

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 14, 1999

Violence -  
Movie Ratings

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed  
Neera Tanden

RE: Ratings Systems for Different Media

This memorandum provides you with information on the ratings system for media, ranging from movies to software.

Movies: All films are rated by a division of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). In 1968, the MPAA adopted the Voluntary Movie Ratings System, which advises audiences about the age-appropriateness of films and limits minors' access to films with adult themes. The ratings board is currently composed of eleven members, all employed by MPAA. The Voluntary Ratings System currently provides for five ratings categories: G, PG, PG-13, R and NC-17 (see attached list). The rationale for a particular movie rating is provided in movie ads on the Internet and in newspapers, but not in ads on television. For example, on the Internet, a parents' rating guide is available that describes what aspect of the movie -- e.g., strong language, sexuality, or horror violence -- earned the film its rating.

Movie Advertising and Trailers: All movie advertising is approved or disapproved by the Motion Picture Association of America. The same set of standards that govern movies themselves also applies to advertising for movies that appears in magazines, newspapers, billboards, radio, and television. A different, stricter set of standards governs movie trailers. Trailers are approved for either general audience release ("G" / "PG" ) or for restricted audience release ("R"). "G" / "PG"-rated trailers are for movies that have been rated either "G," "PG," "PG-13," "R," or "NC-17" by the MPAA. Restricted trailers can play in a theatre only if it is playing an "R," or "NC-17"-rated feature. The approval or disapproval of trailers is based on their suitability for viewing by children. "G" / "PG"-rated trailers cannot show any nudity or drugs, and can only show mild depictions of violence. "R"-rated trailers are less restrictive and can display some depictions of nudity and drugs, as well as some violence (though the act of pointing a gun to a character's head is prohibited).

Television: In 1997, ABC, CBS and most cable networks agreed to display age-based ratings on all television programs except news, sports and unedited movies on premium movie channels. The original ratings system indicated only whether a program was age-appropriate; the system was later modified to include information on whether a program contains violence, sexual content, or explicit language (see attached list). In 1998, the Federal Communications

Commission (FCC) approved the current ratings standards for the V-Chip and ruled that manufacturers have until July 1, 1999 to have the V-Chip installed in 13-inch or larger televisions and until January 1, 2000 for remaining televisions. Parents will be able to program the V-Chip to block programming according to the ratings system (see attached ratings).

Premium Cable Television: In June 1994, four premium cable networks -- Cinemax, HBO, The Movie Channel, and Showtime -- initiated a jointly-developed content advisory system that provides descriptive advisories. This voluntary system was established to provide viewers with information about programming containing violence, sex, and offensive language. Executives in the networks' programming departments are responsible for evaluating the programs. This content advisory system includes descriptive codes, such as "MV" for Mild Violence, "RP" for Rape, "GL" for Graphic Language, and "N" for Nudity (see attached ratings).

Sound Recordings: Record companies voluntarily label some newly released sound recordings with a sticker stating "Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics." The label does not further describe the content of the recordings; it does not indicate for example whether the lyrics are explicitly violent, sexual, or profane. The recording industry labeling system is wholly voluntary on the part of record companies, with no oversight or enforcement capability by the RIAA. There are no penalties for not placing the advisory sticker on music products that are explicit, and there are no industry guidelines to determine which music products should be labeled.

Interactive Electronics Games: Two major classification systems for interactive electronic entertainment have been created -- the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) for computer software and the Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSAC) for game devices, such as Nintendo and Sega. IDSA established the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) as a ratings body for computer software titles. The ESRB classification system has five ratings categories: Early Childhood (EC), Everyone (E), Teen (T), Mature (M), and Adults Only (A). Accompanying these classification labels on title packaging are content descriptors relevant to each category. These descriptors provide consumers with additional content information and in many instances indicate the level of violence or sexual content of the title. Among the descriptors used are the following: Realistic Violence, Realistic Blood, Strong Sexual Content, Use of Tobacco and Alcohol, Mature Sexual Themes.

The Recreational Software Advisory Council Ratings System is the product of a coalition of software companies organized as the Computer Game Ratings Working Group in order to implement a ratings system for game devices. The ratings system developed by the RSAC is based on a five-part classification scale ranging from titles suitable for all audiences to those considered extreme in violent or sexual content and language. The ratings are Level 0, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4. For example, titles considered to have extreme content (Level 4) may contain wanton or gratuitous violence, torture or rape, provocative frontal nudity or explicit sexual activity and graphic language. The RSAC system is based on self-disclosure by the company producing the game.

Online: Unlike other media, a ratings system for the Internet need not be universally applied. In order to protect children from potentially objectionable areas of the Internet, parents can use a

blocking technology to block out all materials that are unrated. Several Internet access providers have already added such parental control technologies to their services. America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy, for instance, all have systems enabling parents to prevent children from gaining access to any parts of the Internet that the server has not found to be suitable for children. In addition, both Microsoft and Netscape, which together control 97 percent of the web browser market, have implemented a technology in their browsers that allows parents to block material that they deem to be inappropriate. Finally, numerous other technologies are being developed and promoted to enable parents to monitor their children's online activities, set time limits for their children's access online, or let children exchange e-mails only with people on a preapproved list.

## **Movies Ratings System**

G for "General Audiences. All ages admitted."

PG for "Parental Guidance Suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children."

PG-13 for "Parents Strongly Cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13."

R for "Restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian."

NC-17 for "No children 17 and under admitted."

## **Movie Advertising and Trailers:**

G/PG: for general audiences. May be displayed before any movie.

R: for restricted audiences. May only be displayed by audiences viewing R- or NC-17-rated movies.

## **Premium Cable Television**

MV for Mild Violence

V for Violence

GV for Graphic Violence

RP for Rape

AL for Adult Language

GL for Graphic Language

BN for Brief Nudity

N for Nudity

AC for Adult Content

SC for Strong Sexual Content

## **TV Ratings System**

The following categories apply to programs designed solely for children:

**TVY** All Children. This program is designed to be appropriate for all children, including children from ages 2 - 6. This program is not expected to frighten younger children.

**TVY7** Directed to Older Children. This program is designed for children age 7 and above who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality. Themes and elements in this program may include mild fantasy violence or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of 7. Programs containing fantasy violence that is somewhat more intense or combative are designated **TV-Y7-FV**.

The following categories apply to programs designed for a broader audience.

**TVG General Audience.** Most parents would find this program suitable for all ages. It contains little or no violence, no strong language, and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.

**TVPG Parental Guidance Suggested.** This program contains material that parents may find unsuitable for younger children and the program may contain one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D).

**TV14 Parents Strongly Cautioned.** This program contains some material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age and may contain one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).

**TVMA Mature Audience Only.** This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S), or crude indecent language (L).

## **Interactive Electronics Games**

### Entertainment Software Ratings Board

**Early Childhood -** Titles rated "Early Childhood (EC)" have content suitable for children ages three and older and do not contain any material that parents would find inappropriate.

**Everyone -** Titles rated "Everyone (E)" have content suitable for persons ages six and older. These titles may contain minimal violence, some comic mischief (for example, slapstick comedy), or some crude language.

**Teen -** Titles rated "Teen (T)" have content suitable for persons ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

**Mature -** Titles rated "Mature (M)" have content suitable for persons ages 17 and older. These products may include more intense violence or language than products in the Teen category. In addition, these titles may include mature sexual themes.

**Adults Only -** Titles rated "Adults Only (AO)" have content suitable only for adults. These products may include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence.

### Recreational Software Advisory Council

#### **LEVEL FOUR**

Violence Rating Descriptor: Rape, or wanton, gratuitous violence

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Frontal nudity, amounting to provocative display

Sex Rating Descriptor: Explicit sexual acts or sex crimes

Language Rating Descriptor: Crude, vulgar language or extreme hate speech.

### LEVEL THREE

Violence Rating Descriptor: Aggressive violence or death to humans

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Frontal nudity

Sex Rating Descriptor: Non-explicit sex acts

Language Rating Descriptor: Strong language or hate speech

### LEVEL TWO

Violence Rating Descriptor: Destruction of realistic objects

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Partial nudity

Sex Rating Descriptor: Clothed sexual touching

Language Rating Descriptor: Moderate expletives or profanity

### LEVEL ONE

Violence Rating Descriptor: Injury to human being

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Revealing attire

Sex Rating Descriptor: Passionate kissing

Language Rating Descriptor: Mild expletives

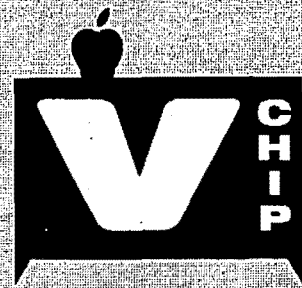
### LEVEL ZERO

Violence Rating Descriptor: None of the above, or sports related

Nudity Rating Descriptor: None of the above

Sex Rating Descriptor: None of the above, or innocent kissing, romance

Language Rating Descriptor: None of the above



**THE V-CHIP  
EDUCATION  
PROJECT**

# A Parent's Guide to the TV Ratings and V-Chip

**THE CENTER FOR MEDIA EDUCATION**

**THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION**

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# Why A Parent's Guide to the TV Ratings and V-Chip?

**M**any parents are more concerned than ever before about the impact of TV on their children. They want to do what they can to monitor the kinds of violence, sex or adult language their children are exposed to on TV.

The TV ratings and the V-Chip can help parents navigate their children's way through the vast world of television. The TV ratings can help parents figure out which programs are inappropriate for a certain child's age or unsuitable because of sex, violence or adult language. The V-Chip can help parents "screen out" the programs with TV ratings they don't want their children to watch. The V-Chip is already built into new TV sets - parents who want to use it just have to turn it on when they set up their new TV. If you want to use the V-Chip, but don't plan to buy a new TV, you can purchase a special "set-top box" that does the same thing.

Not all parents will want to use the V-Chip, but many will. This booklet is designed to help parents understand how the TV ratings and the V-Chip work. It explains what each rating means, how to use the V-Chip, and who to contact if you have other questions. Once you know how the ratings and the V-Chip work, you can decide if these new tools can work for you and your family.



WHY A PARENT'S GUIDE?





## Understanding the TV Ratings

# What the TV Parental Guidelines Mean

In 1997, the TV industry began using a TV ratings system designed to give parents more information about the content and age-appropriateness of TV shows. These ratings are called the TV Parental Guidelines.

Here are the official TV Parental Guidelines symbols and definitions. We've also provided some additional tips—in italics—to help you understand what each rating means, based on what we've learned from monitoring how the ratings are applied to programs.

**Audience:** Indicates the audience for which a television program is appropriate

**Content Label:** Indicates shows containing higher levels of violence, sex, adult language, or suggestive dialogue



### The Content Labels

TV Parental Guidelines may have one or more letters added to the basic rating to let parents know when a show contains higher levels of violence, sex, adult language or suggestive dialogue:

- V - violence
- S - sexual situations
- L - coarse or crude indecent language
- D - suggestive dialogue (usually means talk about sex)
- FV - fantasy violence



### All Children

This program is designed to be appropriate for all children. Whether animated or live action, the themes and elements in this program are specifically designed for a very young audience, including children from ages 2-6. This program is not expected to frighten younger children.

*What you need to know: Not all TV-Y shows are violence-free. Some shows with cartoon violence are rated TV-Y, such as the "Road Runner" cartoons. There is no content rating to let you know if a TV-Y show contains violence.*



### Directed to Older Children

This program is designed for children age 7 and above. It may be more appropriate for children who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality. Themes and elements in this program may include mild fantasy or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of 7. Therefore, parents may wish to consider the suitability of this program for their very young children.

*What you need to know: TV-Y7 shows that contain a lot of fantasy violence are supposed to be labeled with the "FV" rating. But even some TV-Y7 shows without the FV label may contain fantasy or comedic violence that could be of concern to some parents, although it is usually much milder than in those shows with the FV rating.*



### Directed to Older Children - Fantasy Violence

For those programs where fantasy violence may be more intense or more combative than other programs in the TV-Y7 category, such programs will be designated TV-Y7-FV.

**What you need to know:** A TV-Y7-FV rating indicates a program that may contain some or all of the following characteristics: violence as a prevalent feature of the program; fighting presented in an exciting—even thrilling—way; villains and superheros valued for their combat abilities; violent acts glorified; and violence depicted as an acceptable and effective solution to a problem. Fantasy violence may be part of an animated cartoon, a live-action show, or a program that combines both animation and live-action.



### General Audience

Most parents would find this program appropriate for all ages. Although this rating does not signify a program designed specifically for children, most parents may let younger children watch this program unattended. It contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.

**What you need to know:** Most TV-G shows don't contain any sex, violence or adult language at all. Those that do have such content are usually mild. There are no content ratings used on TV-G shows to let you know if they do contain such content.



### Parental Guidance Suggested

This program contains material that parents may find unsuitable for younger children. Many parents may want to watch it with their younger children. The theme itself may call for parental guidance and/or the program contains one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D).

**What you need to know:** Many TV-PG shows do contain moderate levels of sexual dialogue or violence, and not all of them are labeled with the content ratings. TV-PG shows with higher levels of sex, violence or adult language are usually labeled with content labels.



### Parents Strongly Cautioned

This program contains some material that parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age. Parents are strongly urged to exercise greater care in monitoring this program and are cautioned against letting children under the age of 14 watch unattended. This program contains one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).

**What you need to know:** Most TV-14 shows contain sex, violence or adult language. Not all of those shows are labeled with the content descriptors. TV-14 shows with the highest levels of sex, violence or adult language are usually labeled with the content ratings. A TV-14 rating without content labels may also indicate a program with a mature theme.



### Mature Audience Only

This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S), or crude indecent language (L).

**What you need to know:** Very few shows are labeled TV-MA.



## *More About the TV Ratings*

# Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

**T**he chart in the previous section explains what each TV rating means. Once you become familiar with the guidelines, it's up to you to decide how to use them in your family's best interests. Remember that the TV Parental Guidelines are a tool—not a substitute for parental responsibility. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions about the ratings.

### **What are the TV Parental Guidelines?**

The TV Parental Guidelines have two parts: an age-based rating that indicates the age group for which a particular program is designed, and a content-based rating that lets you know if the show contains higher levels of sex, violence or adult language. The age-based ratings are similar to those used to rate movies, except that the TV Parental Guidelines also include two ratings for shows specifically designed for children: TV-Y, for all children; and TV-Y7, for children 7 and older.

### **How do the ratings work with the V-Chip?**

The V-Chip is technology built into a TV set that "reads" the rating for a particular TV program. Once you decide which TV ratings are inappropriate for your children, you can use the V-Chip to block out programs with these ratings.

### **Can I use the ratings without a V-Chip?**

Even without a V-Chip, ratings offer useful information for parents who may be concerned about the age-appropriateness or content of a program. By understanding what the different ratings mean, and finding out how different shows are rated, you can use the ratings to guide your children's viewing habits.

### **How can you find out what a program is rated?**

To find out a program's rating, check your local TV program listings, *TV Guide*, or look for the on-screen display at the start of a show. Most newspapers print the rating next to the program name and scheduled time in the TV listings guide. If your local newspaper does not include the program rating, call the publisher and ask that it be included. If you have a V-Chip, you don't need to check the rating of each show, since you can simply program your TV to block any shows that receive particular ratings.



### **How is the rating displayed on the TV screen?**

The rating symbol appears in the upper left-hand corner of the TV screen during the first 15 seconds of a program. If a program is longer than one hour, the symbol is repeated again at the beginning of each hour of the broadcast.

### **Are all television programs rated?**

The TV Parental Guidelines are used to rate most types of programs—including talk shows, soap operas, sitcoms, dramas, and movies. Two types of shows are not rated by these guidelines: news and sports. Also, unedited movies shown on premium cable channels—such as HBO, Showtime or Cinemax—are not rated with this system. Unedited movies on cable TV will display a rating, but it is the original movie theater rating from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). For more information about the movie ratings, see page 6.

### **Who decides how a program is rated?**

The TV industry is responsible for rating its own programming. This means that the producer who creates the program or the network that broadcasts it decides what the rating will be.

### **Do all broadcast networks and cable programmers rate their TV programs?**

The ratings system is voluntary. The entire TV industry has been strongly encouraged to rate its programming, but not everyone is participating. This is why some programs you watch do not display a rating, and others display age ratings but not content labels. As of this writing, BET (Black Entertainment Television) does not rate its programs at all, and NBC does not use the content labels to indicate if a show contains sex, violence or adult language.

### **Why are children's programs rated differently from other programs?**

Children are a special audience—they watch and understand television in different ways than teens and adults. Research has shown that many young children do not yet have the ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality and can be easily influenced and frightened by sights and sounds.

### **What are the ratings for children's programs?**

Children's programming is divided into two age categories: TV-Y and TV-Y7. A TV-Y rating means that the producers consider the program to be appropriate for children of all ages, including those as young as 2 years old. The TV-Y7 rating means the producers designed the show for children ages 7 and older. The reason that the guidelines divide at age 7 is because experts have found that children younger than 7 often cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is make-believe.



**How can I tell whether or not a children's show contains violence?**

You can't always tell from the ratings whether or not a children's show contains violence. A special rating for "fantasy violence" (FV) is used to indicate more intense levels of violence than in other shows in the TV-Y7 category. Mild levels of fantasy or animated violence can appear in the TV-Y and TV-Y7 categories without receiving the "FV" label.

**What kinds of violent content may appear in a program with an "FV" rating?**

A TV-Y7-FV rating indicates a program that may contain some or all of the following characteristics: violence as a prevalent feature of the program; fighting presented in an exciting—even thrilling—way; villains and superheros valued for their combat abilities; violent acts glorified; violence depicted as an acceptable and effective solution to a problem.

Fantasy violence may be part of an animated cartoon, a live-action show, or a program that combines both animation and live-action.

**What about violence and sexual content in the news?**

News is exempt from the TV ratings, so it will not carry either the age-based or content labels.

**What can you do if you don't agree with a TV rating?**

Anyone who wants to question a rating given to a particular TV program can contact the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board. The Monitoring Board makes sure the ratings are applied in a consistent and appropriate way. The Board is made up of 24 members: six each from the broadcast industry, the cable industry, and the creative community; and five non-industry members drawn from leading child advocacy, medical, religious and educational organizations. It is currently chaired by the president of the Motion Picture Association of America.

To contact the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, use the address and phone number on page 14 of this booklet.

**WHAT ARE THE MOVIE RATINGS?**

When you watch a movie on cable TV that has not been edited for television, the original movie rating by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) is used instead of a TV rating. The V-Chip can be set to block MPAA-rated movies on premium cable channels, such as HBO, Showtime or Cinemax. Movie ratings are as follows:

- G** General Audiences. All ages admitted.
- PG** Parental Guidance Suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.
- PG-13** Parents Strongly Cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.
- R** Restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or guardian.
- NC-17** No One 17 and Under Admitted.



## *Using the V-Chip*

# What Parents Should Know About the V-Chip

### **How does the V-Chip work with the TV ratings?**

**T**he rating that flashes on the screen during the first 15 seconds of a program contains a special electronic identification signal that registers how the program has been rated. All TVs with the V-Chip can receive and understand the electronic rating signals. These signals are sent from TV broadcasters and cable networks in the same way that closed-captioning information is transmitted.

Parents can use the TV ratings to identify programs they want to block with the V-Chip. In fact, the V-Chip allows parents to identify the ratings they wish to block on two different rating systems: the TV Parental Guidelines, and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) movie ratings (used on any unedited movies shown on premium cable channels). By following the screen directions offered for the two separate ratings systems, parents can ensure that TV programming rated on either system is included in their V-Chip programming "strategy." For more information on movie ratings, see page 6.

### **Is it possible to block all shows that contain violence?**

It's not quite that easy. No matter how you program your V-Chip, some shows with violence will get through. Some shows with violence, including those shown on BET and NBC, and even some children's shows, will not be filtered out by simply selecting "V" or "FV." In addition, news and sports are exempt, so they would not be blocked by selecting "V." The best way to block out most violence is to use the age-based ratings to determine what programs are not appropriate for your children.

### **How do I program my V-Chip TV set?**

Once you understand what each of the ratings means, programming a V-Chip TV set is a matter of following step-by-step directions. All new sets will include V-Chip programming instructions in one or two places: (1) an on-screen menu that displays set-up options once the TV has been turned on, and (2) a written instruction guide that is included with the operator's manual for the new TV.

### **Is the V-Chip activated as soon as I turn on my TV?**

The V-Chip will not operate unless you select the option to activate it. Then, a display of the ratings menu will show on the screen that allows you to pick the ratings you wish to block. It is important to remember that you must first activate the V-Chip (by choosing the appropriate option given through the on-screen or written instructions) and then program your settings (by choosing the ratings to block) before it will start to work.

**How do I prevent my children from undoing the V-Chip?**

All V-Chip TV sets will request that you enter a personal identification number just as you would do with an automatic banking card. This number—called a parental lock code—will act as your password in order to change settings, activate and de-activate the V-Chip. Most TV brands will request this number through a display on the screen. Check the written instructions for your TV set to find out how to enter the code.

**Do I have to buy a new TV to get a V-Chip?**

A V-Chip set-top box, which can be attached to your old TV set, allows you to block programs in the same way as the new V-Chip TV sets. Check to see which local stores carry the set-top boxes.

**What if I forget my password number?**

You should look in your TV's operating manual to find out what to do if you forget your parental lock code number. Each TV brand may differ slightly, but most will offer one of two options: (1) a 1-800 customer service phone number, which you can call to find out how to re-set your password number, or (2) instructions in the new operating manual, which will explain how to void an old password number and set a new one. It's a good idea to write down your parental lock code number and keep it away from children.

**Can I override the V-Chip settings if I want to watch a program?**

You can turn off the V-Chip any time you want by entering your parental lock code number and following the directions for your TV set. You can re-activate the V-Chip the same way.

**What happens when I turn my V-Chip TV set off?**

Once you have entered your parental lock code number, selected the ratings to block and then activated the V-Chip, this information is stored in the TV's "memory." If you turn off your TV and then turn it on to view later, the V-Chip will continue to block programs with the ratings you have selected.

**How do I change the settings on my V-Chip TV?**

You can change the V-Chip settings at any time, whether you want to add new ratings to block or simply change your previous selections. First, enter your parental lock code number and then follow the same basic steps as before.





**Can I program my V-Chip TV set to block either age-based or content-based ratings, or a combination of both?**

It is possible to program the V-Chip to block all shows in a particular age-based rating, or to block only those shows in that age group that have higher levels of sex, violence, adult language, or sexual dialogue. Some V-Chip TV sets have separate on-screen menu displays for age and content categories, while others may display both age-based and content-based ratings in the same screen. No matter how your TV set operates, the V-Chip will block programs the same way:

***Blocking Age Categories:***

To block all shows within a certain age category, set the V-Chip for that age rating. It automatically blocks out all programming at that age level as well as all higher age categories. For example, if you set the V-Chip to block programs with a TV-PG rating, all programs with TV-PG, TV-14, and TV-MA ratings will automatically be blocked.

***Blocking Content Categories:***

If you'd prefer to block only TV-PG shows that contain higher levels of violence, while letting through other TV-PG shows, you can select TV-PG-V instead of TV-PG. This will only block those shows with the "TV-PG-V" label, and not TV-PG shows with adult language (L), sexual situations (S) or suggestive dialogue (D).

**Can I block individual programs?**

Many TV sets allow parents to block programs based on date, time or channel. For example, if you don't want your child to watch a particular show that airs at 10 p.m. on a particular channel, check your written instructions to see how to program this into your TV. Once you have set your TV to block programming that airs on the day, time and/or channel you've identified, this setting remains until you decide to change it. It is important to remember that not every TV set includes this feature, so check your operating manual to make sure.

**Can I block individual channels?**

Check your TV's operating manual to see if you are able to block individual channels. If your TV set has this feature, you can program your TV to block a particular channel permanently until you decide to change this setting.

**Which TV manufacturers offer the V-Chip TV sets?**

As of January 2000, all TV manufacturers in the United States are supposed to include V-Chips in TV sets 13 inches and larger. Many V-Chip TVs will be available for purchase by July 1, 1999. You should be able to purchase V-Chip TVs at any retail outlet that sells TV sets.

*TV Tips***Viewing With Your Family**

**E**very family uses TV differently. If you are concerned about the amount of time your kids spend with TV, or the kind of content they're watching, there are steps you can take, in addition to using the TV ratings or the V-Chip:

**Plan Your TV Time**

- ✘ Set TV time limits—experts recommend children watch no more than 1 to 2 hours each day, including videotapes.
- ✘ Help children make a TV plan for each day—how much, which programs and when to watch. If you don't approve of their TV choices, explain why and help them make a more appropriate selection.
- ✘ Make a "no TV" rule during dinner—use this time for family conversation.

**Make Your Own TV Guidelines**

- ✘ Get into the habit of checking the TV rating before you watch a program.
- ✘ If you have not seen a program your child watches, prescreen an episode to make sure the TV rating is accurate and the content is appropriate.
- ✘ Whether or not you decide to use the ratings and the V-Chip, let your children know which shows are off-limits.

**Watch TV With Your Child**

- ✘ Whenever possible, watch TV with your child and talk about the program while you watch.
- ✘ Keep TV sets out of kids' bedrooms.
- ✘ If TVs are in a room where you spend time as a family, that will increase your opportunities to watch together and talk about the program.
- ✘ If you can't watch together, try to know what your kids are watching and find a time to talk with them about it later.



### **Learn to Watch TV Carefully and Critically**

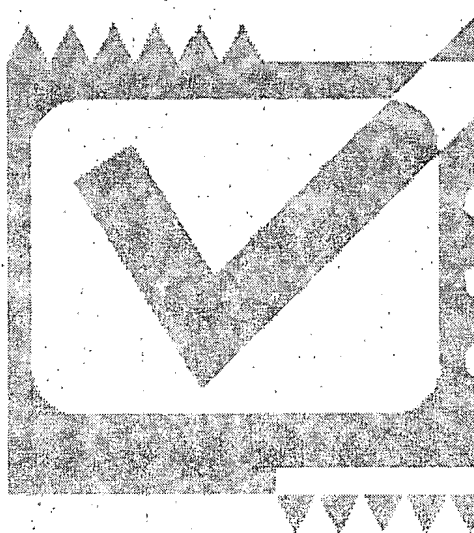
- ✘ Pay attention to how TV and other media might be affecting your children's behavior—what they talk about, how they dress, who they admire, and what items they own with product logos.
- ✘ Help your children interpret media messages for themselves—ask them how they feel about the way a character handled a situation and how they might handle it differently.
- ✘ Use the VCR as a tool to tape special programs that help kids deal with tough issues, and then watch these shows with your children.

### **Use TV to Talk With Kids About Tough Issues**

- ✘ Television can offer you a springboard to discuss tough issues with your kids. It's not always easy to talk to kids about violence, sex, alcohol or drugs, but once a TV character opens the door the time is right.
- ✘ Teach children to question and challenge messages that promote violent solutions to problems, encourage inappropriate and risky sexual behavior, or make it look cool to use alcohol and drugs—point out how these values compare to the ones you want them to learn.
- ✘ Discuss any alternative solutions TV characters could use to resolve real-life problems.

### **Set an Example When You Watch TV**

- ✘ Be selective when you use TV—pay attention to how much and what you watch when children are around.
- ✘ Watch programs that you believe are unsuitable for children when they're not around—videotape these shows to watch at another time.
- ✘ Make it a habit to use all media critically—choose movies, magazines, music, books, websites and other media for yourself that support your values.



*Talk With Your Kids*

## Talking With Your Kids About Tough Issues

In today's world, kids are confronting issues about sex, relationships, violence, alcohol, drugs, and other tough issues at increasingly early ages. Parents want to protect their kids, educate them, and impart their values, but they often express uncertainty about how and when to do so. Having conversations with a child about sex and other tough issues can be difficult for parents, but it is essential. Here are some tips about talking with kids about tough issues:

**1. Start Early**

As a parent, you have a wonderful opportunity to talk with your child about these issues first, before anyone else can confuse your child with incorrect information or explanations that lack the sense of values you want to instill. We need to take advantage of this "window of opportunity" with young children and talk to them earlier and more often, particularly about tough issues like sex, HIV/AIDS, violence, alcohol and drugs.

**2. Initiate Conversations With Your Child**

While we want our children to feel comfortable enough to come to us with any questions and concerns—and thus give us the opportunity to begin conversations—this doesn't always occur. That's why it's perfectly okay—at times even necessary—to begin the discussions ourselves. TV and other media are great tools for this. Just one or two questions could help start a valuable discussion that comes from everyday circumstances and events.

**3. Especially about Tough Topics Like Sex, Drugs, and Violence**

If you feel uncomfortable talking about such sensitive subjects with your young child, you're not alone. Many parents feel awkward and uneasy, especially if they are anxious about the subject. But, for your kid's sake, try to overcome your nervousness and bring up the issue with your child. After all, our children are hearing about it both through the media and other sources, and that information may not include the values that we want our kids to have.

**4. Create an Open Environment**

Young children want their parents to discuss difficult subjects with them. However, our kids will look to us for answers only if they feel we will be open to their questions. It's up to us to create the kind of atmosphere in which our children can ask any questions—on any subject—freely and without fear of consequence. How do you create such an atmosphere? By being encouraging, supportive and positive.



TALK WITH YOUR KIDS

### 5. Communicate Your Values

As a parent, you have a wonderful opportunity to explain important issues before anyone else can confuse your child with "just-the-facts" explanations that lack the sense of values and moral principles you want to instill. Don't hesitate to make your beliefs clear. Remember, research shows that children want and need moral guidance from their moms and dads, so don't hesitate to make your beliefs clear.

### 6. Listen to Your Child

Listening carefully to our children helps us to better understand what our children really want to know as well as what they already understand. And it helps keep us from talking above our youngsters' heads and confusing them even further.

### 7. Try to Be Honest

Whatever your children's age, they deserve honest answers and explanations. It's what strengthens our children's ability to trust. Also, when we don't provide a straightforward answer, kids make up their own fantasy explanations, which can be more frightening than any real, honest response we can offer.

### 8. Be Patient

By listening patiently, we allow our children to think at their own pace and we are letting them know that they are worthy of our time.

### 9. Use Everyday Opportunities to Talk

It's important to talk with your kids about tough issues often, but there isn't always time in the day to sit down for a long talk. Also, kids tend to resist formal discussions about today's toughest issues, often categorizing them as just another lecture from mom and dad. But if we use "talk opportunities," moments that arise in everyday life, as occasions for discussion, our children will be a lot less likely to tune us out.

### 10. Talk About It Again. And Again

Since most young children can only take in small bits of information at any one time, they won't learn all they need to know about a particular topic from a single discussion. That's why it's important to let a little time pass, then ask the child to tell you what she remembers about your conversation. This will help you correct any misconceptions and fill in missing facts.



*Talking With Kids About Tough Issues* is a public education campaign to support parents by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now. For more information about the campaign, or for a free booklet on how to talk with kids, contact: 1-800-CHILD-44 or [www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org)



## Getting Involved

# Where To Find Out More

**T**his is your chance to let the folks who rate TV shows know how you think they're doing: Is the rating system helpful to you as a parent? Do you disagree with how certain shows are rated? There are a number of places you can send your comments. Pick any one of those listed below, or let them all know how you feel! If you'd like, copy the form on page 16, and use it to send in your comments.

**(1) The TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board.**

This is the group that handles public comments on the ratings system or how individual shows are rated.

You can call them at:  
202-879-9364

Or write them at:  
TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board  
P.O. Box 14097  
Washington, DC 20004

You can also look them up  
on the Web at:  
[www.tvguidelines.org](http://www.tvguidelines.org)

**(2) Your local television station or cable operator.**

Look them up in the phone book, and let them know if you agree or disagree with how their shows are rated.

**(3) The Federal Communications Commission's V-Chip Task Force.**

The FCC is the government agency working with TV manufacturers, program producers and parents to ensure the effective implementation of V-Chip technology.

You can call them toll-free at:  
1-888-225-5322

Or write them at:  
Mass Media Bureau, or  
Cable Services Bureau  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

You can also look them up  
on the Web at:  
[www.fcc.org](http://www.fcc.org)



GETTING INVOLVED

#### (4) The major broadcast networks.

If you have some comments directed toward one of the TV networks, you can contact them directly:

**ABC Television Network**  
77 West 66th Street  
New York, NY 10023  
212-456-7777  
[abc.go.com](http://abc.go.com)

**UPN Network**  
11800 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
310-575-7000  
[www.upn.com](http://www.upn.com)

**WB Network**  
4000 Warner Boulevard  
Burbank, CA 91522  
818-977-5000

**Fox Broadcasting Company**  
10201 West Pico Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90035  
310-369-1000  
[www.foxworld.com](http://www.foxworld.com)

**CBS Television Network**  
524 West 57th Street  
New York, NY 10019  
212-975-4321  
[www.cbs.com](http://www.cbs.com)

**Pax-TV**  
601 Clearwater Park Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
561-659-4122  
[www.pax.net](http://www.pax.net)

**NBC Television Network**  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, NY 10112  
212-664-4444  
[www.nbc.com](http://www.nbc.com)

#### WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

There are many organizations and resources to help your family make quality TV choices and learn more about media's effects on children. Here are a few to get you started.

**American Academy of Pediatrics**  
601 13th Street, NW, Suite 400 North  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-347-8600  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**  
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016  
202-966-7300  
[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

**American Psychological Association**  
750 1st Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
202-336-5500  
[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

**Center for Media Literacy**  
4727 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 403  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
323-931-4177  
1-800-226-9494  
[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)

**National PTA**  
330 N. Wabash Avenue, Suite 2100  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312-670-6782  
[www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

**National Institute on Media and the Family**  
606 24th Avenue South, Suite 606  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
612-672-5437  
[www.mediaandthefamily.org](http://www.mediaandthefamily.org)

**Center for Media Education**  
2120 L Street, NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20037  
202-331-7833  
[www.cme.org](http://www.cme.org)

**Children Now**  
1212 Broadway, Fifth Floor  
Oakland, CA 94612  
510-763-2444  
[www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)





HOW DO YOU RATE IT?

## How Do YOU Rate It?

# Making Your Voice Heard

**You can copy this form and use it to send your comments to the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, or to any of the other groups listed on pages 14 and 15.**

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE  
CHECK



I disagree with how a particular show I watched was rated.

Name of show: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time it was on: \_\_\_\_\_

Station call letters or cable network: \_\_\_\_\_

How the show was rated: \_\_\_\_\_

Why you disagreed with the rating: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



I often disagree with how certain shows are rated.

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Thank you for the TV ratings system—it's helpful.



I usually agree with how most shows I watch are rated.



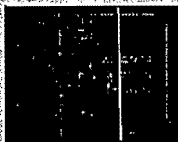
Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Send to: TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, P.O. Box 14097, Washington, DC 20004*



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE TV RATINGS AND V-CHIP  
The Center for Media Education (CME) is a national non-profit, nonpartisan organization, founded in 1991, dedicated to creating a quality electronic media culture for children, their families, and the community. Through its research, public education, and outreach initiatives, CME has been the leading force behind expanding children's educational TV programs and fostering safeguards on the Internet and television.

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is an independent national health care philanthropy and is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries. This project was conducted as part of the Foundation's Program on the Entertainment Media & Public Health, which was established to examine the impact of entertainment media on society, and to work with the entertainment industry to help convey important health messages to the public.



*Center for Media Education*  
2120 L Street, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
Tel: (202) 331-7833  
Fax: (202) 331-7841  
[www.cme.org](http://www.cme.org)



*Kaiser Family Foundation*  
2400 Sand Hill Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
Tel: (650) 854-9400  
Fax: (650) 854-4800  
[www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)

**For another free copy of this booklet, call:**  
1-877-2-VCHIP-TV

**To order multiple copies of this booklet, call:**  
1-800-656-4533 (ask for publication #1491)

**Visit the V-Chip Education Project Web Site:**  
[www.vchipeducation.org](http://www.vchipeducation.org)

#### **Author Attributions**

Bobbie Eisenstock, Ph.D. is the primary author of this parent guide. An educator and media consultant, Dr. Eisenstock specializes in the social and psychological effects of television and new interactive media on children and the family.

Cathryn C. Borum is the co-author and managing editor of this publication.

The chapter "Talk With Your Kids" is excerpted from a booklet by Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation, and was written by Lynne S. Dumas. A free copy of the full booklet is available by calling 1-800-CHILD-44 or at [www.talkingwithkids.org](http://www.talkingwithkids.org).

