

Navigating Your Way Through The TV Parental Guidelines and V-Chip





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About the TV Ratings and V-Chip

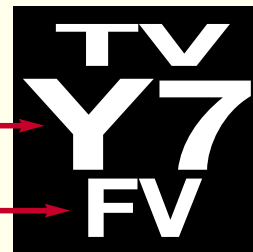
With an increasing number of TV channels and programs coming into our homes each day, it can be hard for parents to monitor what their children are watching. Many parents are concerned about their young children watching programs with content that's more suitable for older children or adults.

That's why the television industry designed a TV ratings system to give parents more information about the content and age-appropriateness of TV programs. These ratings, called the TV Parental Guidelines, can be used in conjunction with the V-Chip – a device available in most newer TV sets – to allow parents to block out programs they don't want their children to see.

Understanding the TV Ratings

AUDIENCE: Indicates the audience for which a television program is appropriate

CONTENT LABEL: To help parents identify the specific content in a program, the TV ratings system includes additional labels that are added, where appropriate, to programs rated TV-Y7, TV-PG, TV-14 and TV-MA.



The Content Labels

TV Parental Guidelines may have one or more letters added to the basic rating to let parents know when a show contains fantasy violence or higher levels of violence, sex, adult language or suggestive dialogue.

- D** - suggestive dialogue
- L** - coarse language
- S** - sexual situations
- V** - violence
- FV** - fantasy violence

A TV ratings icon appears in the upper left-hand corner of the screen at the beginning of all rated programs. The ratings are applied to all programs except news and sports.

Children's Programming

Special attention is given to programs directed specifically to children. There are two ratings for children's programming. TV-Y identifies programs designed for children of all ages. TV-Y7 indicates the program is intended for children over the age of seven, who are better able to distinguish between make-believe and reality. In some cases, another label (FV) will be added to a program in the TV-Y7 category. FV indicates that the program contains *fantasy violence*, which is more combative or intense than other TV-Y7 programs.



General Audience Programming

In addition to the two children's ratings, there are four general audience ratings (TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14 and TV-MA). These ratings are described on the following page.



All Children

This program is designed to be appropriate for all children. Whether animated or live action, the themes and elements in this program are specifically designed for a very young audience, including children from ages 2-6. This program is not expected to frighten younger children.



Directed to Older Children

This program is designed for children age 7 and above. It may be more appropriate for children who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality. Themes and elements in this program may include mild fantasy violence or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of 7. Therefore, parents may wish to consider the suitability of this program for their very young children.



Directed to Older Children-Fantasy Violence

For those programs where fantasy violence may be more intense or more combative than other programs in the TV-Y7 rating category, such programs will be designated TV-Y7-FV.



General Audience

Most parents would find this program appropriate for all ages. Although this rating does not signify a program specifically for children, most parents may let younger children watch this program unattended. It contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.



Parental Guidance Suggested

This program contains material that parents may find suitable for younger children. Many parents may want to watch it with their younger children. The theme itself may call for parental guidance and/or the program contains one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D).



Parents Strongly Cautioned

This program contains some material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age. Parents are strongly urged to exercise greater care in monitoring this program and are cautioned against letting children under the age of 14 watch unattended. This program contains one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).



Mature Audience Only

This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S), or coarse indecent language (L).

Everything You Need to Know About the V-Chip

The V-Chip is built into a television set to work in conjunction with the TV Parental Guidelines. It electronically reads television-programming ratings and allows parents to block programs they believe are unsuitable for their children.



Is there a V-Chip in every television?

The V-Chip is in every television set 13-inches or larger manufactured after January 2000 and some sets sold after July 1, 1999. This means if you bought a new television set after July 1, 1999, your television is most likely equipped with a V-Chip.

How do I program and activate the V-Chip?

Each television set's V-Chip works a little differently. Once you understand the definition of each rating and content label, programming and activating the V-Chip is as simple as following the set-up procedure which can be found in one of two places: 1) the television on-screen menu options, or 2) the written instruction guide included in the owner's manual. The V-Chip will only be activated if you select the option to do so.

How do I ensure that my child will not de-activate the V-Chip?

To activate the V-Chip, a parental lock code is required. This identification number acts as the password to activate, de-activate, and change the settings of the V-Chip.

Does the V-Chip turn off when I turn my television off?

Turning the television off will not turn off the V-Chip. It will continue to block programs when the television is turned on again.

What type of programming does the V-Chip block?

The V-Chip can block programming by age-based category or content label. For instance, if you want to block all TV-14 programs, you can do so by selecting TV-14. If you only want to block TV-14 programs that contain higher levels of violence, you can select TV-14-V. You should also know that when you block a particular rating or content label, all categories above that will be blocked. For example, if you block all TV-14 programs, all TV-MA programs will also be blocked. If you block TV-14-V programs, all TV-MA-V programs will also be blocked.

Can the V-Chip block out motion pictures that carry the MPAA rating?

Motion pictures that are uncut and unedited can run on premium channels (e.g. HBO and Showtime). You can set the V-Chip to block these programs using the MPAA rating system.

Other Frequently Asked Questions

How are programs rated?

Programs are voluntarily rated by the broadcast and cable television networks.

Does the same program week after week carry the same rating?

Programs are rated by episode and, therefore, may carry a different rating based on the content.

What is syndicated programming, and how is it rated?

Syndicated programs are those programs such as talk shows, game shows, and archived reruns of dramas and sitcoms first run by networks or cable systems, which are purchased by local television stations. The distributor of such programs is responsible for rating them.

Are commercials rated?

Television advertising is not rated.

Are network promotions rated?

Network promotions are advertisements for a specific daily or weekly program or block of programs. Many single show promotions display the rating that the program will carry.

Where do you find a program's rating?

To find a rating, you can check the: 1) local newspaper listing 2) *TV Guide* 3) on-screen display at the beginning of each show 4) on-screen cable program guide. Additionally, some television broadcast and cable networks list the program ratings on their web sites.

Do newspapers carry the TV Parental Guidelines?

A number of newspapers print the rating next to the program name and scheduled time in the listing guide. If your local newspaper does not list the TV ratings, call and ask that it do so.

How is the rating displayed on the TV?

A rating icon appears in the upper left hand corner at the start of the program. If the program is more than one hour, the icon will reappear at the beginning of the second hour.

Where do I send complaints about a program's rating?

The TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board is responsible for ensuring that the ratings are applied with accuracy and consistency. Individuals can contact the Board via mail, phone, or email to voice complaints. The contact information is located on the back page of this brochure.

Who rates a movie that has been edited for television?

Theatrical movies rarely run uncut on broadcast or basic cable network television. The broadcast or basic cable network edits these movies according to the network's standards. After the movie has been modified, it is given a TV Parental Guideline rating. Premium cable networks like HBO and Showtime do run uncut theatrical movies. These movies carry the original MPAA movie rating, in addition to supplemental content advisories provided by the network.

Contact Us

The television industry is pleased to provide the TV Parental Guidelines as a public service and welcomes your feedback. The TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board handles public comments and information on the rating system.

Here's how you can reach the Board:

Phone: 202-879-9364

Web: www.tvguidelines.org

Email: tvomb@usa.net

Mail: TV Parental Guidelines
Post Office Box 14097
Washington, DC 20004

