

# Pointers For Parents

## Game Ratings Help Parents Decide Before They Buy

(NAPSA)—Computer and video games make great gifts, but how can you be sure a particular game is right for your family? One easy way: check the rating.

Almost every game sold today is rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board, a self-regulatory organization that gives consumers independent information about video games. The ratings have two parts: rating symbols, which suggest what age group the game is best for, and short phrases called content descriptors, which describe what's in the game.

The rating symbols are always found on the front of the game box. EC (Early Childhood) means the game may be suitable for children ages 3 and older. E (Everyone) means the game may be right for kids 6 and over. T (Teen) is for ages 13 and up and M means that a game may be suitable only for persons 17 and older. AO (Adults Only) means the game is not intended for children.

The content descriptors, which are found on the back of game boxes, give consumers specific information about a game's content. The descriptors fall into several categories, including: educational content, violent content, sexual themes and bad language. Used together, the rating symbols and content descriptors allow parents a detailed look at the game without opening the box.

"When parents check the rating, the control is in their hands," said Marc Szafran, ESRB Acting Executive Director.

Parents say that the ESRB system works for them. In a 2002 nationwide poll to evaluate the effectiveness and use of ESRB ratings, ESRB found that 90 percent



**E (Everyone) and T (Teen) are just two of the ratings used by the Entertainment Software Rating Board.**

of parents find the ESRB rating system helpful. Additionally, more than half of all parents now check the rating when buying or renting a computer or video game.

"Parents can trust the ESRB ratings," said Szafran. "Each game is rated by three independent raters. They come from all walks of life. The raters include retired school principals, parents, and other professionals."

The ESRB has a toll-free number (1-800-771-3772) that consumers can call to check a product's rating before shopping for a computer or video game. The ESRB's Web site ([www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)) also has information on ratings and content descriptors, and features a search engine that consumers can use to help make informed purchasing decisions.

The ESRB is a self-regulatory organization that has independently rated more than 8,000 video and computer games since 1994. ESRB also independently rates Internet games and interactive Web sites.