



Media and Technology

Safety Tipsheet

Category: Video Games

What You Need to Know

Benefits

- Video games and interactive play are great ways for children to learn.
- Some video games can help your child become more physically active.
- Almost all newer video game systems have built-in parental controls. Check with the manufacturer of the video game system for more information, or ask a sales representative at the store.

Risks

- Many games involve computer and internet networks.
- Video game content can involve violent content.

Ratings

The ESRB rating system has two parts: the rating symbol and the content descriptors. The rating symbol is on the front of the package and suggests which ages the game is appropriate for. The content descriptors are on the back of the package and provide more details about the reason for the game's rating.

What You Can Do

- **Set the parental controls for your family's system.**
- **Do your homework.** Video game ratings are designed to give parents guidance. There are many ways to learn more about the content of video games, including speaking to older children and other parents, testing the games in stores, and reading newspaper, magazine, and online reviews.
- **Play the games with your child.** If you aren't interested in playing the games, be an active observer for the first few weeks your child is playing a new game.
- **Establish a Media Use Contract with each child in your family.** It is important that you have a conversation with each child to set rules and limits that are appropriate for him or her. Once the contracts have been signed, post them in a prominent place in your home as a reminder.

Visit these online resources for in-depth information:

- Parent Teacher Association, www.pta.org
- Common Sense Media, www.commonsensemedia.org/game-reviews/
- Entertainment Software Rating Board, www.esrb.org

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