character.)

- An advertisement should not glamorize or exploit the ESRB rating of a product (e.g., an advertisement with a tag line that states: "banned by the ESRB" or a 'T' rating has never been pushed this far," etc.)
- All advertisements should be created with a sense of responsibility to the public.
- No advertisement should contain content likely to cause serious or widespread offense to the average consumer.

In addition to the core Principles, ARC has also established specific content guidelines to assist video game companies in creating responsible and accurate advertising. These Guidelines cover visual, written, or spoken content that is violent or sexual in nature or content that may contain language, images, or descriptions that could offend individuals or groups of individuals. Among other things, the Guidelines bar misrepresentations regarding the character and/or rating of a product, graphic and/or excessive depiction of violence, graphic and/or violent depiction of the use of weapons, and graphic and/or excessive depiction of nudity.

If a company is found to have violated any principles or guidelines, it will be notified by ARC and asked to adjust its advertising to comply. If it fails to make a bona fide attempt to do so, the company could face a number of sanctions including the revocation of the title's rating, public notice of the violation, referral of the violation to appropriate government agencies, and/or the payment of fines.

"We feel that a video game manufacturer's responsibility does not just end with the content of its product, but extends to the advertising and marketing of that product as well," said Dr. Arthur Pober, Executive Director of the ESRB. "The Advertising Review Council will see to it that video game manufacturers fulfill this broader obligation."

IDSA's Lowenstein said he is especially grateful that the Nation's leading game magazines have embraced the new ad unit. "The decision by the game magazines to adopt the ARC Principles and Guidelines is a critical step towards ensuring prompt and effective implementation of the new industry standards," said Lowenstein. "Their proactive stance demonstrates a strong commitment to their readers."

The publishers who agreed to adopt the ARC standards as their internal codes are: Imagine Media (which publishes Next Generation, PlayStation Magazine, PC Accelerator, PC Games, the Official Dreamcast Magazine, N Gamer; and the Daily Radar.com website); Ziff-Davis (which publishes Computer Gaming World, Electronic Gaming Monthly, the Official US PlayStation Magazine, and Expert Gamer); and IDG Games Media Group (which publishes GamePro Magazine.)

The implementation of ARC principles, guidelines and procedures will be effective starting January 31, 2000.



ESRB



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD
845 THIRD AVENUE
14th FLOOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 9, 1999

CONTACT: Siobhan McCready
202/338-8700

ESRB LAUNCHES NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAME RATINGS

Campaign PSA features Tiger Woods

(Washington, D.C.) The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) today launched a national campaign to promote awareness and use of its computer and video game rating system during the holiday season.

The campaign, urging parents to "check the rating," includes a public service announcement (PSA) featuring golfer Tiger Woods; paid advertising in national publications; relationships with prominent national organizations such as the PTA and YWCA; and agreements by major retailers to distribute educational materials or to make their best efforts not to sell games rated for "adult" or "mature" audiences to children under the age of 17.

"Our guiding principle is that parents and consumers should have the tools they need to monitor which computer and video games their children play," said Dr. Arthur Pober, executive director of the ESRB, the independent organization that implements the rating system. "When parents check the rating, the control is in their hands – right where it should be."

ESRB ratings have two parts – rating symbols that indicate which age group each game is appropriate for, and "content descriptors" that provide detailed information about the game's contents. Both the rating symbols and the content descriptors are printed on game boxes.

In a recent survey conducted by Peter Hart Research, 75 percent of parents said that parents – not government or the game makers – bear the primary responsibility for monitoring the computer and video games their children play.

The survey found that only 45 percent of parents are aware of the existence of the rating system for computer and video games. However, when the system is described to them, 80 percent say they find it "helpful" or "very helpful."

--more--

Phone: 212-759-0700 • Fax: 212-759-2223
EMAIL: info@esrb.org
Web Address: <http://www.esrb.org>



"The campaign is founded on the core principle that when people know about the ESRB, they use it and trust it," said Doug Lowenstein, president of the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), the trade group representing computer and video game makers. "Our job is to make sure they know about it."

The PSA featuring Tiger Woods is a take-off on the extremely popular Nike ad in which Woods performs tricks bouncing a golf ball on a golf club. In the ESRB PSA, Woods attempts to perform the same tricks with a tennis ball and tennis racket. "You gotta know what games are right for you. Same with computer and video games. That's why parents have to make sure each game is right for their kids... When you check the rating, the control is in your hands," says Woods in the public service announcement.

The print ads include the headline "The control is in your hands. Check the rating," and will appear during the holiday shopping season in a number of national publications, including *Newsweek*, *People*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Parents*, *Parenting*, *Good Housekeeping*, and USA Today.

In addition, *Child Magazine* and *Nickelodeon* will be running tear-out inserts that explain how to use the ratings.

As part of its outreach campaign, ESRB has also established relationships with a wide range of highly respected national organizations, each of which has agreed to take various steps to educate its members about the rating system. Participating organizations include the national PTA, YWCA, YMCA, Child Welfare League of America, Mothers Against Violence in America, Children's Television Workshop, and the Children's Television Resources and Education Center.

"The ESRB rating system is a partnership between industry and parents," said Pam Eakes, founder of Mothers Against Violence in America. "The industry is meeting its obligations by providing ratings and content information. It's parents' responsibility to use the ratings as a tool in making decisions about which games are appropriate for their homes."

ESRB is also working with major national retailers to provide educational materials to in-store shoppers and to make their best efforts not to sell games rated "mature" to children under the age of 17. To date, Toys 'R Us, Babbages, Funcoland, and Electronics Boutique have agreed to make their best efforts to uphold the ESRB ratings. As part of the campaign, the ESRB is giving each store that participates a certificate it can post announcing that it has made a "Commitment to Parents."

--more--

In addition, several stores, including WalMart, Target and Hollywood Video have agreed to make major efforts to distribute educational materials. WalMart, for example, will run the Tiger Woods PSA on its in-store television network that reaches 30 million shoppers a week.

The Hart Research survey indicated that parents pay close attention to the games their children play. Of those parents whose children play computer or video games, 83 percent say they try to watch or play each game to determine whether it is appropriate. And 89 percent say that games for their household are generally purchased or rented by an adult or in the presence of an adult.

"This type of comprehensive rating system is a model for the entertainment industry," said Peggy Charren, founder of *Action for Children's Television*. "Any parent who is buying a game for his or her child should be using the ESRB ratings."

The ESRB is an independent, non-profit rating system established in 1994 by the IDSA. To date, ESRB has rated over 5,000 computer and video games. ESRB also rates Internet games and interactive web sites.

Each game is rated by three trained reviewers from all walks of life. The system's advisory board includes representatives from the Consumer Federation of America, Kidsnet, Children's Television Workshop, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals, among others.

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MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: PETER D. HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 1999

**RE: RESULTS OF A RECENT NATIONWIDE SURVEY AMONG PARENTS
CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF THE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING
BOARD**

Between October 8 and 17, 1999, Peter D. Hart Research conducted a national survey among 1,005 households of parents with children age 3 to 17. Of these households, 77% are homes in which at least one child plays computer or video games. The margin of error for the main sample of 1,005 households is $\pm 3.2\%$, while the margin of error for the subsample of "child gamer" households is $\pm 3.6\%$.

The major objective of the survey was to examine parents' attitudes toward (a) supervision and monitoring of children's entertainment activity—including computer and video game playing; (b) awareness of and reaction to the ESRB rating system; and (c) the responsibility of computer and video retailers in preventing children from purchasing or renting inappropriate games. The following memorandum details the key survey findings.

Parents strongly believe that it is their responsibility to monitor their children's activities, and they say they are very active in doing so. As expected, a near-unanimous 98% of parents say that it is important to monitor and regulate the content of what their children watch, read, and play with. And when it comes to the various entertainment activities their children consume, parents conduct a great deal of monitoring and supervision: 84% say they provide a great deal or quite a bit of supervision over the movies their children watch, 79% say the same about the television programs their children watch, 70% monitor the records/tapes/CDs their children listen to, and 69% provide that level of supervision of the computer and video games their children play.

When we probe more specifically into attitudes toward children and computer/video games, the survey data show that parents already exercise a great deal of supervision over the games their children play. Fully 89% of parents whose children play computer and video games say they are usually present when buying or renting games for their households, while 83% of these "child-gamer" parents say they try to watch or play every game their child plays at least once.

