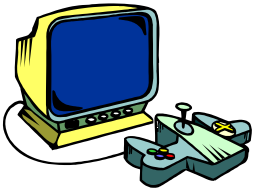


# Video Games and What's New



## Stopping Violence before it Starts ...

Information adapted from the National Institute on Media and the Family

November & December, 2007

### Mind Games and Our Kids

If you're worried about the impact video and computer game playing may have on your child, you're not alone. There are over 5,000 game titles available. Parents might feel at a loss when it comes to getting unbiased information about the possible effects of game playing on children.

#### Pros

Quality video/computer game playing can:

- Introduce children to technology.
- Boost self-discipline – games usually require following directions.
- Provide practice in problem solving and logic.
- Increase fine motor and coordination skills.
- Provide occasion for adults and children to play together.
- Foster interest in information technology.

#### Cons

Over-involvement with video/computer game playing can:

- Foster social isolation; even good games are more often played alone.
- Distract from the time children should spend on other important activities like reading, playing with friends, etc.
- Very popular games feature plots based on anti-social themes such as violence, irresponsible sex, gender bias, and aggression.
- Children play in an environment of super weapons, slaughter, kicking, stabbing, and shooting.
- Women are often portrayed as weak or helpless characters.
- Feelings of mastery occur in a video world that is not real. Playing violent games may contribute more to aggressive behavior than passively watching television.

#### Did You Know

- When a child watches a TV program or a movie, they are in the role of observer. When they play a video or computer game, they are participants.
- A video game system purchased today is more powerful than a Cray Supercomputer manufactured just twenty years ago.
- Approximately 69% of American families own or rent video and computer games.

Children ages 8-12 are the most frequent players of video and computer games.



#### Inside this issue:

Front Side-  
Mind Games and our Kids

Careful Shopping List

Back Side-  
Recommended Videos This Year

Video Game Ratings

Taming the Video Game Tiger

*Youth, parents, teachers and community members are addressing violence and related risk behaviors that have become harmful and are a hidden part of our community. Please contact your school or Connie Abert, UWEX Youth Development Educator, 715-258-6230, if you are interested in helping with these efforts.*

Video games can be a healthy part of a child's life. Parents need to help children do a good job of limiting the amount and content of games they play.

### Careful Shopping List of Video Games

There are new games on the market all the time. Any game unrated or rated for a mature or adult audience is not appropriate for homes with children. Many times video games are bought for adults and then young teens have access to them in the home when adults are not present. **Check** out our website at [www.waupaca.uwex.edu](http://www.waupaca.uwex.edu) or [www.mediafamily.org](http://www.mediafamily.org) for a listing of video games that are rated only for mature or adult audiences and are not appropriate for younger ages.

## Recommended Videos This Year

1. Lego Star Wars II—The Original Trilogy	E 10+
2. Mario Hoops 3 on 3	E
3. Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz	E
4. Roboblitz	E 10+
5. Madden Football '07	E
6. Loco Roco	E
7. Dance Factory	E
8. Brain Age	E
9. Nancy Drew: Danger by Design	E
10. Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2: The March of the Minis	E

## ESRB Ratings

**Cartoon violence**  
"actions involving cartoon-like characters."  
**Fantasy violence**  
"easily distinguishable from real life."  
**Intense violence**  
"realistic-looking depictions of conflict."  
**Sexual violence**  
"depictions of rape or violent sexual acts."

## Video game ratings carry one of seven logos showing age recommendations



**EC** (Early Childhood)-age 3+

**KA** (Kids to Adult)-age 6+: Minimal violence, slapstick comedy, some crude language

**E** (Everyone)-As of 1/1998, the new "Everyone" designation replaces "Kids to Adults" rating

**T** (Teens)-age 13+: Violence, profanity, mild sexual themes

**M** (Mature)-age 17+: More intense violence, profanity, mature sexual themes

**AO** (Adult Only)-Adults only: due to graphic violence & sexual themes, not for persons under 18

**RP** (Rating Pending)-Product has been submitted to the ESRB and is awaiting final rating

## Taming the Video Game Tiger

1. LIMIT game playing time. (Recommendation: no more than one hour per day.)
2. CHECK the age game ratings on the box; but become familiar with the game before you buy it. [(Some T(een) and E(veryone) rated games have a level of violence and sex that you may not be comfortable with.]
3. USE other content sources and reviews to help you choose a game. (Games are often previewed in detail on the web.)
4. CHECK KidScore for parent generated game reviews.
5. RENT a game to preview before buying.
6. AVOID the "first person shooter", killing-machine games. M-rated games are not meant for children or teenagers.
7. REQUIRE that homework and chores be done before game playing. Playing games should be a reward.
8. DO NOT PUT video game consoles or computers in children's bedrooms where they can shut the door and isolate themselves.
9. PLAY AND ENJOY the game with your child; check in as your child moves into deeper levels in the game. (With some games the level of violence goes up the deeper into the game the player gets.)
10. TALK about the content of the games. Ask your child what's going on in the game.
11. EXPLAIN to your children why you object to certain games.
12. ASK your local retailer or rental store to implement policies preventing the sale or rental of M-rated (mature) games to children or youth.
13. LOOK for games that involve multiple players to encourage group play.
14. PICK non-lethal games that require the player to come up with strategies, and make decisions in a game environment that is more complex than punch, run, and kill.
15. Finally, ENCOURAGE your child to play with friends away from the video game set.

**Questions to ask about violence in video games: Is the violence rewarded or punished?**

**What are the consequences? How graphic is the violence? Is the violence against humans or inanimate objects? Is the violence sexual?**