Case Study: Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE): Game age rating systems and parental controls

SCEE does not permit any PlayStation video game to be published without an age rating.

30 countries within our region (Europe, Australia/NZ, Middle East and Africa) recognize the PEGI age rating system for games (http://www.pegi.info/en/index/). Other game age rating systems exist in Germany (USK), Russia, Australia (Classification Board), New Zealand (OFLC) and South Africa.

All PlayStation consoles have parental controls which parents can set to ensure that their children cannot play games (disc-based and downloaded games) rated higher than their age by PEGI or other game rating systems in our region. This parental control setting is protected by a passcode. Since SCEE does not permit the publication of any PlayStation game without a rating either under PEGI (notwithstanding that PEGI is a voluntary system) or as may be required by law in our region, this means that the parental controls are available to restrict play for almost every PlayStation game.

Where there is no requirement to rate games under the age rating systems above, we impose our own internal rating system (for example, for PlayStation Mobile applications) which can also be read by the PlayStation console parental controls.

PlayStation console parental controls also work with recognized age rating systems for films.

Parents can also prevent the use and collection of location data on PS Vita, a handheld console. SCEE offers or imposes further parental controls on the PlayStation Network (PSN):

1. Consumers cannot view or download any content (or related advertising) which is age rated higher than their PSN registered age. This cannot be overridden by the parent.

2. We also prevent children engaging in online gameplay against others, via the PSN, of games rated higher than their age, even if the parent has not restricted play at the console level (we can do so as PSN log-in is required for all online play).

3. Since you cannot have a PSN master account unless you are 18, purchases by children (via sub-accounts) are managed at all times by their parents. Parents can set the maximum amount of funds that can be spent by their child via the child's sub-account.

4. Parents may disable real-time chat on the PSN for the sub-accounts they manage.

5. Parents may disable access to user-generated content for the sub-accounts they manage.

6. Parents may disable use of the internet browser on the console.

7. On some consoles, we offer the chance for parents to purchase web filtering software.

8. Parental controls are protected by passcodes.
9. The PSN has detailed Terms of Service, setting out clear rules as to online conduct and grief reporting, and a Privacy Policy, each of which has to be accepted on registration. SCEE provides reactive moderation as a rule but pre-moderation takes place for games that are aimed at young children.

All game age ratings are displayed on the front of disc-based games and on downloadable games on the PSN so that a parent can make an informed choice prior to purchasing games for their children.

SCEE would like to see a greater take-up of parental controls and is working to improve parents’ awareness of age ratings and parental controls. To that end, amongst other things, SCEE has improved the printed instructions included with new consoles by creating a new set of simple and easy-to-use instructions to be included in the box for every PlayStation 4.