With parents saying that they closely monitor their children's activities and are heavily involved in the purchase of computer/video games, it is not surprising that they seek help and guidance in the purchasing process. While awareness of the ESRB

rating system is growing, it is clear that as it gains greater visibility, it will be an even more valuable tool in helping parents decide what is appropriate for their children. The ESRB rating system is not as well-known as are other, more established ratings systems. Only 45% of parents surveyed are aware of the ESRB rating system, compared to 94% who are aware of the movie rating system.

Although the ESRB rating system has relatively low name recognition among parents, our survey results indicate that it is viewed as helpful by the group of parents who already are familiar with the system. **Seventy-three percent of parents who are aware of the ESRB rating system would describe it as very or somewhat helpful in determining what is suitable for their children**, which is similar to the evaluations given to the better-known and more established movie and television rating systems.

After hearing a detailed description of the ESRB rating system, 80% of all parents (and 83% of parents in child-gamer households) say the ESRB rating system would be helpful in deciding the appropriateness of computer and video games.

The ESRB rating system clearly is perceived by parents as an effective tool (83% are impressed by its being the only rating system with both age and content descriptions), but parents would also like computer and video game retailers to be equal partners in the effort. For example, four in five (82%) parents think that it is important that retailers prominently display a description of the ESRB rating system.

The bottom line from the survey findings is that with parents reporting that they are heavily involved in game-purchasing decisions, the ESRB rating system—once it gains greater awareness—will become an even more valuable tool in helping parents decide the appropriateness of the computer and video games that they purchase for their children.



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Rebecca A. Caruso
Susan McLaughlin
Toys "R" Us
201/599-8090
carusor@toysrus.com
mclaugh@toysrus.com

TOYS "R" US LAUNCHES RATING SYMBOLS INITIATIVE IN STORES NATIONWIDE

Paramus, New Jersey (November 9, 1999) -- Toys "R" Us, Inc., (NYSE: TOY), the world's leading resource for kids, families and fun, has launched a major initiative to help make it easier for consumers to understand the rating system for video and computer game software.

Rolling out to all Toys "R" Us store nationwide – more than 700 – are posters and brochures that explain what the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings system is all about. Toys "R" Us carries only software rated "eC," Early Childhood; "E," Everyone; "T," Teen; and "M," Mature. Toys "R" Us will not sell "Mature" rated software to customers under the age of 17, unless accompanied by an adult. Register prompts have been instituted in all stores to encourage sales associates to call a customer's attention to any "M" rated purchase. The prompts enable a customer to confirm that she is aware of the rating on the product she is purchasing, or reminds the sales associate to ask for identification if the customer appears to be under age 17.

Toys "R" Us has also moved all of its "M" rated software packages and games to the top tier of the software display so that small children cannot mistakenly access it.

"While it's important to monitor what your children buy and use, it's very difficult to keep abreast of all the new games and software on the market," said Michael Goldstein, Chief Executive Officer, Toys "R" Us. "The ESRB has already devised a rating system

that helps consumers to understand the content of the software they may be considering buying. We're simply getting that information to consumers quickly and easily, so that they can make the right decision *before* they make their purchase."

Toys "R" Us' signage also encourages consumers to check "content descriptors" – a black and white box on the software package that provide further details about the software content.

"We're thrilled to see Toys "R" Us step up and take such a positive role in supporting our rating system. We hope others will follow this example," said Arthur Pober, Executive Director, ESRB.

"We want to do our part to help our customers make the right choices for their families," added Goldstein. "Computer games and software is a category that covers a broad range of ages, and we offer merchandise to meet the varying interests of our customers. We think it's important, however, to do our part to ensure that every customer has the information he or she needs to make an informed decision."

Toys "R" Us, the world's leading resource for kids, families and fun, currently operates 1,522 stores: 706 Toys "R" Us stores in the U.S., 445 international Toys "R" Us stores, including franchise stores; 205 Kids "R" Us children's clothing stores; and 121 Babies "R" Us stores and 44 Imaginarium stores. The company also sells merchandise on its Internet sites at <http://www.toysrus.com> and <http://www.imaginarium.com> and through mail order catalogs.

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Entertainment Software Rating Board
TV PSA: 30
"Tiger Tennis"
FINAL

VIDEO:

Woods on tennis court, with tennis racket and ball.

Woods tries to do tricks with racket and ball, but fails.

He successfully bounces ball behind his back and between his legs. (Rating icons appear on screen.)

Woods hits ball as hard as he can, out of court and over trees.

Tennis ball lands on golf green and bounces into hole. Golfers standing on green look around to see where ball came from. (ESRB logo appears on screen.)

Woods smiles at camera.

AUDIO:

Tiger Woods (s/s):

I love sports. But you gotta know what games are right for you.

Same with computer and video games. That's why parents have to make sure each game is right for their kids.

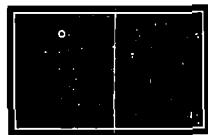
How? Check the rating. Every game has a rating symbol that tells you what age group the game is best for. There's also a content label that tells you what's in the game.

When you check the rating, the control is in your hands.

See? You gotta play the game that's right for you.



ESRB



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD
845 THIRD AVENUE
14th FLOOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

Dr. Arthur I. Pober, Ed. D.
Executive Director

Dr. Pober is Executive Director of the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). The ESRB is the rating board established by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) to provide parents and other consumers information necessary to make informed purchases of interactive entertainment software.

Prior to establishing the ESRB, Dr. Pober was Vice President and Director of the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU, the self regulatory arm of the children's advertising industry), for the Council for Better Business Bureaus. CARU was established in 1974 to promote truthful and accurate advertising that is targeted at children.

Dr. Pober has enjoyed a long career in the field of education, having held positions such as Principal of Hunter College Elementary School, Director of Special Programs for the Board of Education for the City of New York, and Director of Gifted and Talented Education for New York City among others.

He has worked extensively in the public and private sectors to create and develop programs and learning materials for children, and has lectured throughout the world on topics ranging from education, intelligence training and arts education. He currently serves on the advisory boards of the Jewish Museum, Child Magazine and the new ABC television show "Science Court".

He received his doctorate in Educational Psychology and Organizational Development from Yeshiva University.

Phone: 212-759-0700 • Fax: 212-759-2223
EMAIL: info@esrb.org
Web Address: <http://www.esrb.org>



Douglas Lowenstein President, IDSA

General Background

- Earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Washington University in St. Louis in 1973.
- Following his undergraduate studies, he spent one year as a newspaper reporter in Buffalo, New York, then eight years in Washington, DC, including six years as a correspondent in the Cox Newspapers' Washington Bureau.
- IN 1982, Lowenstein began a five-year assignment in the office of U.S. Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio). He worked as Special Assistant and as Legislative Director, supervising Metzenbaum's legislative and committee staff and directly handled energy and securities issues.
- From 1986 to 1991 Lowenstein was principal in National Strategies, Inc. a Washington DC based public policy consulting firm.
- Just prior to joining the staff of the IDSA, he served as an executive vice president of Robinson Lake Sawyer Miller, Inc., a strategic communications firm based in Washington, DC and New York.
- Lowenstein is also the author of the book, Lowenstein: Acts of Courage and Belief, about civil rights and antiwar activist Allard K. Lowenstein.

Accomplishments at the IDSA

- The IDSA has been an effective voice before the federal government, Congress, and state and local government on such industry issues as ratings, First Amendment and Internet content regulation, and copyright protection.
- Built and owns the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) the world's largest and most prestigious interactive entertainment trade event.
- Played a key role in the launch of the new Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences.
- Created a domestic and international anti-piracy campaign to protect members from pirates.
- Conducted a variety of consumer and industry research initiatives.



*Working together to reduce the violence in our society
and to promote the safety and well being of our children.*

Pamela Eakes
Founder and President

Pamela Eakes is Founder and President of Mothers Against Violence in America (MAVIA). Headquartered in Seattle, Washington, MAVIA is a national network of mothers, fathers, students and others working together to prevent violence by and against children. MAVIA's primary goals are to 1) encourage investment in prevention before young people are affected by violence and 2) to advocate for changes that support a safer America for all children.

