



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

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NEWLY ESTABLISHED ESRB WEBSITE COUNCIL COMMITS TOP GAME ENTHUSIAST SITES TO INDUSTRY MARKETING GUIDELINES

*EWC Code of Conduct Requires Members to Display ESRB Rating Information and
Restrict Children's Access to Trailers for Mature-rated Games*

NEW YORK, NY – The Entertainment Software Rating Board ([ESRB](#)), which assigns the age and content ratings for computer and video games, today announced the establishment of the ESRB Website Council ([EWC](#)). Under this innovative partnership, many top game enthusiast websites agree to a common set of standards regarding the display of ESRB rating information and use of age-gates on video content intended for older viewers. Similar to how the ESRB supports and helps coordinate retailers' efforts to restrict the purchase of Mature-rated games by those under the age of seventeen, the EWC broadens the video game industry's unrivaled commitment to responsible marketing practices and enhancing compliance.

Initial EWC members include [E3Expo.com](#), [g4tv.com](#), [GameFly.com](#), [GameRevolution.com](#), [GameSpot.com](#), [GameSpy.com](#), [GamesRadar.com](#), [GameTrailers.com](#), [GameZone.com](#), and [IGN.com](#). Additional websites are expected to join in the near future.



All EWC member websites commit to a [Code of Conduct](#) that sets forth various guidelines, many of which mirror the ESRB's Advertising Review Council (ARC) requirements that all publishers of ESRB-rated games must meet for their own websites. These include:

- Displaying accurate and current ESRB rating information on main product pages;
- Employing age-gates on video content associated with games rated or anticipated to be rated M (Mature) that restrict access to visitors under the age of seventeen; and
- Ensuring that age-gates are both "age-neutral" (i.e., do not hint at the age threshold for access) and incorporate a Federal Trade Commission (FTC)-recognized method for preventing circumvention (i.e., dropping a session cookie to prevent a user from going back and entering a different birth date).

The focus of the EWC is to work with member websites in facilitating improved compliance with the EWC Code. Member sites will be regularly monitored by ESRB and notified of any instances of non-compliance, including the forwarding of any complaints about non-compliance received from consumers. Upon receipt of such notice, members agree to promptly correct the issue and provide remedial training to managers, producers, and/or other employees to help ensure awareness of EWC guidelines.

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“With the establishment of the ESRB Website Council, video game publishers, retailers and now the leading game enthusiast websites can proudly stand together in their common commitment to ensuring consumers have the information necessary to make informed purchase decisions and to help restrict access to content that isn’t intended for younger viewers,” said ESRB president Patricia Vance. “All of the EWC member sites deserve recognition for their leadership and I applaud them for volunteering to be a part of the EWC.”

The EWC Code extends to game enthusiast sites many of the same responsible online practices that ESRB has required of game publishers for years with respect to their own websites. The FTC’s most recent Report to Congress confirmed that the video game industry has “the strongest self-regulatory code,” that full ratings disclosure existed on 100% of the game publisher websites checked, and that compliant age-gates were being implemented 86% of the time¹.

“Obviously some games aren’t intended for younger players, and the same goes for the trailers that promote them,” added Peer Schneider, SVP of Content and Publisher, IGN Entertainment. “Because we serve such a broad and growing audience, we’re happy to support any effort that ensures we’re going about it responsibly.”

“While the Internet provides incredible opportunities for children to learn, play and connect with the world around them, parents and teachers face growing concerns about the types of content that children may be exposed to online,” said Stephen Balkam, CEO of the Family Online Safety Institute ([FOSI](#)). “It is extremely gratifying to see the ESRB Website Council proactively make a commitment to help prevent children from accessing material that isn’t suitable for them, and their efforts should serve as an example to others. I commend the ESRB and the EWC member sites for taking an important step in making the internet a safer place for families.”

“The ESRB rating system exists to guide parents that buy their children video games, and as an industry we all have a shared interest in supporting that system,” added Simon Whitcombe, vice president, Games, CBS Interactive. “While our chief goal is to give gamers the most current and exciting information, videos, reviews and demos, we all have a role to play in making sure games are marketed in an appropriate manner. The EWC underscores that commitment and demonstrates how seriously it is taken.”

The EWC is modeled largely after the highly successful [ESRB Retail Council](#) which was created in 2005 primarily to support major video game retailers in enforcement of their store policies not to sell Mature-rated games to those under the age of 17. Since its inception, [ERC-sponsored mystery shop audits](#) (conducted by the same firm that is used by the FTC) have measured a 27% increase in compliance with store sales policies, from 65% in November 2006 to 83% in May 2010.

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About Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

The ESRB is a non-profit, self-regulatory body established in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). ESRB independently assigns computer and video game content ratings, enforces advertising guidelines, and helps ensure responsible online privacy practices for the interactive entertainment software industry.

¹ Federal Trade Commission Report to Congress, December 2009 ([link](#))