

Learn Video Game Rating Basics Before You Buy

With the holidays right around the corner, video games may seem like an easy buy for kids and a winning gift idea.

While most people are familiar with the movie ratings system, many may not understand how to select age-appropriate video games.

Over the years, a handful of games have come under fire for what many people perceive to be content that is far too illicit for young kids and even teenagers.

Parents nationwide have expressed concern over how to decipher just what is and isn't appropriate video game material for their children.

Such concerns can go unnoticed by relatives looking to give their nieces or nephews their favorite video game come the holiday season.

Fortunately, there's a system in place to assist parents and gift-givers alike when it comes to video games and kids.

Experts recommend the follow-

ing guidelines to manage a family's home use and enjoyment of video games. All video games contain a ratings symbol on the front and back of the package. The ratings symbols are as follows:

· EC (Early Childhood) - content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.

· E (Everyone) - content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.

· E 10+ (Everyone 10 and older) - content suitable for persons ages 10 and older.

· T (Teen) - content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.

· M (Mature) - content suitable for persons ages 17 and older.

Before purchasing a title, check the game content and skill-level requirements by carefully examining the packaging to see which age group the game is recommended for.

All video games have a content descriptor on the back of the product's packaging.

These content descriptors provide more details about the product

in terms of language, themes and other areas that may be of interest to consumers.

Examine the pictures and text on the packaging to get an idea of what the title is about. Make sure that the software is compatible with your gaming system.

Kid-Friendly Games

The following three games are out this fall and are appropriate for teens and children alike:

Call of Duty 3 is the follow-up to the #1 next-generation game and delivers the intensity of being closer than ever to the fury of combat during the Normandy Breakout, the historic campaign that made the liberation of Paris possible and brought the Allies a step closer to

Berlin.

Through a seamless narrative that delivers the rush of unrelenting battle and breathtaking action, players assume the roles of four ordinary Allied soldiers - American, British, Canadian and Polish - and are thrust onto an authentic, living battlefield for an unprecedented variety of combat, with advanced high-definition graphics, detailed character animations and explosive on-screen action, delivering the most immersive and cinematically intense war experience ever.

Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam lets players experience the breakneck speed of downhill skateboard racing as they tear up the steepest terrains in the world while performing tricks

and outmaneuvering opponents in locations such as the crowded streets of San Francisco and rocky terrain of Machu Picchu.

Developed for the Wii®, gamers utilize an innovative and intuitive control system as they take on the role of Tony Hawk or one of nine characters and compete in specific time-based challenges in one of three gameplay modes including race, trick and slalom.

Gamers can also challenge friends in head-to-head competitions with up to four players as they pull off a variety of high-velocity stunts and crashes in living, populated environments filled with cars, pedestrians and buildings.



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Top 25 Holiday Songs

1. Santa Claus is Coming to Town
 2. The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)
 3. Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas
 4. Winter Wonderland
 5. White Christmas
 6. Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow
 7. I'll Be Home for Christmas
 8. Jingle Bell Rock
 9. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
 10. Little Drummer Boy
 11. Sleigh Ride
 12. Silver Bells
 13. It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year
 14. Feliz Navidad
 15. Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree
 16. Blue Christmas
 17. Frosty the Snow Man
 18. A Holly Jolly Christmas
 19. I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus
 20. Here Comes Santa Claus (Right Down Santa Claus Lane)
 21. (There's No Place Like) Home For the Holidays
 22. Santa Baby
 23. It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas
 24. Carol of the Bells
 25. Wonderful Christmastime
- Source: American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers