

Helpful Advice for Parents on Choosing Video Games

Don't rely solely on ratings.

Even video games rated "E" for "Everyone" are dominated by violent action. Our own analysis of the Electronic Software Regulation Board's 2001 website database revealed that 87% of games rated "T" for "Teen" contained violence. The video game industry even markets their most violent games (rated "M" for "Mature" audiences at least 17 years old) to children, even those as young as six (FTC, 2000). Furthermore, anyone with an Internet connection can download violent video games for free and without proof of age.

How can you tell if a video game is potentially harmful?

- Play the game, or have someone else demonstrate it for you.
- Ask yourself the following 6 questions:
 1. Does the game involve some characters trying to harm others?
 2. Does this happen frequently, more than once or twice in 30 minutes?
 3. Is the harm rewarded in any way?
 4. Is the harm portrayed as humorous?
 5. Are nonviolent solutions absent or less "fun" than the violent ones?
 6. Are realistic consequences of violence absent from the game?
- If two or more answers are "yes," think very carefully about the lessons being taught before allowing your child access to the game.

Be a wise consumer

- Buy video games that are helpful to your children
- Don't buy potentially harmful video games

Be a wise parent/grandparent

- Know what your children are playing
- Don't allow access to violent video games
- Restrict time spent playing video games
- Explain to your children why violent games are harmful
- Teach nonviolent problem solving at every opportunity

Be an involved citizen/consumer

- If a retailer sells violent games to children, complain to the owner/manager.
- If a retailer screens sales or rental of violent materials to children, thank the owner/manager, perhaps by purchasing nonviolent educational video games.
- Help educate others in your community (parents, youth, public officials)
- Let your public officials know that you are concerned.

Some websites about entertainment media and parenting issues:

<http://www.mediafamily.org/index.shtml>

<http://www.lionlamb.org>

<http://www.sosparents.org>