

***Child Development & Family Life: Media Literacy
Selecting Movies and Videos for Children/Youth
Beginners' Family & Consumer Judging Contest 2007***



Selecting a movie or video game for a child is an important task.

Choose movies and video games wisely.

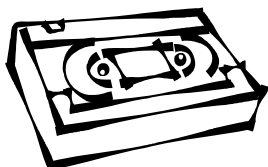
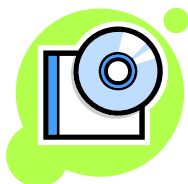
All forms of media deliver messages, that is, they are trying to tell you something.

The message could be positive or negative.

Take the time to look for and listen to the messages and decide if they are good messages for you and your friends.

Think about the pictures and messages on the screen before you buy a movie or game.

- Does a “cool, young” actor smoke or use illegal drugs?
- Are women or men shown only in traditional jobs? (Example: all teachers are women)
- If there is violence, is it looked at as a bad thing? Violence is not normal or acceptable and the characters in the movie should see it as a bad thing.
- Is there sexual content?



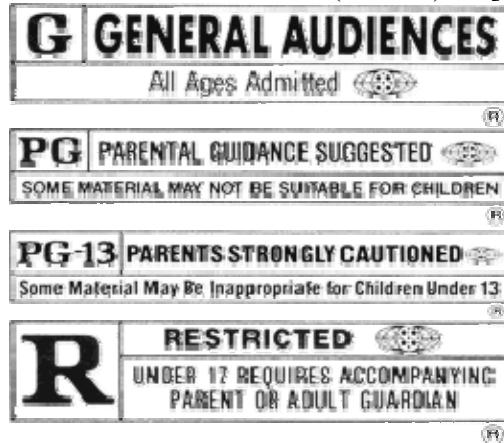
Think It Over Before You Buy!

- Did you know that there are rating scales for movies, TV shows and video games?
 - Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) for movies
 - Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) for video games
 - T.V. Parental Guidelines for television programs
- Ask other people about the content of a movie or game. Is it scary? Does it have too much violence or bad language? Did they like the movie? Would your parents let you watch the movie alone?
- Try to rent the movie or game to try it before buying it for a young child or friend.
- Watch for harmful stereotypes. Examples of stereotypes might be:
 - All construction workers are boys
 - All black people are good basketball players
 - All girls are not strong; they don't have strong muscles
 - All older people cannot hear very well
- Always remember that movies and video games are not real life.
 - Watching too much violence can make people less aware of real violence.
 - Movies and games use special effects and make-up to make people look better than they are or scarier!
 - People often take risks or do things in movies that they would not do in real life. These are called stunts and they have specially trained people to do this. For example, a child may get hurt in the movie and then he is fine again in a little while. This may not be like real life.
- Remember that pediatricians (children's doctors) recommend that children under the age of 2 should not watch T.V. or play computer games.

Look for these things in a good movie

- Have a parent or older brother/sister help you find the correct rating for your age on the Motion Picture rating scale. The MPAA is below.
- Is this a movie that you would want to watch with an adult? If you have questions about something in the movie, talk to an adult. Movies can be good learning experiences.
- Remind yourself that the movie is NOT real life; it is pretend.
- Remember that not all cartoon-like movies are for children.
 - Does the movie have too much strong content – bad language, drug use, violence or sexual content?

Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) [Voluntary Movie Rating System]



G – General audiences – all ages admitted.

- Nothing in theme, language, nudity, sex or violence would be offensive to children/parents
- **G** rating is not a “certificate of approval.” It does not mean that it is a children’s film.
- There is very little violence; no nudity or sex scenes; no illegal drug use

PG: Parental Guidance Suggested. Some Material May Not Be Suitable For Children

- Parents need to examine a **PG** film before letting their child attend or view it
- Some material is not suitable for young children. Parents must decide.
- There may be some bad language (profanity), violence or brief nudity.
- No illegal drug use

PG-13: Parents Strongly Cautioned. Some Parts May Be Inappropriate For Children Under 13

- Beyond boundaries of **PG** for theme, violence, nudity, sex, or language but does not fit in **R**
- Any drug use requires at least a **PG-13** rating.
- Violence is rough or persistent
- A single use of one bad word requires a **PG-13** rating. More uses require an **R**-rating

R: Restricted, Under 17 Requires Accompanying Parent Or Adult Guardian

- Includes hard language, tough violence, or nudity in a sexual scene or drug abuse or some combination of these.

NC-17 No One 17 and Under Admitted

- No children under the age of 17 will be admitted
- Violence, sex, abnormal behavior or drug abuse that most parents would consider too strong and off-limits for children and youth.

Look for these things in a good video game for children/youth

- Have a parent or older brother/sister help you find the correct rating for your age on the video game rating scale The ESRB rating scale is below.
- Choose games for two or more players or team play. It is fun to play with a friend and it helps you learn fair play and taking turns.
- Find games that let you do something positive. For example, you could build your own city (*Sim City*) or roller coaster (*Roller Coaster Tycoon*)
- Find games that allow you to be creative, for example, to make original art or experiment with music or write a story.
- Find games that help you learn and explore. Two examples are:
 - *Civilization* builds a new world or civilization that will stand the test of time
 - *Digital Zoo* designs characters for an animated film

Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) for Video Games



Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) Rating Symbols



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Titles rated **EC (Early Childhood)** have content that may be suitable for ages 3 and older. Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.



EVERYONE

Titles rated **E (Everyone)** have content that may be suitable for ages 6 and older. Titles in this category may contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.



EVERYONE 10+

Titles rated **E10+ (Everyone 10 and older)** have content that may be suitable for ages 10 and older. Titles in this category may contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes.



TEEN

Titles rated **T (Teen)** have content that may be suitable for ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling, and/or infrequent use of strong language.



MATURE

Titles rated **M (Mature)** have content that may be suitable for persons ages 17 and older. Titles in this category may contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language.



ADULTS ONLY

Titles rated **AO (Adults Only)** have content that should only be played by persons 18 years and older. Titles in this category may include prolonged scenes of intense violence and/or graphic sexual content and nudity.



RATING PENDING

Titles listed as **RP (Rating Pending)** have been submitted to the ESRB and are awaiting final rating. (This symbol appears only in advertising prior to a game's release.)