Motivated by the senseless 1993 murder of nine-year-old Loetta Coston, who was shot and killed in her mother's car by a disturbed motorist, Eakes left a 20-year career in advertising and marketing to become President of MAVIA. In starting MAVIA, Eakes believes that just as M.A.D.D. was successful in changing attitudes and behavior regarding drunk driving, MAVIA's grass roots network has the potential to have the same impact in changing America's attitudes regarding violence.

For her efforts with the organization she has received the 1999 Woman of Achievement Award from Women in Communications, the 1995 YWCA Isabel Coleman Pierce Community Service Award, the 1995 City of Seattle and Providence Medical Center Violence Prevention Award, and 1995 Citizen of the Year from Mercer Island and The Seattle Times 1994 Best of Puget Sound citizen recognition.

In addition to her commitment to MAVIA, Eakes is co-chair of the SafeFutures Community Planning Board, a national initiative of the Office of Juvenile Justice, Crime and Delinquency, serves on the Advisory Committees for the National Center for Safe Schools and the U.S. Department of Education's "America Goes Back to Schools," and the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice.

Her past involvement consists of service on a number of community boards, including a three-year term as a Children's Hospital and Medical Center Guild Association Trustee. In 1996 she received the Pennington Award for Community Service from Children's Hospital and Medical Center.

Eakes is an alumnus of the University of Kentucky and the University of Tennessee.

Born and raised in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Eakes now lives with her husband, Kenneth, and their two sons in Newcastle, Washington.

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تاریخ یاد-

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Davis O'Connell

Date: 10/25/99
To: Anna Richter - Office of Eric Liu
Fax: 456-2878
From: Terry O'Connell/Chris Heyde
Re: IDSA meeting request

*Thank you
for your help!
Chris*

On behalf of Doug Lowenstein, President of the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), I would like to schedule a meeting with Mr. Liu.

At the meeting with Mr. Liu, Mr. Lowenstein would like to discuss youth violence, software piracy, and the Generalized System of Preferences.

Attached is background information about the IDSA, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), and youth violence.

The IDSA is the U.S. association exclusively dedicated to serving the business and public affairs needs of companies that publish video and computer games for video game consoles, personal computers, and the Internet. IDSA members collectively account for more than 90 percent of the \$5.5 billion in entertainment software sales in the United States in 1998, and billions more in export sales of American-made entertainment software.

Available dates for Mr. Lowenstein include November 8, 1999, at 10am, 11am, or 1pm; November 10, 1999, at 10am; or November 11, 1999, at 10am or 11am. If you need any additional information please feel free to contact Jennifer Golden or Chris Heyde at (202) 638-5333. Thank you very much for your consideration of this request.

444 North Capitol Street, Suite 841, Washington, DC 20001
phone (202) 638-5333 fax (202) 638-5335



THE EFFECT OF VIDEO GAMES ON CHILDREN: A FACT-BASED RESPONSE

Ever since the tragic shootings at Columbine High School, questions have been raised about the impact that violence in the media has on our nation's children. Many individuals have engaged in this national discourse. The motives of the participants are well-intentioned. But when their comments are based on unsupported assertions and accusations, they detract from, and do not enhance, the serious national debate that events such as the Columbine tragedy should foster.

One writer, retired Army Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman, has received considerable media attention for his assertion that video games teach kids to kill. The record does not support his allegations. Upon examination, many of the basic claims Mr. Grossman makes to support his view are contradicted by the facts.

Mr. Grossman, a M.Ed in counseling psychology, taught psychology at the United States Military Academy and is the Director of the Killology Research Group in Jonesboro, Arkansas. He is entitled to his opinions, but in order to evaluate the validity of those opinions, it is important to review the facts. This paper addresses many statements by Mr. Grossman in recent months.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that the rising popularity of video games translates directly into increasing violent crime.¹

The Facts: Violent crime, particularly among the young, has decreased dramatically during the 1990's while video games have steadily increased in popularity and use.

The homicide rate in this country has steadily declined throughout the decade and is now at its lowest point since 1968, well before video games were on the market.² Aggravated assaults have also declined and the number of such incidents are lower than it has been since 1973.³ Violent crime among juveniles, including homicides, is down by 40 percent since 1993.⁴

¹ Grossman, Testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Page 3.

² U.S. Department of Justice, *Crime Facts at a Glance*, from the Bureau of Health Statistics, Vital Statistics.

³ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁴ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, pp. 41, 96.

There is no positive relationship between video games and violence in America. In fact, there is a negative correlation: As video game use has gone up, all violent crimes, including those committed by youngsters, have gone down.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman states that academic research conclusively demonstrates a link between violence in video games and violent behavior.⁵

The Facts: Mr. Grossman cites no research involving video games and has conducted none.

Mr. Grossman cites a 1972 report by the U.S. Surgeon General as evidence to bolster his claimed link between video games and real-world violent behavior, but video games did not exist in 1972. To support his claim, he also cites a 1982 study by the National Institute of Mental Health and a 1992 report by the American Psychiatric Association. But neither document includes evidence about video games.

More importantly, numerous academic researchers who have studied this issue have concluded that violent video games do not lead to aggressive behavior. Dr. Kevin Durkin, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Australia wrote a survey of academic research on computer and video games commissioned by the Government of Australia regarding the state of research into the role of video games in children's lives. In that survey, Durkin concluded, "Overall, evidence is limited, but so far does not lend strong support to the claims that computer game play promotes aggression in children or adults."

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims "'The video game 'Doom' is being marketed and has been licensed to the United States Marine Corps...as an excellent tactical training device."⁶

The Facts: Simulators used by the military are dramatically different than the average video game and could never serve as a substitute for the experience gained by firing a real weapon. The simulator Mr. Grossman cites was meant to build teamwork and in no way replaced the rigorous training that Marines go through.

⁵ Grossman testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Page 3.

⁶ Grossman testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Pages 1-2.

Colonel (Ret.) Ron Krisak, ran the training technology battle labs at Fort Dix from 1995-97. He has publicly stated that the simulations could not teach a person to shoot a gun effectively. "I don't see how anyone would learn how to fire a weapon accurately from these games without some form of mentoring," says Krisak.⁷

The Marine Corps Modeling and Simulation Management Office (McMISMO) stated that the game was an interesting way for Marines to practice teamwork tactics. But the game is not part of any regulation training.

According to Army Secretary Louis Caldera "We don't use simulators primarily to teach people how to fight and fire weapons. We use (them) to teach people to work as a team, to work together as crews."⁸

Moreover, the retail video game cited by Mr. Grossman, Doom II, was radically altered by two Marine programmers to create the Marine version. The makers of the game were not involved in the development and no licensing agreement was entered into.

It is therefore incorrect for Mr. Grossman to claim the game has been marketed or licensed to the Marines for any purpose, or that there is a correlation between the military's use of video game technology and its impact on users in the home.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that violent video games are "mass murder simulators that can teach you how to commit mass murder before you even put your hands on a gun."⁹

The Facts: **Because they do not replicate real world experiences, computer simulations are not effective substitutes for real life practice.**

Mr. Grossman states that flight simulators can teach you how to fly without touching an airplane; drive without using a car; and kill without touching a gun. The assertion is ludicrous on its face. Pilots must fly real planes and drivers must drive real cars before they are licensed -- and for good reason. Games may simulate the real world; they do not re-create it.

A 14-year old who has played Mario Andretti's racing game would likely be horribly injured if he tried to compete in an actual car race; as would a child who tried to fly a jet after playing Falcon 4.0 on his video game. Likewise, a child who played Doom with a joystick, controller or mouse would not gain the experience needed to become a marksman.

⁷ *USA Today*, June 23, 1999.

⁸ *United Press International*, Aug. 18, 1999

⁹ Grossman testimony before the House Judiciary Committee, Page2.

According to Dr. Stuart Fischhoff, Professor of Media Psychology at Cal State – Los Angeles, "When you are in the military, you're in what is called 'total institution,' where everything around you is supporting that ideology; when you are a kid [playing a video game] in the mall, you go home," he noted. "There's a whole complex thing called 'society,' and social forces that intervene between the time you stop the game and get on with your life."¹⁰

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that Michael Carneal, who shot students at Paducah West High School in Paducah, Kentucky, is a perfect example of a violent game enthusiast who himself turns to violence.