#### **Design:**

Words • Pictures • Ideas ([www.wpiweb.com](http://www.wpiweb.com))

July 1999





**THE V-CHIP  
EDUCATION  
PROJECT**

**CENTER FOR MEDIA  
E D U C A T I O N  
2120 L STREET, NW  
S U I T E 2 0 0  
WASHINGTON, DC  
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PHONE: 456 2878, 6687  
FAX:

FROM: Ann Delany

PHONE: 202.393.1010  
FAX: 202.393.5510

Number of pages, including cover sheet:

3

MESSAGE

I'll call you tomorrow -  
let me know if there's  
anything else -  
Ann

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Suite 900 East

Washington, DC 20001

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After  
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el

# Movie-Rating Group Is Frisking Ads for Guns

By BRUCE ORWALL  
And JOHN LIPPMAN  
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
Memo to movie advertisers: Hold your fire.

Amid a growing debate over a possible link between movies and youth violence,



the movie-industry trade group is telling Hollywood to lay down its arms. As the industry tries to fend off government regulation of how it markets entertainment to kids, the Motion Picture Association of America has quietly told studios in recent

weeks that it plans to get tougher on the use of gun and other violent imagery in movie advertising, including TV spots and previews in theaters.

"If you're brandishing a gun in a poster or a trailer or anything, it's going to be looked at more intensely than it was," says MPAA Chairman Jack Valenti. "And some of those are going to be toned down."

The policy shift isn't a legal matter, but part of what it calls the movie industry's program of "voluntary self-regulation," which includes the assignment of ratings to films. While it hasn't issued a directive, the group is informing studios about the new policy as they submit advertising materials for review.

The MPAA, which lobbies on behalf of seven major studios that fund it, approves all advertising materials for films that are submitted to be rated.

In an interview, Mr. Valenti characterized the new policy as one of "heightened scrutiny." It doesn't add new specific prohibitions to MPAA policy, which already bans ads from showing scenes with weapons held to a person's head.

But some movie marketing executives in Hollywood say they have been told by the MPAA that the group will specifically disallow many images that show weapons being fired, especially straight at the camera. Some studio executives say that guns held in a pointing position may also be off

limits.

The MPAA recently told Seagram Co.'s Universal Pictures to delete an image of a firing machine gun from a trailer for "Mystery Men," a comedy about ragtag superhero heroes. Universal declined to comment.

Independent studio Trimark Pictures, a unit of Trimark Holdings Inc. two weeks ago submitted advertising materials for a home-video release of "Mr. Murder." The original ad, featuring a pointed gun, was rejected. When Trimark resubmitted it, substituting a knife for the gun, it was approved.

Artisan Entertainment Inc. President Amir Malin says it isn't just gun violence. Please Turn to Page B4, Column 1

# Movie-Rating Group Starts Frisking Ads for Weapons

Continued From Page B1

getting fresh attention. In a trailer touting Arlann's coming Steven Soderbergh film "The Limey," the MPAA recently vetoed an image of someone being thrown off a balcony. "That hasn't happened before," he says, adding that much worse violence appears on TV cop shows.

Mr. Mallin adds that the studio had been warned that intense scrutiny was coming. "After Columbine, we did get a call from the MPAA saying they would be tougher on the issue of violence," he says.

The MPAA's edict is Hollywood's strongest response yet to the political pressure in the wake of the recent Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colo. In recent weeks, President Clinton has ordered a government investigation on the marketing of violent entertainment to children, which may result in studio marketing records being subpoenaed.

Also, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde has introduced legislation that would outlaw the sale of obscenely violent movies, video games and books to children. Movie-theater owners have agreed to begin checking IDs of teenagers trying to buy tickets to R-rated movies.

Mr. Valentini says the industry isn't flinching under pressure. Rather, he says, the group is trying to be a responsive participant in the national debate on youth violence. "Trying to lessen the reliance on guns in advertising if we possibly can is a small way of trying to be part of this movement," he says.

Mr. Valentini adds: "Suppose I told you that yesterday the speed limit on I-95 was 75 and tomorrow it says 55. We changed the speed limit, that's all."

Guns and gunfire have been staples of movie advertising for years. Perhaps the most vivid recent examples were the ammo-heavy previews for "The Matrix," the science-fiction thriller starring Keanu Reeves that was released in April by Time Warner Inc.'s Warner Bros. unit. One "Matrix" preview climaxed with Mr. Reeves, a gun in each fist, firing rounds straight into the camera. Another showed slow-motion shootouts and included the line "Guns. We need lots of guns."

Both previews were preceded by a stamp of approval that reads: "The following preview has been approved for all audiences by the Motion Picture Association of America."

"The Matrix" isn't alone in featuring gunplay. The poster for "Payback," released last winter by Viacom Inc.'s Paramount Pictures, featured star Mel Gibson pointing a gun into the camera. The movie's preview also shows Mr. Gibson firing straight at the viewer. Even advertisements for more serious fare, such as Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan," showed men pointing guns.

The MPAA's rating system is voluntary, and nonmember studios can take their films to the marketplace without being rated. But studios feel bound to submit their films for rating because theater operators usually won't accept unrated movies.

Once a film is submitted to the MPAA

for rating, the organization insists on approving all the film's ad materials. If a studio were to air a rejected TV spot over the MPAA's objection, Mr. Valentini says the group would revoke the movie's rating.

He concedes the new policy will require some adjustments. "If I were a marketing guy I'd be screaming my head off," he says. But the rating system is designed for parents, not directors, film marketers or studio executives, he says. And with current concerns about movie violence, he says, Hollywood can't be unresponsive.

But the new crackdown is causing some confusion for movie marketers. Some studios have been told to edit TV spots that contain imagery in preview trailers that the MPAA cleared before the Columbine tragedy. DreamWorks SKG, for instance, was ordered to cut a sequence, which began approved for the trailer of "The Haunting," from a TV commercial for the thriller. The studio declined to comment, but the scene at issue showed spikes dropping from a ceiling onto actress Lili Taylor.

NATO

Frank ~~Samolis~~ Samolis

457-5244

Exec Dir NATO Margaret Grosso

813-506-1778

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Aud Rtg's  
- music - explicit  
1700s  
summers  
not  
ESAB - the room

John Fithian

Pres

g NATO ESAB NATO

we have done a variety of things to implement  
3 parts

on the ent + ed + gov study

gov study

FTC study: provide all docs to FTC  
met w/ them, did supplements/  
document production  
held back nothing  
FTC: pleased

ed: on-going - have had several meetings  
w/ National PTA

Schl Psychologists

have gotten ideas on how better to ed  
parents still in concept phase

internet site provision of things 7 within 4 days

Wld wt + Nat PTA + NEA + Schl psych  
go that way can link on their ratings system

Schl principals

on enforcement

Nat ID cr policy we have done several things  
on compliance;

bd mtg in november

wt MPAA convened session to

put add'l articles in trade newsletters

+ when it's called to our attention we  
can test more

ed+ent

NATO + MPAA agreed at Nat bd mtg  
to provide add'l details about rating  
agency

print  
in ads we run (bulletins, theater, etc ads)

explanation 2 rating included in ad

movie poster or ad 1-1st by for content  
on specific movie  
responding to PTA

**FAX TRANSMISSION****INTERACTIVE DIGITAL SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION**

1775 EYE STREET NW, SUITE 420

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

202/833-4372

FAX: 202/833-4431

TO: Anne O'Leary  
FROM: Alec French

DATE: 10/14/99 456-2878

PAGES (including cover): 12

RE:

Info on IDSA proactive efforts  
COMMENTS:

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## 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 5,600 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.

