



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

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Majority of parents say they limit children's access to Mature-rated video games

Awareness and use of ESRB rating system continues to grow

New York – A majority of America's parents say they “never” allow their children to play M (Mature) rated computer and video games, according to a recent survey conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates commissioned by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). The M (Mature) rating is assigned by the ESRB to indicate that a game may be suitable for ages 17 and older.

“This study confirms that parents are actively making informed decisions about the games their children play,” said Patricia Vance, ESRB President. “We are gratified that the rating tools we provide are helping parents regulate their kids’ media diets appropriately.”

According to the nation-wide telephone survey of 500 parents of children age three to seventeen, 53% of parents say they “never” allow their kids to play M-rated games, an additional 37% say they “sometimes allow” their children to play M-rated games and 8% said they “generally allow” their children to play M-rated games. Parents of children under the age of 13 are almost twice as likely to “never” allow their children to play an M-rated game.

In addition, 78% of parents are aware of the rating system. Nearly three-quarters (70%) of parents say they “check the ESRB rating” for age appropriateness when buying computer and video games for their children “everytime” or “most of the time” and over half (54%) of parents check the content descriptors. Content descriptors, found on the back of game packaging, indicate elements in a game that may have triggered a particular rating and/or may be of interest or concern.

When parents do allow their children to play M-rated games, they do so after checking the rating information, considering what’s in the game, and making a judgment about whether their children can handle the content of the game.

According to the survey, parents identified four key factors when considering if an M-rated game is appropriate. Those points include:

- They monitor or play the games that their children play.
- They read the information on the game's package to determine whether the game is appropriate for their children.
- Their children know that it is just a game and it's not real.
- Their children can handle what is in the game without it affecting their behavior or attitudes.

"We are encouraged that more and more parents are using the rating system along with other key factors in consciously making decisions about which games are appropriate for their families," Vance added.

The survey also found that:

- 95% of parents believe that the rating system is "helpful" in deciding which games are appropriate for their children and 90% say they are "confident" the ratings accurately describe game content.
- Those who use the ratings most often include mothers (81%), and parents of boys under the age of 10 (87%). Use of the ratings decrease as children become teenagers, with 69% of parents of boys over the age of 12 checking the ratings.
- 61% of parents are aware of ESRB content descriptors, a dramatic increase of 53% since the last survey was done in 2003. And 89% of those parents use them "every time," "most of the time," or "sometimes" when they purchase a game.

The ESRB rating system includes six age-based rating categories: EC (Early Childhood) for ages 3+, E (Everyone) for ages 6+, E10+ (Everyone 10 and older), T (Teen) for ages 13+, M (Mature) for ages 17+, and AO (Adults Only) which indicates that the game should only be played by adults age 18 and older. The rating category is found on the front of game packages. The rating system also includes 32 content descriptors, found next to the rating category on the back of game packages, describing content in the game that may be of concern to parents, including violence, sexual content, language, use of controlled substances, and gambling.

"We believe that the increase in awareness and resulting use of the content descriptors is directly related to the more prominent display of content descriptors on game packaging since 2003, and to the power and broad exposure of a new consumer education campaign launched by the ESRB illustrating both parts of the rating system in PSA advertisements, retail signage and print circulars," Vance concluded. "When parents use both parts of the rating system, they have

more than sufficient information on which to base an educated purchase decision.”

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About Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

The ESRB is a non-profit, self-regulatory body established in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). ESRB independently applies ratings, enforces advertising guidelines, and helps ensure responsible online privacy practices for the interactive entertainment software industry.