The Facts: While Michael Carneal owned several mature-rated games, he owned multiple games rated in the "Teen" and "Everyone" categories. He also told psychologists that he, "prefers more thinking than fighting games."¹¹

Carneal further stated that his favorite game was Monster Truck Madness, which is rated by The ESRB for play by "Everyone". His close friend, Matt Neamon, told police Carneal preferred less violent civilization and driving-style games to violent ones.¹²

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that Carneal must have learned to shoot from video games because he "had never fired a gun before in his life."¹³

The Facts: Carneal had extensive experience handling and shooting rifles and handguns.

Carneal spent several summers, including the one before the Paducah shooting, at a 4-H facility where he was taught how to shoot a gun.¹⁴ His next door neighbor was an avid shooter who had tutored Carneal in the use of handguns and rifles.¹⁵ The neighbor's son, Toby Nace, told police that he and Carneal had shot the murder weapon before the Paducah attack.¹⁶ Finally, the weekend before the shooting, Carneal and another friend had fired at least two clips of ammunition in the friend's backyard.¹⁷

¹⁰ Los Angeles Times

¹¹ Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell Page 17.

¹² Matt Neamon Interview by Det. Carl Baker on 12.3.97, Page 28.

¹³ Grossman testimony before House Judiciary Committee, Page 4.

¹⁴ 1. Police Report, McCracken Co. Sheriff's Department, 9.21.98.

2. Dr. Schetky's Report, Page 4.

3. Benedek and Weitzel and Clark report, Page 14.

4. Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Page 14.

¹⁵ 1. Dr. Schetky's Report, Page 21.

2. Benedek and Weitzel and Clark report, Page 14.

¹⁶ Toby Nace Interview, Det. Carl Baker, 12.1.97, Page 9.

¹⁷ 1. Michael Alonso Interview by Det. Carl Baker on 12.7.97, Page 16.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that because Michael Carneal had been trained by video games, Carneal methodically aimed and fired at his classmates' heads.¹⁸

The Facts: By his own acknowledgement, Carneal shot with his eyes closed and did not aim at specific individuals.

Carneal told psychologists said remembered "pulling the trigger the first time, but I had my eyes closed."¹⁹ He also said he aimed "straight across [the] room at [the] wall on [the] other side of [the] crowd and not at individual people."²⁰

Unfortunately, 50 kids were packed in a tight prayer circle, ensuring that Carneal's blind shots would hit human targets.

Assertion: Mr. Grossman claims that Carneal was profoundly influenced by the video games he played.²¹

The Facts: Psychologists who evaluated Carneal said he had serious psychological problems, including strong paranoid schizophrenic tendencies and mild psychotic delusions.

Carneal stated that he had covered bathroom vents so no one could see him shower, and that he was afraid someone lived under his bed and was going to cut off his feet. Carneal kept an array of knives under his mattress, and a Rorschach test showed that he had shown signs of clinical depression for years prior to the shooting. His junior high school paper spread a rumor that Carneal was homosexual, and as a result Carneal said he was repeatedly called "gay" and hit by schoolmates. He used to feel that everyone was talking about him and calling him stupid. There is evidence that Carneal imagined much of this torment, with friends reporting that he was teased no more than any other kid at the school.²²

Carneal thought about death extensively and considered suicide.²³ And he associated guns with popularity and power. He fantasized that classmates would join him in taking over the school if he brought guns to school.²⁴

2. Police Report, 5.27.98.

¹⁸ Grossman testimony before Senate Commerce Committee, Page 1.

¹⁹ Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Page 16.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Grossman testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee, Page 1.

²² James O'Nan interview by Det. Carl Baker dated 12. 6. 1997, Page 4

²³ 1. Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Page 10.

2. Dr. Schetky's Report, Pages 17-18

²⁴ 1. Michael Carneal interview by Det. Carl Baker 12. 4. 97, pp. 10-15.

2. Benedek and Weitzel and Clark report, Page 2.

3. Michael Carneal Evaluation, Second Interview by Dr. Cornell, Pages 13-15.

4. Dr. Schetky's report, Pages 12 & 15.



ABOUT THE INTERACTIVE DIGITAL SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION

CHARTER:

Formed in April 1994, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) is the only U.S. trade association exclusively dedicated to serving the business and public affairs interests of companies that publish video and computer games for video game consoles (such as Nintendo 64, Sega Dreamcast, and Sony PlayStation), personal computers, and the Internet. Our members collectively account for more than 85 percent of the \$6.3 billion in entertainment software revenue in the U.S. in 1998, and billions more in export sales of U.S.-made entertainment software.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP:

Acclaim Entertainment, Activision, Inc., Capcom, Disney Interactive, Eidos Interactive, Electronic Arts, Fox Interactive, Hasbro Interactive, Havas Interactive/Sierra Online, Inc., Infogrames North America, Interplay Productions, Kesmai Corporation, Konami of America, Inc., Lego Media International, LucasArts Entertainment, Mattel Media, MGM Interactive, Microsoft Corporation, Midway Home, Namco Hometek, Inc., Nintendo of America, NovaLogic, Inc., Psygnosis, Red Storm Entertainment, Ripcord Games, Sega of America, Sony Computer Entertainment, SouthPeak Interactive, Take 2 Interactive, The 3DO Company, THQ, Inc., Titus Software Corporation, UBI Soft, Inc.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

■ Presenting E³, the World's Premier Trade Show Focused on Interactive Entertainment

Every year, the IDSA presents the highly acclaimed Electronic Entertainment Expo (E³), the world's largest trade show dedicated exclusively to the interactive entertainment industry. Wholly owned by the IDSA, E³ attracts nearly 60,000 industry professionals from around the world to see the latest in interactive entertainment software and related products, and to participate in three days of thought-provoking sessions and seminars. In 2000, E³ will be held from May 11- 13 in Los Angeles.

■ Conducting a Worldwide Anti-Piracy Program

The IDSA's Anti-Piracy Program is designed to combat entertainment software piracy both in the U.S. and around the world. Worldwide piracy is estimated to have cost the U.S. entertainment software industry \$3.2 billion in 1997. IDSA anti-piracy efforts include investigative and enforcement activities in the U.S., foreign markets and the Internet. The program works closely with government agencies such as the Justice Department, the FBI, and U.S. Customs on copyright and related policy issues, and also conducts education and training activities around the world.

■ Working with Government on Policy Issues

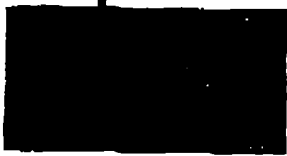
The IDSA works with government at all levels to make the voice of its members heard on a wide range of crucial legislative and public policy issues ranging from copyright to First Amendment protection and Internet regulation.

■ Providing Current Information about the Industry

The IDSA is a leading source of consumer, economic and other industry data, as well as information on related market trends. Recent projects include the IDSA's annual consumer usage and buying habits survey, a survey of consumers' online game usage, an analysis of the interactive entertainment industry's impact on the U.S. economy, and a report on the State of the Entertainment Software Industry.

■ Providing the Nation's Pre-eminent Entertainment Software Rating System

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), created by the IDSA, is the nation's pre-eminent entertainment software rating system for all platforms. The ESRB has rated over 5,800 titles submitted by more than 335 of the industry's leading publishers.



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD
845 THIRD AVENUE
14th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10022

ESRB



ABOUT THE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is an independent rating system which was established in September of 1994 by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), the leading trade association for the interactive entertainment software industry. The ESRB is a voluntary rating system which was developed to give parents and consumers information about the content of video and computer games so that they can make informed purchase and rental decisions. As of August 1998, the ESRB has rated over 5,000 titles submitted by over 280 publishers, making it by far the leading entertainment software rating system in the country and the only one which has rated software for all platforms, including personal computers, CD-ROMS and video game cartridge consoles.

On July 29, 1994, the ESRB rating system was presented to Congress and the media and received a great deal of praise. Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) characterized the ESRB rating system as the "most comprehensive system of any entertainment medium in this country." The system has also been praised by Peggy Charren, founder of Action for Children's Television and one of the country's leading child advocates, by the nation's foremost consumer group, the Consumer Federation of America, and by leading retailers such as Wal-Mart and Toys 'R' US. More recently Senators Lieberman and Kohl and the National PTA released a report card assessing industry progress in establishing rating systems and gave the industry an "A" for creating the ESRB rating system.