OCT-14-1999 15:34

BSMG WORLDWIDE

202 659 8287 P.02/08

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Washington, D.C. 20008

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**For Immediate Release**  
**October 13, 1999**

Tiger works TPA

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

## **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 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.

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

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BSMG WORLDWIDE

202 659 8287 P.04/08

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](http://www.idsa.com) or by calling Dan Sweet at (202) 739-0221]*

####

# **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.



# IDSA NEWS

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**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 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 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. "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](http://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 WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

January 6, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FROM: ANN O'LEARY  
RUBY SHAMIR

CC: MELANNE VERVEER

SUBJECT: MEDIA RATINGS SYSTEMS

---

The purpose of this memo is to update you on the President's challenges to the media industry to improve its ratings systems and to lay out some of the policy implications of implementing a uniform ratings system for media and entertainment. To provide you with a reminder of the various ratings systems, we have attached a copy of the memo to the President prepared by Neera Tanden explaining the different ratings systems for the various media and entertainment industries.

As you have pointed out, the main problems with the various ratings systems are that there are far too many ratings each based on different criteria, parents are not given good information on how to best use the ratings in many of the industries, and many of the ratings systems are not being adequately enforced. In order to address some of these concerns, the President has issued a number of challenges to the various industries. By and large, the industries have been working hard to meet those challenges, and should be applauded for their efforts. These various efforts, however, have not been aligned in order to develop one comprehensive system that would be easy for parents to understand and could be more easily enforced. As you recently noted, the industries need to be pushed further to work toward an easily understandable and enforceable system.

In order to move forward on this agenda, we agree that you should meet with industry representatives in order to hear about their progress thus far, to better understand the reasoning behind each system, and to brainstorm with the industry about a uniform system, but also to hear ideas from them on other ways in which the ratings systems could be simplified for parents and could be more readily enforced.

**Action Taken on the President's Challenges**

Below, we have outlined the President's challenges and the progress the industry has made to meet those challenges. As you will see, there are potential impediments to developing a uniform ratings system.

**FTC Report:** As you know, the President called for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Justice Department to jointly study the marketing of violence to children and, specifically, to evaluate the various rating systems. The FTC report will also evaluate the issue of enforceability of movie ratings. The FTC plans to complete the report by the fall of 2000.

**Movies:** The President made a number of challenges to the motion picture industry. First, he challenged theater and video store owners to enforce more strictly the ratings systems on the movies they show, rent, and sell – a challenge that the theater owners accepted. The National Association of Theater Owners (NATO) accepted this challenge and has been working to promote enforcement of the ratings by disseminating information to its members on the importance of checking ID's, and contacting sellers or theaters when informed of a break with policy. NATO has had on-going consultations with educational associations such as the PTA to develop ways to better educate parents. Although it is not yet public, NATO and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) plan to release a new program which will include on all movie advertisements and posters both the rating, as well as movie-specific content information for each individual movie advertised.

Additionally, the President has challenged the whole industry to stop showing guns in any ads or previews children might see, and in response the MPAA has since implemented a policy of heightened scrutiny on movie advertisements.

Finally, the President challenged the movie industry to reevaluate its entire ratings systems, especially the PG rating, to determine whether it is allowing too much gratuitous violence in movies approved for viewing by children. At this point, we are not sure how far the industry has come to meet this challenge, but the FTC is including an evaluation of the movie industry ratings system in its report.

**Television:** The major push in the television industry has been to protect children from programming that their parents believe is inappropriate. In order to accomplish this goal, the President fought for legislation that requires the V-Chip to be installed in all new television sets sold beginning January 1, 2000. This goal was accomplished on time so that all televisions now on the market are installed with the V-Chip. The technology of the V-Chip is based on the television ratings system already developed and currently in use by the television industry. V-Chip is technology built into a TV set that "reads" the rating for a particular TV program and is used by parents to block out programs with these ratings. Currently, all programs on the broadcast networks are rated and encoded for V-Chip use (TV7, TV14, etc.), and all the networks, excluding NBC, use content descriptions in their ratings as well (S,V,L, etc.). Additionally, all cable channels, excluding the Black Entertainment Network (BET), encode their programming with the V-Chip ratings.

In order to promote awareness and give parents tools they need to effectively use the V-Chip, the President called for two new initiatives to make sure the V-Chip becomes a useful tool for parents. The first was the establishment of a V-Chip Task Force to ensure that the V-Chip law is implemented effectively. The FCC established the task force to ensure the V-Chip requirement is enforced; promote parental awareness about the V-Chip; encourage adoption of a standard label identifying television sets that contain the V-Chip; study the use of the V-Chip; and

evaluate the effectiveness of the industry's ratings system. The President also announced a major public awareness campaign about the V-Chip. Since the announcement, all four major networks have agreed to run PSAs on the V-Chip and the Kaiser Family Foundation in partnership with the Center for Media Education have produced a free booklet for parents on how the V-Chip works (please find copy of booklet attached).

One potential impediment to developing one uniform rating system is that the V-Chip has been programmed to read the ratings developed by the television industry. These ratings are based on age-appropriateness, as well as whether a program contains violence, sexual content, or explicit language. While the ratings offer a solid indicator on the age appropriateness and general content of the programming, some in the field have criticized these ratings for not being rigorous or substantive enough. If one uniform system was developed, the V-Chip would need to be reprogrammed to align with the new system or the entire system would need to be aligned with the television ratings.

**Interactive Electronic Games:** The President has also challenged the video game industry to widely inform the public of their ratings and enforce the ratings at the point of sale. In 1994, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) established an independent board, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) to develop and implement ratings for computer software. These ratings provide the most extensive and comprehensive ratings of any in the system and have been applauded by Senator Lieberman for their comprehensive nature. Recently, the IDSA accepted the President's challenge and worked with ESRB to set tough standards in advertising to ensure that video game software makers are providing appropriate, responsible, truthful, and accurate advertising.

The industry also has developed guides for parents to be able to more effectively use the ratings on video games and has distributed these guides at the counter of video game stores over the holiday season. And, the industry has created a point-of-sale system to remind clerks to ask for identification from buyers to ensure that stores are not selling adult-rated games to minors.

If a uniform ratings system were developed, the IDSA would most likely work very hard to ensure that the standards were as tough as those already developed. The most significant problem in this industry is that the ratings are confusing and not easy for parents to understand, and the industry has been criticized for not enforcing the ratings. They are, however, working to address both of these issues.

**Internet:** The Administration has been actively working to encourage the Internet industry to self-regulate and to help give parents the tools they need to protect their children from inappropriate material. As a result of the call to action that you and the President issued last May, the Administration has worked with the Internet industry to encourage the 25 largest Internet providers to develop a comprehensive resource for parents. These companies developed "getnetwise" – a one-stop site where parents and teachers can learn how to provide kids with a safe, educational, and entertaining and age-appropriate online experience. Through this web site, parents can access more than 80 technologies that allow them to monitor the amount of time their child spends on the Internet, and provide them with tools to block inappropriate information, as

well as links to report troubling or illegal material. Both the Internet industry and parent advocacy groups have been very supportive of this work.

A number of large companies on the Internet have begun to use the ratings system for their products with little prodding. One example is America On-Line which recently announced that it will require all games played on the AOL service to be rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), and will work with others in the industry to press for wide adoption of game ratings across the Internet. Games which are rated adults-only or which are not rated will not be available for play on the AOL service. Beyond.com, CNET and eToys joined AOL in this announcement and have agreed that any games in their inventory which have been rated by the ESRB will have their ESRB rating prominently displayed wherever they are sold. Additionally, Amazon.com uses ratings on the music, DVDs and games sold on its web site.

