



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

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ESRB EXTENDS NO-COST RATING SERVICE TO ALL DIGITALLY DELIVERED GAMES

New Digital Rating Service Enables ESRB Ratings to Become Consistent Standard Across All Game Platforms; Includes Guidance on Interactive Elements

NEW YORK – The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), the non-profit self-regulatory body for the video game industry, today announced a streamlined, no-cost service for assigning ratings to all digitally delivered games. ESRB’s new “Digital Rating Service” utilizes a brief but detailed online questionnaire to assess not only a product’s content and age-appropriateness, but also interactive elements, including the sharing of personal information or physical location and exposure to unfiltered user-generated content. This newly streamlined service will first be put into use for downloadable games available from a number of computer and video game platforms including Xbox LIVE Arcade, PlayStation® Network, PlayStation® Vita, PlayStation™ Certified devices, Nintendo® eShop, Wii Shop Channel™ and Windows 8, with other digital content aggregators, online game networks, streaming and download services to follow.

“Consumers have grown accustomed to using ESRB ratings when making decisions about the appropriateness of the games their families play. With the explosion of devices from which consumers can access games today, our goal is to ensure that those same tools are available everywhere games can be found,” said ESRB president Patricia Vance. “More recently, parents’ concerns have begun to extend beyond just content to include the sharing of their kids’ personal information or location and interactions with other players. ESRB’s Digital Rating Service now offers all digital platforms, storefronts and networks the opportunity to empower their customers with consistent, credible, familiar and useful upfront guidance no matter where their family chooses to play games.”

The streamlined rating process makes obtaining an ESRB rating fast and easy by assigning a rating immediately. By simplifying the process and eliminating the cost to developers, the ESRB expects to broaden adoption of its ratings among game providers of all types. The resulting ubiquity of ESRB ratings will ease a parent’s job by presenting a single ratings standard across the many platforms on which their children access games. Increased adoption of ESRB ratings also means that developers will no longer be subject to differing and oftentimes conflicting rating systems and standards for their digitally delivered games. ESRB’s Digital Rating Service complements the CTIA Mobile Application Rating System with ESRB, a program launched last year through which ESRB assigns ratings to mobile apps using a similar process.

“The ESRB’s Digital Rating Service is the most sensible way to implement ratings across the many platforms on which we now publish games,” said John Riccitiello, CEO of Electronic Arts.

“A consistent standard is in the best interest of publishers and consumers alike, empowering parents with the information they need to make informed choices for their families.”

“Today our customers expect to be able to play their favorite games across a wide range of different devices, in home and on the go,” added Jack Tretton, president and CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA). “We believe our developers will greatly appreciate how easy this new streamlined system is to use and our customers are certain to benefit from having broader access to ESRB ratings across all of their game devices.”

Ratings Go Beyond Content

Consumer research shows that at least two thirds of parents consider it essential that a rating system provide disclosure about the collection and/or sharing of personal information with third parties, the sharing of a user’s location, and the ability to track a user’s location, *and* consider it *just as important* as being informed about content and age-appropriateness.* As a result, ESRB’s Digital Rating Service not only assigns the familiar ESRB Rating Category and Content Descriptors that consumers already know and trust, but also generates standardized notices, called “Interactive Elements,” which include:



“Shares Info” indicates that user-provided personal information (e.g., e-mail address, phone number, credit card info, etc.) is shared with third parties;



“Shares Location” indicates the ability to display the user’s location to other users; and



“Users Interact” indicates possible exposure to unfiltered/uncensored user-generated content, including user-to-user communications and media sharing via social media and networks.

In addition to providing critical guidance to consumers in advance of playing a game, all three parts of a game’s rating information (Rating Category, Content Descriptors and Interactive Elements) can also be mapped to parental controls to restrict access by these criteria. While adopters of ESRB ratings may choose to not display all three parts, complete rating information is always available by searching the ESRB website at ESRB.org.

“ESRB’s rating system has always been an effective means for parents to gauge content, and its latest evolution addresses the emerging concerns of parents whose children increasingly access and play games in a digital marketplace,” concluded Stephen Balkam, CEO of the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI). “Information is a critical weapon in the online safety arsenal, and giving parents tools like the ESRB’s new Interactive Elements notices empowers them to take appropriate action to protect their children in an online environment.”

The ESRB Rating System

Established in 1994, the ESRB has become among the most highly recognized and respected rating systems in the world. The FTC has commended ESRB for having “the strongest self-regulatory code” and applauded tools like [Rating Summaries](#) that offer consumers even greater information by which to choose games for their families. According to the latest research, 85% of parents with children who play video games are aware of the ESRB ratings and 70% use the

ratings on a regular basis (either “every time” or “most of the time”) when deciding about a game for their child. Nearly nine in ten (88%) find the ESRB ratings to be either “very helpful” or “somewhat helpful” in choosing games for their children.*

* Online survey of 509 parents with children who play video games. Conducted May/June 2012 by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and commissioned by ESRB.

About ESRB

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is a non-profit, self-regulatory body that assigns age and content ratings for video games and apps so parents can make informed choices. As part of its regulatory role for the video game industry the ESRB also enforces industry-adopted advertising guidelines and helps ensure responsible online privacy practices under its Privacy Online program. ESRB was established in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA).