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# GOVERNMENT NOTICE

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## DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

No. 184

24 February 2006

### FILM AND PUBLICATION BOARD

#### **FILMS AND PUBLICATIONS ACT, NO. 65 of 1996** [Section 31(3)(b)]

#### GUIDELINES USED IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF FILMS, COMPUTER GAMES AND PUBLICATIONS

##### 1 Introduction

The Film and Publication Board (the "Board") is responsible for the classification of films, interactive computer games and certain publications intended for distribution and/or public exhibition in the Republic.

Classification is intended to protect children from exposure to potentially disturbing and harmful materials and, in so far as sex is concerned, from premature exposure to adult experiences, and to provide such cautionary information as will allow adult South Africans to make informed viewing and reading choices, both for themselves and for children in their care.

##### 2 Guiding principles

A classification committee, drawn from a panel of members appointed through a process of public nominations, examines a film (or an interactive computer game or a publication) against-

- \* generally-accepted community standards of tolerance as reflected in classification guidelines;
- the relevant sections and schedules of the Act, and
- the human rights values of the *Constitution*.

In making their decisions, examiners, consistent with the principle that, in all matters concerning children, the best interests of the child are paramount, aim to strike a reasonable balance between competing interests and the protection of children from potentially disturbing, harmful materials and age-inappropriate materials.

##### 3 Classifiable elements and consumer information

The classification guidelines identify a number of *classifiable elements*, the frequency and intensity of which will determine the appropriate age restriction and consumer information which will apply to the film, game or publication examined. The *classifiable elements* identified by the Board are: *violence, sex, nudity, language and prejudice or negative stereotyping based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion or other group-identifiable characteristics*.

Consumer information is indicated by symbols: "V" warns of violent scenes; "S" indicates scenes involving sexual conduct; "N" is for nudity; "L" is information about strong language and "P" is advice that the material contains scenes or language that is biased or prejudiced with regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion or other group-identifiable characteristics.

Guidelines for the category of films, interactive computer games and publications restricted to adults only, identified as either "XX" or "X18", are set out in Schedules 1, 2, 6, 7 and 10 of the Act. Materials rated "XX" may not be distributed or exhibited in public. Materials classified "X18" may only be distributed or exhibited by holders of licences to conduct the business of adult premises and in accordance with the conditions set out in section 24(2) of the Act.

The guidelines below are for use by examiners in determining what may be potentially disturbing or harmful to, or age-inappropriate for, children in films, games or publications falling outside the 'restricted to adults only' category.

Child pornography is not a matter for classification. Any film, interactive computer game or publication containing scenes, images or descriptions of child pornography will be reported to the police for investigation and prosecution.

#### 4 Invitation for public feedback

In order to ensure that the guidelines reflect, as far as possible, generally-accepted community standards and levels of tolerance, the Board invites comments, criticisms and suggestions from the public. The guidelines will then be refreshed and amended in the light of public feedback. Comments, criticisms and suggestions may be sent, in writing, to:

The Senior Executive Officer (Operations),  
Film and Publication Board  
Private Bag X2205,  
HOUGHTON 2041, or

by fax to 011 483 1084, or

e-mail to [westmorej@fpb.gov.za](mailto:westmorej@fpb.gov.za).

The closing date for receipt of any public feedback is the 31 March 2006.

The Classification Guidelines

### Films

There are six categories for general or mainstream films. These range from 'A' (suitable for all ages) to '18' (material considered unsuitable for anyone younger than 18 years).

The 'A' and 'PG' categories are advisory, while categories "10", "13", "16" and "18" are legally restrictive and allowing a person under a specified age to watch or hire a film restricted to persons of or above a specified age would constitute an offence in terms of the Act.

#### **"A": suitable for all age**

Films in this category are suitable for all ages. They contain nothing considered harmful or disturbing to even very young children.

Theme	No themes are treated in a way that might threaten a child's sense of security or well-being.
Language	No use of strong language, such as swear words, threats, abuse, profanity or prejudice. There may infrequent use of mild language within context.
Drugs	There are no scenes condoning, promoting, glamorising or encouraging the use of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.
Prejudice	If the film contains any prejudice or negative stereotyping, the context makes it clear that such prejudice is wrong. The issue is resolved in a way that both supports human rights values and can be understood by even young children.
Nudity	There may be brief scenes of nudity in non-sexual contexts.
Sex	There are no scenes of sexual activity beyond brief kissing. There may be a few brief but discreet scenes of implied sexual activity.

Violence There may be brief scenes of unrealistic, non-threatening and very low-impact violence and scenes of mild threat, menace or suspense.

### **"PG": Parental Guidance**

This is an advisory category, alerting parents to the fact that the film contains some material that might confuse or upset some children who watch it on their own. While the film is not judged unsuitable for children, parents are advised to monitor the contents, either by finding out more about the film or by watching it with their children.

Theme No themes are treated in a way that might threaten a child's sense of security or well-being. A 'PG' classification without consumer information indicates that children may need parental guidance as the theme itself may be complex.

Language Strong language (swear-words, threats, abuse, profanity or prejudice) is infrequent and occurs only within context.

Drugs There are no scenes condoning, promoting, glamorizing or encouraging the use of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.

Prejudice If the film contains any prejudice or negative stereotyping, the context makes it clear that such prejudice is wrong. Issues of race, gender, religion and other expressions of intolerance are resolved in a manner that not only shows respect for the inherent dignity of all human beings and/or groups but can also be understood by even young children.

Nudity There may be brief scenes of nudity in nonsexual contexts.

Sex There may be brief scenes of implied sexual activity. These are few and discreet. There are no close-ups and no frontal nudity in the implied sexual scenes.

Violence Brief scenes of minimal, low-impact violence may occur. There are no prolonged or extreme images of violence (eg. a victim suffering, graphic close-ups, long shoot-outs). The film shows that violence has consequences. People who commit violence are punished or suffer remorse. The final outcome is positive. There may be mild threats, menace or suspense. Scenes of moderate violence occur only in clearly contextualised comic, historical, fantastical or natural disaster settings. Fear-inducing dialogue and action should not cause discomfort or distress to any child.

### **"10": Not suitable for children under the age of 10 years**

This is a legally restrictive classification. No child under the age of 10 years may be allowed to watch such a film in a cinema or rent such a video or DVD.

Theme Themes may be complex but outcomes reinforce positive social values. The overall message is reassuring to a child's sense of security and well-being.

Language	There may be infrequent strong language occurring within the context of the story. Sexual innuendo will be outside a child's understanding and words that constitute verbal abuse may occur but infrequently and within a comedic context
Drugs	There are no scenes condoning, promoting, glamorising or encouraging the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Brief scenes of drug use may occur, within the context of the story but instructional detail.
Prejudice	Issues of race, gender and other expressions of intolerance are resolved in a way that shows respect for the inherent dignity of every individual or group. If bias or negative stereotyping occurs, it is resolved within the context of the story. The overall message supports human rights values.
Nudity	There may be brief scenes of nudity, within context but without lingering close-ups.
Sex	There may be scenes of implied sexual activity necessary for the development of the plot, character or theme. However, such scenes are few and without lingering close-ups or suggestive audio effects.
Violence	Violence should be mild and form an integral part of the plot or character development. There are no prolonged or extreme images of violence, such as close-ups and graphic depictions of people suffering either physically or emotionally as a result of violent acts or accidents. Films, including animation, must show in a direct way the negative consequences of intentional violence. Fear-inducing dialogue and actions should not cause discomfort or distress. A cautious approach should be taken when humour within a film is employed to lessen tense or threatening or violent situations. There may be scenes which depict, realistically, death, pain and suffering but such scenes will be brief and treated with appropriate sensitivity.

**"13": Not suitable for children under the age of 13 years**

**This** is a legally restrictive classification. No child under the age of 13 years may be allowed to watch such a film in a cinema or rent such a video or DVD.

Theme	Themes may be more complex and adult than in films classified 'A', 'PG' or '10'. They may include troubling social or moral issues, but these are handled with sensitivity and in a manner appropriate to the development of teenagers. Outcomes are positive and children of and above 13 years will be able to understand them.
Language	There may be strong language appropriate to plot or character development. There may also be language, including mild sexual humour, exploring anti-social values, occurring within context as part of the plot or character development, but not of a demeaning or degrading nature.
Drugs	There may be scenes of drug abuse. These occur within context, and negative consequences of drug-taking are explored. There is no instructive detail or glamorisation of drug-taking.
Prejudice	Some scenes showing bias or negative stereotyping may occur. These are resolved within the context of the story, with positive outcomes. Human rights values are reinforced.
Nudity	Scenes of nudity may occur, without lingering close-ups and within the context of the story, enhancing the plot or character development and not for exploitative purposes.

- Sex** There may be brief scenes of sexual activity, related to the development of plot, theme or character. There is no suggestion of abuse, violence or exploitation in such scenes.
- Violence** Brief scenes of realistic and intense violence may occur within a meaningful context, forming part of plot or character development. Graphic or gory details (eg. close-ups) are infrequent. There are no scenes glamorising or condoning violence. Scenes of domestic and psychological violence, including sexual threat, may occur within the context of the theme and only if the outcome supports positive social values and human rights values. Violence is neither glamorised nor presented as a way to resolve conflicts.

**"76": Not suitable for children under the age of 16 years**

This is a legally restrictive classification. No one under the age of 16 years may be allowed to watch such a film in a cinema or rent such a video or DVD.

- Theme** Themes tend to be more adult than in films classified 'A', 'PG', '10' or '13'. They may include troubling social or moral issues and outcomes are not necessarily positive.
- Language** Strong language may be used.
- Drugs** Scenes of drug use may occur but without instructive detail. There are no scenes condoning, glamorising or encouraging the use of drugs.
- Prejudice** There may be scenes showing bias and negative stereotyping. There might not necessarily be a positive outcome in the plot development.
- Nudity** There may be scenes of nudity, including close-ups. But the context is not sexually exploitative.
- Sex** Scenes of sexual activity may occur within the context of the story but do not feature excessive nudity that is exploitative or gratuitous.
- Violence** There may be scenes of intense violence. But these occur within context. As part of the development of plot or character, or illustrated dramatic events but not as gratuitous violence.

**"18": Not suitable for persons under the age of 18 years**

This is a legally restrictive classification. No one under the age of 18 years may be allowed to watch such a film in a cinema or rent such a video or DVD.

There are no restrictions on themes or classifiable elements, with or without consumer information. However, films classified "18" and intended for adults, will not contain scenes of child pornography, explicit violent sexual conduct, bestiality, explicit sexual conduct which is degrading of human beings and which constitute incitement to cause harm, the explicit infliction of extreme violence or explicit sexual conduct involving sexual intercourse with visual presentation of genitals or of the anal region.

## Interactive Computer Games

There are ~~six~~ categories for interactive computer games: 'A', "PG", '10', "10", '16' and '18'. These categories are not based on the ease or difficulties of a game but, like the classifications of films, on the frequency and intensity of the classifiable elements within the game.

### **: suitable for all ages**

Games classified 'A' contain nothing that could be considered harmful or disturbing to children of any age. But parental supervision may be needed for very young children.

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| Language  | There may be occasional crude language (eg "damn") but no sexual expletives or profanities.  |
| Drugs     | No depictions of drug taking occur. There is no encouragement of criminal or anti-social behaviour.  |
| Prejudice | The game contains no bias or negative stereotyping with regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion or other group identifiable characteristics.   |
| Nudity    | There are no scenes of nudity.   |
| Sex       | There are no scenes or references to sexual activities.  |
| Violence  | There may be minimal violence in playful, comic or highly stylised settings, and scenes of mild horror. There are no sequences that will threaten a child's sense of security or well-being. |

### **"PG" : Parental guidance**

This is an advisory category, alerting parents, through consumer information symbols, to materials that might confuse or upset or be inappropriate for younger children. While the game is judged not unsuitable for children, parents are advised to monitor any game classified "PG" to assess its suitability for their children.

### **"10": Not suitable for children under the age of 10 years**

This category of game is restricted to children aged 10 and older. No child under the age of 10 may be allowed to buy or rent such a game, or play it in a public arcade.

Language	There may be occasional use of mild language.
Drugs	There are no depictions of drug abuse, including alcohol and cigarettes. There is no encouragement of anti-social behaviour.
Prejudice	The game contains no bias or negative stereotyping with regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion or other group identifiable characteristics.
Nudity	There may be brief scenes of nudity, within context, but without close-up focus on the genital or anal regions.
Sex	There are no scenes of provocative sexually-suggestive themes or activities.
Violence	There may be moderate amounts of cartoon, fantasy or mild violence or horror.

