

## Top tips on making age ratings work for you

Age ratings are a useful tool when you're trying to decide if an app, game or film is appropriate for your child. Here are our top tips on using age ratings to make informed decisions.

- 1) Know your child.** As a parent you'll usually know best what's appropriate for your child. Age ratings are helpful, but there might be times when you have a different view. For instance, if you know your 13 year old is easily upset by people getting hurt, you might not want them playing a video game with violence in it, even if the game is rated 12.
- 2) Do some research.** Because every child is different, it can be helpful to find out a bit more about the reason for a rating when deciding what you'll allow. Many ratings (like those from PEGI) come with some kind of description. If you can't find one or need more information, you might try checking out a website, app, game or film for yourself before deciding if it's OK for your child.
- 3) Consider the context.** Some ratings (like the BBFC's) account for the context of potentially upsetting or offensive material. A film that features drug use, for instance, might receive a lower rating if it's clearly portrayed as a bad thing. Not all ratings make these considerations, so it can be helpful to make your own judgements about the context of possibly inappropriate material.
- 4) Know the law.** While many age ratings are just a guideline, it's good to remember that some are legally enforceable. You might think your child is mature enough to play a particular 18-rated video game, for example, but staff in a shop would be breaking the law if they sold the game to anyone under 18. You might want to find out a bit about the laws around age ratings and keep this in mind when you're deciding what you will and won't allow.
- 5) Be realistic.** In the age of smartphones and tablets, it's not always possible to control what your child sees. Age ratings are a good first step but don't assume they'll definitely stop your child seeing inappropriate content – especially because a lot of what's online isn't rated or restricted by age. It's still worth talking to your child about potentially upsetting or sensitive topics in an age appropriate way.