### **Legislative Action**

In June of 1999, Senators McCain and Lieberman introduced the "Media Violence Labeling Act of 1999," which calls for a consistent and comprehensive system for labeling violent content in audio and visual media products (including the labeling of products in advertising and marketing). The bill calls for the various industries to come together and voluntarily submit a joint proposal to the FTC for consideration.



**Ratings System  
Q&A  
December 22, 1999**

**Q: What is the Administration's reaction to the First Lady's announcement that she would seek to scrap the different ratings systems for movies, television, and video games for a single system?**

**A:** The President has long believed in and has fought for giving more information to parents so that they can control what programs come into their living rooms and the media their kids are exposed to. This Administration has long held that a comprehensive, voluntary ratings system would enable parents to keep their kids safe from violent or inappropriate media. The President believes strongly that we all need to accept responsibility for the problem of youth violence and that those in the entertainment industry need to acknowledge their own influence and take responsibility for the messages they send to children.

Over the course of this Administration, the President has worked hard to give parents control over the music, movies, television, and video games their kids are exposed to and has urged the entertainment industry to give parents more information.

- Four years ago, President Clinton and Vice President Gore called for the creation of V-chip legislation. Approximately two weeks from now, all new television sets will have the V-chip installed as a result of this legislation.
- Second, the President has challenged the whole industry to stop showing guns in any ads or previews children might see.
- Third, he challenged theater and video store owners to enforce more strictly the rating systems on the movies they show, rent, and sell – a challenge that the theater owners have accepted.
- Additionally, the President has challenged the movie industry to reevaluate its entire ratings systems, especially the PG rating, to determine whether it is allowing too much gratuitous violence in movies approved for viewing by children.
- The President has also challenged the video game industry to widely inform the public of the ratings and enforce the ratings at the point of sale. Recently, the Interactive Digital Software industry accepted this challenge and set tough standards in advertising to ensure that video game software makers are providing appropriate, responsible, truthful, and accurate advertising. The industry also has developed guides for parents to be able to more effectively use the ratings on video games and has distributed these guides at the counter of video game stores over the holiday season. And, the industry has created a point-of-sale system to remind clerks to ask for identification from buyers to ensure that stores are not selling adult-rated games to minors.

*Long first sheet on President's challenges to media & entertainment  
w/ all the challenges & progress*

*Substance Secretary  
FCC*

*Bottom Briggs  
Randy Simons  
Curtis  
MATT  
NATO  
CC*

*any HHS?*

*JANAY  
CC*

*ratings  
+ content  
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descriptors*

*encoding  
w/  
V-chip*

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are*

- Finally, the President has called on the FTC and the Justice Department to study the marketing of violence to children.

Learning how well it can be done?

Not full

Stay - Entertainment,  
etc.

**JIM KOHLENBERGER@OVP**

01/06/2000 04:56:08 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Ruby Shamir/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: Draft Games Release, as discussed

----- Forwarded by Jim Kohlenberger/OVP on 01/06/2000 04:56 PM -----



**Jillless@aol.com**

11/16/99 10:57:00 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Jim Kohlenberger@OVP@EOP

cc:

Subject: Draft Games Release, as discussed

Jim

The draft release is below, let's talk when you have had a chance to run the traps internally.

Jill

#### AMERICA ONLINE TO REQUIRE RATINGS FOR ALL GAMES PLAYED ON AOL

AOL Endorses Leading ESRB Ratings System for Online Games With Support of  
Key Partners Beyond.com, CNET and eToys

Games Without Ratings or for Adults Only Will Not Be  
Promoted on AOL-Controlled Screens

Dulles, VA, November 18, 1999 -- As part of the Company's commitment to provide parents with the information they need to guide their children's online experience, America Online today announced it will require all games played on the AOL service to be rated by the nation's leading video and computer game rating system, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), and will work with others in the industry to press for wide adoption of game ratings across the Internet.

Joining AOL in this announcement are its partners Beyond.com, CNET and eToys -- who all have agreed that any games in their inventory which have been rated by the ESRB will have their ESRB rating prominently displayed

wherever they are sold. ESRB rating designations range from "Early Childhood," to "Everyone," "Teen," "Mature," and "Adults Only."

Highlights of AOL's initiative on game ratings:

- \* All games available for play on the AOL service will be rated by the ESRB and those ratings will be prominently displayed. Games which are rated adults-only or which are not rated will not be available for play on the AOL service.

- \* AOL and AOL.COM commerce partners with games for sale online which have been rated by the ESRB will prominently display ESRB ratings at the point where they are sold. Games which have not been rated, or which are rated adult-only, will not be promoted from AOL-controlled screens.

- \* AOL and ESRB will take the lead in forming an industry task force to campaign for industry-wide adoption of ratings for all online games, demos and games editorial sites, and to address the issue of shareware.

- \* AOL expects that it and its partners will be fully compliant with this new policy by no later than March, 2000.

Steve Case, Chairman and CEO of America Online, Inc., said: "Electronic games can be a great source of enjoyment for our kids. With our adoption of ESRB ratings for games on our service, and our campaign to encourage the rest of the online industry to support game ratings, we hope that parents everywhere will have easier access to the information they need to make informed decisions about what games to allow their children to play."

Said Jon Sacks, Sr. Vice President and General Manager, AOL Interactive Service: "Parents need good information in order to help their children make the right decisions about what they do both online and in their everyday lives. We want to congratulate our gaming and commerce partners for their important support for the ESRB system, and we look forward to working with the rest of the industry to ensure the widest possible adoption of this valuable resource for parents."

Said Arthur Pober, ESRB Executive Director: quote to come

The ESRB is an independent rating system established in September, 1994 by the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) to give parents and all consumers information about the content of video and computer games so they can make informed purchase and rental decisions. Praised by Peggy Charon, founder of Action for Children's Television and one of the country's leading child advocates, as well as by the nation's foremost consumer group, the Consumer Federation of America, ESRB ratings inform consumers about the age appropriateness of a given game, taking into account both violent and sexual content. Offline retail games are rated by the ESRB, while an ESRB subdivision, ESRBi, rates online games and online editorial game Web sites.

Said Trinka Dyer, Vice President and General Manager of the Beyond.com Consumer Division: "Beyond.com is committed to helping our customers make informed decisions on the types of games they purchase. By featuring ESRB ratings on our site, we are helping parents to determine what games are

appropriate for their children."

Quote from eToys, quote from CNET to come

Said Douglas Lowenstein, President of the Interactive Digital Software Association, the trade group which represents the nation's PC and video game software industry: "As the popularity of online games continues to build, it's critical that parents have the access to the same ESRB age and content ratings that are on the video and PC games sold in traditional retail outlets. AOL's announcement is a landmark breakthrough for game ratings on the Internet and will serve as a catalyst to make ESRB ratings as ubiquitous online as they are on packaged software today."

With today's announcement, AOL and AOL.COM have each launched an online consumer education area with information about this new policy, a link to the ESRB home page and other resources for parents (Keyword: Games Policy). In addition to displaying the ratings for all games available for play on the AOL service, AOL is developing new Parental Controls functions that will allow parents to block their children's access to any or all categories of games on AOL based on ESRB ratings.

A fact sheet on the ESRB/ESRBi ratings system is attached. For more information about ESRB, contact ...

AOL boilerplate ...

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