



## GUARD YOUR HEART

## GUARD YOUR MIND

## GUARD YOUR BODY

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- Effects of Video Games

## TEENS and Gaming

Video games have swept the nation and teens are indulging in the newest updates, best systems and hippest gear. Systems like Nintendo and PlayStation are constantly redefining what is current and what is "old school". Some teens have admitted that video games are "addicting" and its no surprise that they stay in the loop to be considered "cool".

However, video games also bring several negative effects on teen behavior, thought processes and development. How? By the glorification of violence, combat and destruction and the misleading acceptance of unhealthy relationships and social interactions. Characters in video games are idolized for behaviors such as gang-related activity, theft, murder and prostitution. These offenders are put on the social chain of approval and provide a false identity of what is cool, or what "makes you a real man". Conversely, those characters committing the offense are rarely, if ever, faced with any negative consequences that would occur in real life. The storylines are detrimental to the healthy development of both girls and guys because of the lack of consequences, deceptive social norms and corrupt personal values.



What has been found through research on gaming? The Ninth Annual MediaWise Video Game Report Card says, "The latest brain research shows that violent games activate the anger center of the teenage brain while dampening the brain's conscience." In terms of viewing such violence, tolerance is increased which means that what was once disturbing is reduced after repeated viewings. Eventually, the aggressive scenes begin to have less of a moral impact and more entertainment value. This desensitization to violence decreases feelings of remorse and empathy which can also be applied, consciously or unconsciously to real life situations.

## Video Game Rating System

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has designed a system to provide consumers with a quick guide to the level of suitability for specific games. Those who rate the games "represent a wide range of backgrounds, races and ages and have no ties to the interactive-entertainment industry". Look for these ratings on the covers of every game:



Titles rated Early Childhood (EC) have content suitable for children ages 3 and older and do not contain any material that parents would find inappropriate.



Titles rated Teen (T) have content suitable for persons ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.



Titles rated Adults Only (AO) have content suitable only for adults. These products may include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence. Adults Only products are not intended to be sold or rented to persons under



Titles rated Everyone (E) have content suitable for persons ages 6 and older. These titles will appeal to people of many ages and tastes. They may contain minimal violence, some comic mischief (for example, slapstick comedy), or some crude language. This rating formerly was known as Kids to Adult (K-A).



Titles rated Mature (M) have content suitable for persons ages 17 and older. These products may include more intense violence or language than products in the Teen category. In addition, these titles may include mature sexual themes.



The product has been submitted to the ESRB and is awaiting final rating.



## Gaming: Parenting Tips

Don't expect your teen to set his or her own limits!

- ▶ **Know what your teen is playing**  
Research game titles online
- ▶ **Set Time Limits**  
Consider school nights and weekends

- ▶ **Set Rating Limits**  
Use the ESRB rating scale
- ▶ **Keep Communication Open**  
Be interested in your teen's interests

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