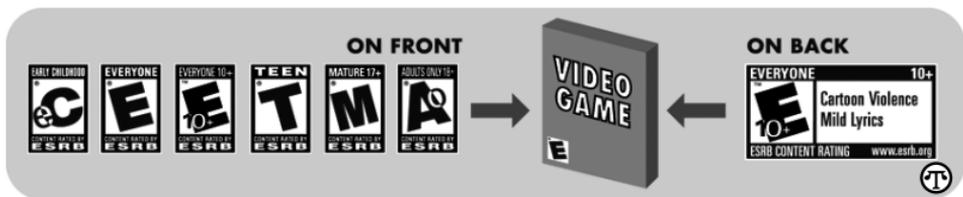


Pointers For Parents

Ratings Help Decide Which Games Are Right For Families



Rating symbols on the front and content descriptors on the back help parents make informed video game purchases.

(NAPSA)—Computer and video games are so popular that last year 248 million video games were sold in the U.S. That's two games for every household.

Many of these games are sold to parents who don't actually play the games themselves.

The average age of a "gamer" today is 30, so it stands to reason that some games were created for adults.

Video games have come a long way since the days of Pac-Man and Frogger. Learning more about the industry's ESRB ratings can help parents decide which games are right for their families.

On the front of virtually every game package is an ESRB rating symbol indicating which games are appropriate for which ages.

On the back, next to the rating symbol, are content descriptors that detail content in the game that may have triggered a rating or might be of interest or concern.

This two-part rating system was developed based on feedback about what parents want in a rating system, and has been found to be the most useful to parents among all entertainment rating systems. There are six ESRB rating categories:

- EC (Early Childhood 3+)
- E (Everyone 6+)

- E10+ (Everyone 10+)
- T (Teen 13+)
- M (Mature 17+)
- AO (Adults Only 18+)

The ESRB also assigns upwards of 30 content descriptors that identify content that contains violence, sexual themes, profanity, gambling, use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco, among others.

"The best advice is for parents to check the ratings on every video game box," says ESRB president Patricia Vance, who is herself a parent. "These can be tough decisions, and the ratings provide a simple and effective way to make an informed choice about which games are right for you and your family."

Vance also recommends that parents check out game reviews in magazines and online, and talk to older kids and video game store clerks to learn more about games. "Another great thing to do is to play the games with your kids," Vance advises. "This is a wonderful way to learn about the games they find to be interesting and exciting while spending time together and having fun."

For more about computer and video game ratings, or to search for ratings information before heading out to the store, visit the ESRB Web site at www.esrb.org.