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Web Address: <http://www.esrb.org>



How the ESRB Works

The ESRB rating system is based on the prior review of actual product content and other materials by three raters randomly chosen from a pool of over 100 demographically diverse individuals from all walks of life. All raters undergo extensive training. These raters assign a rating and appropriate content descriptors after reviewing a range of materials including the most extreme content of the product. Thus, ESRB ratings represent the views of typical consumers with no ties to the industry, exercising their independent judgment on how a title should be rated.

The ESRB has five age-based rating categories, and is unique in that it also supplements the ratings with short phrases, called descriptors, which further explain the content of the product. The rating categories are: Early Childhood (ages 3+), Everyone (ages 6+) (effective 11/98, the Kids to Adult category was changed to "E" for "Everyone"), Teen (ages 13+), Mature (ages 17+), and Adults Only (limited to those ages 18 and older). The descriptors fall into several categories, including: violent content, sexual themes, language, and others such as drug use and alcohol use. No other rating system provides both age and content information to consumers.

The ESRB rating system is informative, user friendly and has been applied to interactive entertainment software products available on all platforms. The ESRB rating icons, used with descriptors such as mild animated violence, use of tobacco and alcohol, and strong language, provide consumers with the advance information they need to make informed purchase and rental decisions for their families. The ratings and descriptors are clear and easily understandable and are displayed on packaging and in advertising.

The ESRB has set up a toll-free number for consumers to call for rating information. The consumer hotline has received over 1.5 million calls since it was established in November 1994. The ESRB has launched a web site at <http://www.esrb.org>. The site consists of ratings and content descriptors, news and information, our parents guide and an overview of the ESRB. The site is updated on a regular basis, offering millions of consumers instant access to rating information at their convenience and pace. These consumer aids are also available in French and Spanish.

The IDSA has adopted an Advertising Code of Conduct which establishes mandatory rules governing the use of rating icons and content descriptors. The Advertising Code of Conduct addresses the size, color and placement of icons and content descriptors on packaging and in television and print advertising.



Consumer and Expert Input and Oversight

The ESRB system was designed with the direct input of consumers who participated in focus groups aimed at making the system user friendly, easily understood, and informative. In February 1995, we surveyed consumers again, and found that 90% of parents and players of video and computer games believe the ESRB system is a highly useful tool for evaluating the content of games. Additionally, the vast majority of respondents believe that the video and computer games they were asked to evaluate had been rated properly by the ESRB.

Outside advisors including academics, consumer representatives, children's advocates, and educators also helped shape the system. Moreover, the ESRB has formed an Academic and Consumer Advisory Board which meets periodically to review how the system is working. Membership of this Board includes: Mary Ellen Fise of the Consumer Federation of America; Dr. Parker Page, President of the Children's Television Resource and Education Center; Karen Jaffe, Executive Director of Kidsnet; Dr. Jeffrey Goldstein of the Department of Social and Organizational Psychology and the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Utrecht (Netherlands) and a recipient of a grant from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation to study the topic of violent entertainment; Dr. Lewis Lipsitt, Professor of Psychology and Medical Science and the Founding Director of the Child Study Center at Brown University; Dr. Rosemarie Truglio, Director of Research, Children's Television Workshop; Thomas Koerner, Deputy Executive Director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals; Charlotte Frank, Senior Vice President, McGraw-Hill; Jeffrey I. Cole, Director, Center for Communication Policy, UCLA; and Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of Greater City Schools; Vincent Ferandino, CEO and Executive Director, New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Enforcement

The IDSA has registered the rating icons as trademarks and is policing the use of the trademarks to ensure they are being properly used. If, through spot checks or consumer complaints, IDSA learns that a publisher may have improperly obtained a particular rating, or is improperly using the trademark, our General Counsel will take action including, but not limited to, revoking the rating, compelling the publisher to resticker the product, or fining the publisher.

The IDSA is working with publishers, retailers and retailer organization to encourage their use of and participation in the ESRB rating system. We are pleased that organizations such as



the Video Software Dealers Association which represents 25,000 video stores include the ESRB rating system in their Pledge to Parents program. In addition, prominent leading retailers like Blockbuster Entertainment do not permit children under age 17 to purchase or rent software rated "M" without parental permission, and children under 18 cannot purchase or rent software rated "AO" under any circumstance. In addition, the ESRB has distributed posters and over five million brochures on the rating system to retailers. Retailers currently displaying the ESRB rating system are Wal*Mart, Toys "R" Us, Blockbuster, Target, Best Buy, Babbages, FuncoLand, Egghead, Electronics Boutique, Movie Gallery. Organizations such as the National PTA, Video Software Dealer's Association and Kidsnet have also disseminated the ESRB's materials. Online retailers such as blockbuster.com, amazon.com, game dealer.com and electronic boutique.com also carry the ESRB's ratings.



ESRB RATINGS



Early
Childhood

Content
suitable for
children
ages 3 and
older.



Everyone

Content
suitable for
persons
ages 6 and
older.



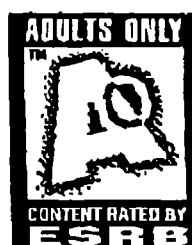
Teen

Content
suitable for
persons
ages 13 and
older.



Mature

Content
suitable for
ages 17 and
older.



Adults Only

Content
suitable only
for adults.



Rating
Pending

Product has
been
submitted to
the ESRB
and is
awaiting
final rating.

CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

- Mild Animated Violence
Contains scenes depicting cartoon/animated/pixelated characters in unsafe or hazardous acts or violent situations.
- Mild Realistic Violence
Contains scenes depicting characters in unsafe or hazardous acts or violent situations in photographic detail.
- Comic Mischief
Contains scenes depicting actions characterized as slapstick or gross vulgar humor.
- Animated Violence
Contains depictions of aggressive conflict involving cartoon/animated/pixelated characters.
- Realistic Violence
Contains realistic or photographic-like depictions of aggressive conflict.
- Animated Blood and Gore
Animated/pixelated or cartoon like depictions of mutilation or dismemberment of body parts.
- Realistic Blood and Gore
Depictions of mutilation or dismemberment of body parts in realistic or photographic-like detail.
Animated Blood
Animated/pixelated or cartoon like depictions of blood.
- Realistic Blood
Representations of blood in realistic or photographic-like detail.
- Suggestive Themes
Mild provocative references or material.
- Mature Sexual Themes
Contains provocative material; including depiction of the human body in either animated or photographic-like formats.
- Strong Sexual Content
Graphic depiction of sexual behavior and/or the human form (i.e., frontal nudity) in either animated or photographic-like detail.
- Mild Language
Product contains the use of words like "damn".
- Strong Language
Commonly referenced four-letter words.
- Gaming
The depiction of betting-like behavior.
- Use of Tobacco and Alcohol
Product contains images of the use of tobacco and/or alcohol in a manner which condones or glorifies their use.
- Use of Drugs
Product contains images of the use of drugs in a manner which condones or glorifies their use.
- Informational
Overall content of product contains data, facts resource information, reference materials or instructional text.
- Edutainment
Content of product provides user with specific skills development or reinforcement learning within an entertainment setting. Skill development is an integral part of product.

Early Childhood Descriptor only: Some Adult Assistance May Be Needed.

Write me -

VIDEO GAMES

Video game maker decries violence critics say he aids

By Herbert A. Sample
McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

DARIEN, Conn. — "There is no question in my mind that violence is out of hand. I mean, it's just totally out of hand."

David Klein is in the headquarters of the company he co-founded nine years ago, talking about Littleton and Paducah and Jonesboro, once-peaceful communities where over the last two years youngsters inexplicably snapped and went on deadly shooting rampages.

"Society in general is out of control," Mr. Klein said. "Maybe kids don't know how to vent their anger and frustrations and are now venting it in the most horrific, imaginable ways."

But his company, ASC Games, produces some of the very video games that critics assert are partly responsible for horrifying episodes of violence committed by young Americans in recent years.

The Senate this week will form a new task force to take a broad look at violence in American culture. It will be led by Sen. Sam Brownback, Kansas Republican, who has charged that companies are "producing and promoting unimaginably gory interactive video games" where "the goal is death. Success is determined by the body count."

The intensifying focus on media content places Mr. Klein and his employees in a dilemma. They know money can be made from depictions of violence. They know youngsters one way or another will get hold of video games that glorify anti-social behavior.

