

Video Games and keeping your child safe: E-safety - key information for parents/carers

As a school we are committed to keeping our children safe and to promoting the safe, responsible use of the technologies available. From our recent conversations in school with children it has come to light that some of our children play age inappropriate video games.

The age rating is a clear indication of the suitability of content and we suggest, if you wish to treat your child to a game, that you ask them to choose a title which is appropriate for their age.

1) Ratings denote the content and appropriateness of games

Since 2003 games have been age rated under the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) system which operates in the UK and over 30 other countries of Europe, in addition, where a game showed realistic scenes of gross violence or sexual activity the game had to be legally classified and received one or other of the BBFC classification certificates given for **videos/DVDs**

The PEGI system has been effectively incorporated into UK law and video games will be age rated at one or other of the following age levels; which you will find on video game sleeves. Ratings do not denote the difficulty or the enjoyment level of a game, but that that it contains content suitable for a certain age group and above

The PEGI age ratings will enable parents and carers to make an informed choice when buying a game for their children.



It is important to note that the age ratings 12, 16 and 18 age ratings are mandatory and that it is illegal for a retailer to supply any game with any of these ratings to anyone below the specified age. The age ratings 3 and 7 are advisory only.

An 18 Rated game is applied when the level of violence reaches a stage where it becomes gross violence and/or includes elements of specific types of violence.

This rating is also applied where the level of sexual activity is explicit which may mean that genitals are visible. Any game that glamorises the use of real life drugs will also probably fall into this category.

2) Content Indicators

In addition to age ratings, video games will include indicators of the type of content and activities that the game includes in it. The descriptors are fairly self-explanatory but should be read in conjunction with the age rating given for a video game.

A violence descriptor with an 18 rated game will indicate a more extreme level of violence than a violence descriptor with a 12 rated game. Similarly a sex/nudity descriptor with a 12 rated game will probably indicate sexual innuendo but a sex/nudity descriptor with an 18 rated game will indicate sexual content of a more explicit nature.

3) Parental responsibility

- The PEGI ratings system helps you make informed decisions about which video games to choose for your family
- A PEGI rating gives the suggested minimum age that you must be to play a game due to the suitability of the content
- As parents you can take direct control of what games your children play at home, how they play them and for how long through parental controls on video game systems such as the Xbox or PlayStation
- Choosing and playing video games as a family is the best way to understand and enjoy them together
- The stories, worlds and characters in video games offer playful ways to engage with a wide range of subjects and fuels creativity, interests and imagination
- The askaboutgames.com website provides further information about video games ratings and offers real family stories and suggestions on how video games can be a creative and collaborative experience for all the family
- We also recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk