

How to Buy the Best Video Games for Your Kids

NewsUSA

(NU) - If you're reading this story, that probably means you're a concerned parent who wouldn't dream of buying your 8-year-old the new "Battlefield 4" video game for the holidays, no matter how many hissy fits are thrown. But let's face it, you've also got a zillion other things on your mind right now – *how's that work deadline coming?* – and not every title is so obviously age-inappropriate.

What to do?

Well, first, remember the reason most kids enjoy playing video games is a positive one. "When kids are asked, in focus groups and surveys, what they like about video games, they generally talk about freedom, self-direction and competence," Peter Gray, a research professor at Boston College, wrote in *Psychology Today*. And second, know that you're not without helpful resources.

Here's how to ensure you make a smart choice:

- **Check the box.** Not only does each one include a letter on the front indicating the maturity level assigned by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) – i.e., "EC" for early childhood, "E10+" for those 10 and over, and "T" for teen – but the cover's flip side provides the basis for the grade. Meaning, if you're unsure whether a video game rated "E" for everyone (or even "M" for mature, 17 or older) is right for your child, content descriptors like "fantasy violence" could be the clincher.

And while producers aren't required to submit games for review, retail partners of the ESRB like GameStop (www.gamestop.com) say they make a point of only carrying ESRB-rated games. "Each



Take steps to understand the video games your kids play.

child has a unique personality, and we believe in helping parents protect younger players from overly mature content," says Jason Cochran, vice president of store operations and strategic initiatives at the company, which is the world's largest multichannel retailer of video games.

- **Understand the gaming lingo.** You know that clueless feeling you get when your child drops gamer terms like "FPS" around the house? The website RespectTheRatings.com explains their meaning – in this case, "first person shooter," signifying a game where the player sees the action through the eyes of its main character – and also offers such other handy tips as the availability of built-in parental controls on consoles and handheld devices.

- **Ask the experts.** About 73 percent of all video games are rated "E" through "T," and GameStop actually has "Game Advisors" in every store who can tell you which ones harness creativity ("Disney Infinity"), say, and which are delightful fantasies ("Angry Birds: Star Wars").

One last tip: When in doubt, try the games in stores yourself.