But they also know that each time another school erupts in gunfire, ASC and its industry brethren become bigger targets for criticism and lawsuits from victims of juvenile violence.

The difficulty for ASC, also known as American Softworks Corp., is defining the line it prefers not to cross. To some critics, the firm went well beyond that boundary when it released the personal computer version of "Grand Theft Auto" in the United States.

In the game, players control small-time crooks who rise through a criminal syndicate by carjacking, running over pedestrians, blowing up school buses, transporting drugs, shooting police officers and generally creating chaos on fictional urban streets.

ASC since late 1997 sold about 107,700 copies at an average price of \$38. Not a bad haul considering ASC initially hesitated when it was offered U.S. publishing rights to "Grand Theft Auto," Mr. Klein said, recalling that the game's violence went beyond anything ASC had previously made.

But after playing it, Mr. Klein decided the game's low-tech graphics and clownish plot made it acceptable. "It seemed to hit the core elements of what gaming is about," he said. "It was a fun game. It was easy to play. It kept you captivated."

Perhaps because of "Grand Theft Auto's" detached visual presentation — players view the action from high above, as if riding on helicopters — critics don't target it as often as they do "Duke Nukem," "Doom" and other violent games that offer players high-tech, first-person involvement.

It is those types of video games — where players can see the bloodletting they perform, up close and through the eyes of the perpetrator — that most worry social scientists.

"If you never see violence from the viewpoint of the victim, you're not going to be more likely to condemn it," said Karen Cerulo, a sociology professor at Rutgers University who has studied violence in the media. "That is part of what's wrong with video games.... You're never the victim."

David Grossman, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who has written about violence in American society, goes a step further by claiming that violent, first-person video games not only desensitize players to killing, they teach players how to kill.

He cites Michael Carneal, the 14-year-old Paducah, Ky., boy who in 1997 shot and killed three students and wounded several others by firing eight rounds that each struck a victim in the head or upper torso. This is "unnatural" marksmanship for someone who had not used handguns before, Col. Grossman contends, and can only be explained by the boy's incessant use of video games that simulate gunplay.

"Certain types of these games are actually killing simulators," he writes in his upcoming book, "Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill."

• Distributed by Scripps Howard.

School's gun raffle sparks ire

Headmaster cites hunting heritage

HALIFAX, N.C. (Agence France-Presse) — A plan to give away rifles and shotguns at a fund-raising raffle in a private school here will go ahead despite criticism, the Raleigh News-Observer reported yesterday.

The prizes reflect the importance of hunting in the community's culture and heritage, Hobgood Academy headmaster John Hardison told the paper. He said he did not intend to be insensitive to recent incidents of school violence.

"We're sorry it's been blown so much out of proportion," Mr. Hardison said. "We're certainly not insensitive to the issue of guns and violence in schools."

He said he's received an objection to the raffle from a relative of a student. It has also raised concerns among advocates for school safety and gun control.

"This is certainly coming from left field," Joanne McDaniel of the state's Center for the Prevention of School Violence in Raleigh told the News-Observer. "We've not heard of anything like this before."

Serious crime remains on wane

Rates have fallen
seven years in row

By Jerry Seper
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Incidents of serious crime nationwide — including murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, vehicle theft and arson — declined for the seventh year in a row in 1998, falling by 5 percent overall compared with 1997, the FBI reported yesterday.

In releasing its final 1998 figures from its Uniform Crime Reporting program, the FBI said the drop resulted from a 6 percent decline in the number of reported incidents of violent crime and a 5 percent drop in the reports of property crimes.

The FBI said 12.5 million offenses were reported in 1998, down 11 percent from 1994 and 12 percent from 1989. The South, with 35 percent of the nation's population, had 40 percent of the total crime. The West, with 22 percent of the population, accounted for 24 percent; the Midwest, with 23 percent of the population, 22 percent; and the Northeast, with 19 percent

of the population, accounted for 14 percent.

Crime dropped 7 percent in both the Northeast and the West, 5 percent in the South and 4 percent in the Midwest, the FBI said.

The FBI said there were an estimated 1.5 million violent crimes reported during 1998. The rate of 566 violent crimes for every 100,000 residents was the lowest since 1985. All four categories of violent crime — murder, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault — declined in volume and rate from 1997.

The total reductions in violent crimes in 1998 were 10 percent for incidents of robbery, 7 percent for murder, 5 percent for aggravated assault and 3 percent for forcible rape. In 1998, the FBI said the number of violent crimes was 18 percent below 1994 and 7 percent below 1989.

In the reported incidents of property crime, motor vehicle

theft dropped 8 percent and arson was down 7 percent. Reports of burglary and larceny dropped by 5 percent. In 1998, the FBI said the number of property crimes was 10 percent below 1994 and 13 percent below 1989.

The FBI said the 6 percent decline in reported incidents of serious crime in the nation's cities overall and suburban counties was only slightly higher than the 5 percent decrease in rural areas.

The FBI also said that:

- In 1998, 7,755 hate crimes were reported, 4,321 of which were motivated by racial bias, 1,390 by religious bias, 1,260 by sexual-orientation bias, 754 by ethnic bias and 25 by disability bias. Five were categorized as multi-bias incidents.

- Law enforcement agencies nationwide recorded a 21 percent clearance rate in 1998.

- During 1998 authorities made an estimated 14.5 million arrests

for all criminal infractions, including traffic — a decrease of 1 percent from 1997. The highest arrest counts were for drug-abuse violations, with 1.6 million reported.

- There were 17,000 murders in the United States in 1998, 7 percent fewer than in 1997 and 28 percent fewer than in 1994. The murder rate was 6 per 100,000 inhabitants, lowest since 1967.

- The 93,103 forcible rapes reported to law enforcement during 1998 was the lowest total of the decade.

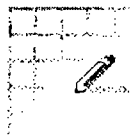
- There were 974,402 aggravated assaults in 1998, down 5 percent from 1997.

- Robbery reports totaled 446,625 or 165 robberies per 100,000 population nationwide in 1998. Nearly \$446 million of property was taken in robberies reported nationwide.

- A total of 1.2 million vehicles were stolen in 1998, an 8 percent decline from 1997.

The Washington Times

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1999

 Ann O'Leary
10/14/99 08:40:47 PM

Letter to -
Video Games

Record Type: Record

To: Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP, Lowell A. Weiss/WHO/EOP@EOP
cc: Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP, Karin Kullman/OPD/EOP@EOP
Subject: One more message - Video games

Eric -

In follow-up to your conversations with David Beier, we could make the following announcement tomorrow in regards to the youth violence prevention efforts by the video and computer games industry --

- The Interactive Digital Software Association, the industry association for video and computer game manufacturers, is stepping up its efforts to inform parents and consumers about the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) and to offer guidelines to the industry on responsible advertising. The ESRB was established in 1994, with no tie to the industry, to generate independent, credible and reliable ratings to help consumers make informed purchasing decisions when buying video and computer games. Last month, the Ratings Board, in cooperation with the industry, launched a major promotional campaign to educate parents about the rating system. The campaign includes flyers in major parent-oriented publications, such as Child Magazine; brochures to be used by national retailers at the point of sale; and outreach to national grassroots organizations that reach parents. Yesterday, IDSA stepped up its efforts further by releasing guidelines for advertisers to responsibly market their products and use the rating system in their advertisements.

IDSA's materials specifically state that some of this work stems from discussions that began at the White House Summit on Youth Violence.

I think it fits nicely with the NBC announcement in terms of private industry stepping up to the plate. Do you want to add this message into Lowell's speech, the press paper, both, or neither? Please advise.

Thanks.

-Ann

Proactive Steps By Entertainment Software Companies To Address Concerns About Violent Content

While the vast majority of video and computer games are appropriate for persons of all ages, and while the majority of the most frequent game players are adults, the industry has long recognized that some products do contain significant levels of violent content that are not appropriate for younger audiences. Over the years, the industry association, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), has taken significant and meaningful self-regulatory steps to ensure that consumers can make informed purchasing decisions. Following is a summary of voluntary activities we've undertaken.

