

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Video Game Ratings Make Holiday Shopping Easier

by Patricia Vance

(NAPSA)—If you have kids to shop for this holiday season, in all likelihood video games will be at the top of their lists. As an experienced mother, I know how hard it is to say “no” when your child asks you for the latest “must-have-it, can’t-live-without-it” computer or video game. But as President of the Entertainment Software Rating Board, the nonprofit organization that assigns ratings to all of those games, I can tell you that the range of content in games today is vast.



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Today, generations of kids have grown up playing video games and are continuing to play them as adults, making the average age of a gamer 29 years old. Consequently, it has never been more important for parents to make sure that the games they are bringing home for their kids are age appropriate.

Ten years ago, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) was created to take the guesswork out of video game purchases. Our independent raters review every game before assigning it a rating for age appropriateness and content descriptors that indicate elements in a game that may have triggered a particular rating and/or may be of interest or concern to a parent. Rating symbols are prominently displayed on the front of all game packaging, and the content descriptors appear on the back. The rating symbols include:

EC (Early Childhood) contains content that may be suitable for ages three and older. Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.

E (**Everyone**) contains content that may be suitable for persons ages six and older. Titles in this category may contain minimal violence, some comic mischief and/or mild language.

T (**Teens**) contains content that may be suitable for persons ages 13 and older. May contain violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

M (**Mature**) contains content that may be suitable for persons ages 17 and older. Titles in this category may contain mature sexual themes, more intense violence and/or strong language.

As president of the ESRB and as a parent, I proudly stand behind the ratings information we provide. But I also know that checking the rating is only the first step to making informed purchase decisions. Parents need to stay actively involved in their children’s computer and video game choices.

Here are some helpful tips for picking the right game:

Be Educated Before You Buy

- Check ESRB ratings information on the front and back of the box, in ads and online at www.esrb.org
- Consider renting the game first to sample the content
- Read reviews online or in various publications available at your newsstand
- Talk to other parents, and even your own children, about what’s in the game.

Good parenting is a tough job, but hopefully this holiday season, the ESRB can make it a little easier.

For more information, visit www.esrb.org.

• *Ms. Vance is president of the Entertainment Software Rating Board.*