1994-1997

- In 1994, the IDSA established the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB). ESRB raters, with no ties to industry, generate independent, credible, and reliable ratings to help consumers make informed purchasing decisions. Uniquely, ESRB ratings, which appear both on game packaging and on the games themselves, cover **both** the age appropriateness of a title and carry phrases describing the content of many games. Though voluntary, compliance with the ratings system is nearly 100%, and the few games that do not carry ratings are educational titles lacking controversial content. Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) consistently calls the ESRB "the most comprehensive entertainment ratings system in the country." To date, over 5,800 products have been rated by the ESRB.
- In 1994, IDSA voluntarily created an Advertising Code of Conduct requiring that ratings and content information issued by ESRB be placed on packaging. The Ad Code also established rules for use of ratings information in advertisements and other forms of consumer marketing.
- In 1997, recognizing the emergence of the Internet, the ESRB launched a new rating service called ESRB Interactive, or ESRBi. Through this service, ESRB offers companies the opportunity to rate their websites and video games distributed on line.

1999

- The ESRB, in cooperation with the IDSA, recently launched a major promotional campaign to educate parents about the ESRB. This promotional campaign includes purchase of advertising in major national publications targeted at parents, placement of ESRB pull-out flyers in major parent-oriented publications, such as Child Magazine, production of a PSA, to be offered to networks and cable TV stations, promoting the use of the ESRB ratings featuring a nationally known sports celebrity, redesigned consumer brochures and the production of millions of copies for use by leading national retailers at the point of sale, and outreach to leading national grassroots organizations with ties to schools and parents seeking ways to partner with them to get the word out to consumers, especially parents, about ESRB ratings and how to use them.
- The IDSA has sent letters to major national retailers seeking their commitments to educate consumers about the ESRB ratings and to make a commitment to consumers to use their best efforts not to sell Mature rated games to persons under 17. Already, several have agreed to sign this commitment and we expect to announce these shortly. In this regard,

Toys 'R Us, working with the ESRB, is rolling out in more than 700 stores nationwide, posters and brochures that explain the ESRB ratings. In addition, Toys "R" Us has advised us that it will not sell "Mature" rated software to customers under the age of 17, unless accompanied by an adult and that it has moved all of its "M" rated software packages and games to the top tier of the software display so that small children cannot mistakenly access it.

- On September 29, 1999, the IDSA Board of Directors took the extraordinary and far reaching step of creating an Advertising Review Council (ARC) within the ESRB. The ARC is empowered to ensure that all advertisements by those who use ESRB ratings adhere to strict content standards covering such areas as violence, sex, and language. In addition, to enhance ad code enforcement, the IDSA has shifted this responsibility to the new ESRB ad unit. This is a major self-regulatory initiative to address concerns about the appropriateness of the content of certain video game ads.
- On September 21, 1999, the three U.S. manufacturers of video game consoles, Nintendo of America, Sony Computer Entertainment America, and Sega of America, all announced that they would package ESRB information with each video game console. As a result, the 5-10 million new buyers of video game console hardware this holiday season will have ratings information in their hands.
- Entertainment software publishers are working with Microsoft to incorporate a password-protected functionality within the Windows 2000 operating system that would allow parents to ensure that Mature-rated games cannot be played on their computer.
- As a result of discussions which began at the White House Summit on Violence, the IDSA and ESRB are in advanced discussions with a major Internet service provider to utilize ESRB ratings on the Internet.
- Several entertainment software publishers have taken a number of actions on an individual basis to respond to concerns about violent games. For instance, Interplay incorporated a filter within its game "Kingpin" which allows a parent to control the amount of violence in the game.



IDSA

NEWS

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For Immediate Release
October 13, 1999

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ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE GROUP CREATES INDEPENDENT COUNCIL TO OVERSEE VIDEO GAME ADVERTISING

LEADING VIDEO GAME MAGAZINES ADOPT INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Washington, D.C. – The Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) announced today the creation of an Advertising Review Council (ARC) to ensure that advertisements placed by U.S. computer and video game software makers are appropriate, responsible, truthful and accurate.

The new ad unit will become a division of the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), the widely-praised organization created by the video game industry in 1994 to independently rate video games for age appropriateness and content. ESRB will monitor and enforce the new advertising principles and guidelines.

In announcing the major new self-regulatory initiative, the IDSA also disclosed that the leading game enthusiast magazine publishers have agreed to adopt and implement the new advertising Principles and Guidelines.

"The creation of ARC is a far reaching initiative to ensure that video games are marketed appropriately to all audiences," said Doug Lowenstein, President of the IDSA. "Our goal in developing this advertising review council is to strike a balance between preserving creative freedom and meeting our responsibilities to consumers."

The Advertising Review Council was founded on four key principles, and will hold video games manufacturers accountable if it is determined that any advertising or promotion of a video game violates any one of these principles. These principles are:

- An advertisement should accurately reflect the nature and content of the product it represents and the rating issued (i.e., an advertisement should not mislead the consumer as to the product's true character.)

- All advertisements should be created with a sense of responsibility to the public.
- No advertisement should contain content likely to cause serious or widespread offense to the average consumer.

In addition to the core Principles, ARC has also established specific content guidelines to assist video game companies in creating responsible and accurate advertising. These Guidelines cover visual, written, or spoken content that is violent or sexual in nature or content that may contain language, images, or descriptions that could offend individuals or groups of individuals. Among other things, the Guidelines bar misrepresentations regarding the character and/or rating of a product, graphic and/or excessive depiction of violence, graphic and/or violent depiction of the use of weapons, and graphic and/or excessive depiction of nudity.

If a company is found to have violated any principles or guidelines, it will be notified by ARC and asked to adjust its advertising to comply. If it fails to make a bona fide attempt to do so, the company could face a number of sanctions including the revocation of the title's rating, public notice of the violation, referral of the violation to appropriate government agencies, and/or the payment of fines.

"We feel that a video game manufacturer's responsibility does not just end with the content of its product, but extends to the advertising and marketing of that product as well," said Dr. Arthur Poher, Executive Director of the ESRB. "The Advertising Review Council will see to it that video game manufacturers fulfill this broader obligation."

IDSA's Lowenstein said he is especially grateful that the Nation's leading game magazines have embraced the new ad unit. "The decision by the game magazines to adopt the ARC Principles and Guidelines is a critical step towards ensuring prompt and effective implementation of the new industry standards," said Lowenstein. "Their proactive stance demonstrates a strong commitment to their readers."

The publishers who agreed to adopt the ARC standards as their internal codes are: Imagine Media (which publishes Next Generation, PlayStation Magazine, PC Accelerator, PC Games, the Official Dreamcast Magazine, N Gamer, and the Daily Radar.com website); Ziff-Davis (which publishes Computer Gaming World, Electronic Gaming Monthly, the Official US PlayStation Magazine, and Expert Gamer); and IDG Games Media Group (which publishes GamePro Magazine.)

The implementation of ARC principles, guidelines and procedures will be effective starting January 31, 2000.

The IDSA is the U.S. association exclusively dedicated to serving the business and

public affairs needs of companies that publish video and computer games for video game consoles, personal computers, and the Internet. IDSA members collectively account for more than 90 percent of the \$5.5 billion in entertainment software sales in the United States in 1998, and billions more in export sales of American-made entertainment software. The IDSA offers services to entertainment software publishers including a global anti-piracy program, staging the Electronic Entertainment Expo trade show, business and consumer research, government relations and First Amendment and intellectual property protection efforts.

[Note: Additional information on ARC's Principles and Guidelines is available on the IDSA website at www.idsa.com or by calling Dan Sweet at (202) 739-0221]

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999**

**Contact: Dan Sweet
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**IDSA
NEWS**

**VIDEO GAME CONSOLE MANUFACTURERS TO PROVIDE RATINGS
INFORMATION WITH PURCHASE OF ALL HARDWARE**

Washington, D.C. — In an action which will put video game ratings information in the hands of millions of American consumers this holiday season, all three video game console manufacturers jointly announced today that they will start including educational material about the Entertainment Software Rating Board in every unit they ship in the United States.

The commitment by Nintendo of America, Sega of America, and Sony Computer Entertainment America, to include simple background information on the game ratings provided by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) in their hardware packaging is part of a stepped-up effort by the entertainment software industry to ensure that parents choose appropriate games for their children. In 1998, between 6.5 and 7.5 million next generation video game consoles were sold in the September-December period. Industry analysts estimate that this number will be equaled and probably surpassed over the same four months in 1999.

The ratings will be included in the hardware packaging in time for the holiday shopping season. Industry experts expect that millions of game systems will be sold this holiday season.

"The ESRB system, which includes age-related letter ratings and written descriptions of a game's contents, is the most comprehensive ratings system in the entertainment industry," said Douglas Lowerstein, President of the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), the trade association representing U.S. entertainment software publishers. "This action reflects the industry's continuing commitment to spreading the word about video game ratings."

"I am pleased that Nintendo of America, Sega of America, and Sony Computer Entertainment America have taken this important step to promote the ESRB rating system," said ESRB Executive Director Dr. Arthur Pober. "This means that millions of new video game console owners will know to look for ESRB ratings when buying games for their new systems. The console

manufacturers have taken an important step to ensure that America's parents know both about ESRB ratings and how to use them."

The console manufacturers will place the information about the ratings system in each package, either in the hardware manuals or on a separate informational card or flyer.

"Nintendo is committed to providing parents with the best possible information, while creating top-quality, family fun," said Howard Lincoln, chairman of Nintendo of America. "Since the ESRB began in 1994, every Nintendo video game has carried a rating because, ultimately, parents play the most vital role in the monitoring the activities of their children. To that end, we will make ESRB rating information available with the Nintendo 64 video game system and the Game Boy Color, so that parents can purchase the best, most appropriate entertainment for their families."

"The video game industry has the best rating system in entertainment. Sega supports the ESRB and the IDSA's efforts in educating the consumer and ultimately helping parents choose games that appropriate for their children," said Peter Moore, senior vice president, Sega of America, Inc. "We are launching Dreamcast on 9.9.99 and Sega is taking responsible action by including information on ESRB ratings inside the box of every new Dreamcast system as well as our Sega and third-party games."

"Gaming has become a legitimate form of entertainment and a popular leisure pastime enjoyed by millions of people," said Kaz Hirai, president and chief operating officer, Sony Computer Entertainment America. "With that, the video game industry has a responsibility to continue to educate the market about the ESRB ratings system and how to use the ratings when choosing gaming software. We are backing up our commitment to consumers and the industry as a whole by including the ESRB ratings and descriptors in all PlayStation hardware packages beginning this holiday season. This move will provide all PlayStation purchasers with the tools enabling them to make appropriate decisions on gaming content."

About 90 percent of all video game software, and an even higher percentage of hardware, is purchased by adults. By including the information on ESRB ratings in hardware packaging, the manufacturers are ensuring that every parent who buys a video game console for home use will have access to the ratings.

The ESRB was established in 1994 to create a voluntary video and PC game rating system so parents and consumers could make informed decisions about the nature of games before buying or renting them. Ratings and content descriptions have been displayed on the outer packaging of almost all video and PC game software packages since the ESRB was established.

Each game is assigned one of five ratings: Early Childhood, Everyone, Teen, Mature and Adults Only. Of the more than 5,000 games rated by the ESRB, 71 percent have received an "Everyone" rating; 19 percent carry a "Teen" rating; and only 7 percent carried a "Mature" rating. Games are also assigned one or more content descriptors, short phrases that describe game content of which parents should be aware.

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Contacts:

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The Advertising Review Council

of the

ESRB

A Summary of the Principles and Guidelines

Introduction

The Entertainment Software Rating Board ("ESRB") is an independent rating system that was established in September of 1994. The Rating Board has been consistently praised by government representatives, educators, advocacy groups, the public, and private industry, and is widely recognized as one of the finest examples of industry-led self-regulation. Currently comprised of three separate divisions—the Rating Board, ESRB*Interactive*, and ESRB Privacy Online—the ESRB continues to demonstrate that meaningful self-regulation is the most effective method available for: (i) protecting consumers; and, (ii) fostering high levels of public trust and confidence.

As a result of recent developments regarding the advertising of interactive entertainment software products and the consistency of that advertising with product content ratings, the ESRB, in association with the interactive entertainment software industry, has once again responded with a self-regulatory initiative: the Advertising Review Council of the ESRB ("ARC"). ARC shall be responsible for the implementation, administration, and enforcement of a self-regulatory system of advertising control for the interactive entertainment software industry. The division's objective is to promote the highest standards of advertising and to provide the interactive entertainment software industry with a system of voluntary principles and guidelines that will assure responsible, appropriate, truthful, and accurate advertising with relation to interactive software products and services.

SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ARC shall, through its oversight and enforcement authority, analyze and evaluate all qualifying advertising for compliance with the Principles and Guidelines. Such oversight and enforcement may occur through either company initiated prior-reviews, ARC's monitoring and review, or outside complaints and will focus on all qualifying advertising matter.

Principles and Guidelines

The Principles and Guidelines are the foundation of this advertising initiative. ARC will use the Principles and Guidelines to assist companies in providing responsible advertising practices. As explicitly stated within the document, ARC will review advertising for compliance with the Principles and Guidelines in the context of the general public, and the scope and weight of each factor may vary on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the demographic for which each product and its associated advertising is intended and in relation to the advertising medium involved.

Principles:

- An advertisement should accurately reflect the nature and content of the product it represents and the rating issued (i.e., an advertisement should not mislead the consumer as to the product's true character).
- An advertisement should not glamorize or exploit the ESRB rating of a product (e.g., an advertisement with a tag line that states: "banned by the ESRB" or "a 'T' rating has never been pushed this far," etc.).
- All advertisements should be created with a sense of responsibility towards the public.

No advertisement should contain content likely to cause serious or widespread offense to the average consumer.

Guidelines:

While the Principles describe the scope of ARC's review, the Guidelines are general parameters intended to further assist companies in providing responsible advertising practices. Although these Guidelines are not intended to restrict or impede creative and/or innovative advertising, they are intended to provide a framework for companies to use when developing and implementing their advertising initiatives.

These Guidelines cover visual, written or spoken content that is violent or sexual in nature or content that may contain language, images, or descriptions that could offend individuals or groups of individuals. Among other things, the Guidelines bar misrepresentations regarding the character and/or rating of a product, graphic and/or excessive depiction of violence, graphic and/or violent depiction of the use of weapons, and graphic and/or excessive depiction of nudity.

Complaints and Concerns

Legitimate complaints or concerns regarding a qualifying advertisement or advertising campaign may be submitted to ARC. ARC's general counsel is responsible for initially reviewing the legitimacy of a complaint and will not accept complaints that are determined to be baseless, frivolous, or presented for any improper purpose, or for advertisements that fall outside of ARC's purview.

Investigations and Reviews

Once ARC receives a complaint or concern, an investigation will be undertaken and the advertiser will be given the opportunity to submit a written response to the complaint or concern. All responses must be received within the allotted time period. In the event a response is not submitted in a timely manner, ARC will proceed with the investigation process and decide the issue upon the expiration of the advertiser's time to reply. After the investigation and review is completed, ARC will formulate a determination regarding the complaint at issue and prepare a final case report that will be distributed to all parties involved.

Appeals

Either an advertiser or complainant may appeal to the president of the ESRB for reconsideration of a complaint or concern if either party is not satisfied with the results of the investigation and final determination. Upon receipt of a request for an appeal, the president will appoint a panel of five (5) individuals: one (1) member of the public; one (1) member of the advertising industry; one (1) member of the publishing and/or media industry; and, two (2) members of the interactive software and hardware industry to hear the appeal. A majority of the panel will constitute a quorum, but a concurring vote of three members is required to decide any substantive question before the panel.

Compliance

If ARC determines that: (i) an advertiser is found to have violated the Principles and Guidelines; or, (ii) after reviewing the advertiser's response to a request for a status report; or, (iii) if ARC determines that the advertiser has failed to make a bona fide attempt to bring its advertising into compliance with either ARC's determinations or the Appeal Panel's decision, then ARC may impose a number of penalties including revocation of a rating, publication, and/or the payment of fines.

In the event an action is published, such publication will be in the form of a report and will be made available to the general public, free of charge, posted at regular intervals on ESRB and Interactive Digital Software Associations' websites, and may be distributed in various forms to government entities, political representatives, consumer protection groups, and the media.

Referrals

In the event ARC determines that an advertiser has failed to make a bona fide attempt to bring its advertising into compliance with either ARC's determinations or the Appeal Panel's decision, or the division determines that either a federal law or federal regulation may be violated, then, the division may forward a description of the facts and all correspondence between the division and the parties to an appropriate federal and/or state agency.