**"13": Not suitable for children under the age of 13 years**

This category of game is restricted to children aged 13 and older. No child under the age of 13 may be allowed to buy or rent such a game, or play it in a public arcade.

Language	There may be occasional use of strong language.
Drugs	There are no depictions of drug abuse, including alcohol and tobacco. There is no encouragement of anti-social behaviour.
Prejudice	No bias or negative stereotyping occurs.
Nudity	There are no sequences of gratuitous nudity.
Sex	There may be mildly provocative sexual themes. But there is no focus on sexual activity and no sequences of sexual abuse.
Violence	Sequences of mild violence may occur, with the protagonist shown in unsafe or violent situations. But there are no graphic or gory deaths and no mutilation or dismemberment of animal or human bodies.

**"16": Not suitable for children under the age of 16 years**

Games classified '16' are restricted to children aged 16 and older. No one under the age of 16 may be allowed to buy or rent such a game, or play it in a public arcade.

Language	There may be strong language.
Drugs	No sequences glamorizing the use of drugs or other criminal behaviour.
Prejudice	If negative stereotyping occurs, it does not promote or encourage hatred based on race, gender, ethnicity or religion or other group-identifiable characteristics.
Nudity	There may be instances of nudity but these are in context and not gratuitous.
Sex	There may be mature sexual themes. But there are no sequences of sexual abuse or threats. There are no scenes which link sexual activity with violence.
Violence	The game may include sequences of intense violence in graphic detail. Mutilation and dismemberment may occur in animated contexts.

**"18": Not suitable for persons under the age of 18 years**

This category of game is restricted to persons aged 18 and older. No one under the age of 18 may be allowed to buy or rent such a game, or play it in a public arcade.

Language	There may be very strong language.
Drugs	Sequences of drug abuse may occur.
Prejudice	Negative stereotyping may occur. But it does not promote or encourage hatred based on race, gender, ethnicity or religion or other group-identifiable characteristics.
Nudity	There may be frequent and prolonged sequences of nudity.
Sex	There may be sequences of sexual activity. But these are in context and not gratuitous.
Violence	Sequences of sustained, intense and graphic violence may occur. But there is no sexual or domestic violence.

**Publications** There are two categories of publications which are subject to regulation by classification in terms of the Act: (i) a publication in respect of which a complaint has been lodged with the Board that that publication be referred to a classification committee for examination and classification, and (ii) publications which contain visual presentations or descriptions listed in Schedules 1 or 2, which must be submitted to the Board for classification prior to



distribution. The guidelines below will be used in the classification of the first category of publications. Guidelines for the classification of publications in the category (ii) are set out in Schedules 1 and 2 to the Act.

**No classification necessary** A publication which, in the opinion of a classification committee, contains no classifiable elements that may be potentially disturbing, harmful or age-inappropriate to children of all ages, will not be subject to any restrictions and no classification will, therefore, be necessary for such publications.

**“PG13” : Not recommended for children under the age of 13 years**

This is an advisory category to caution parents that a publication classified “PG13” may contain materials that may not be suitable for all children under the age of 13 years.

**Theme** Themes are treated and handled in a way that is sensitive to the stage of emotional and cognitive development of younger children. However, parents and guardians should, on the basis of their experience of children in their care, provide appropriate guidance to children under the age of 13 years.

**Violence** There may be depictions or descriptions of intense violence necessary for the development of plot and character and is neither gratuitous nor exploitative. The over-all message is that violence is anti-social and disrespectful of the right to human dignity and is not an appropriate method for solving problems or conflicts. Treatment especially of themes of domestic and sexual violence must be pro-social and supportive of human rights values.

**Sex** There may be depictions and descriptions of sexual conduct, which is not explicit, exploitative or gratuitous, but necessary for the development of the theme, plot or character. Sexual themes and sexual activities are treated and presented in a way that is sensitive to the development stages of pre-teens and teenagers, but may not be appropriate for children under the age of 13 years without parental guidance. The treatment of sex should not promote irresponsible sexual conduct.

**Nudity** Depictions and descriptions of nudity are neither sexually exploitative nor demeaning of the right to human dignity.

**Language** Language that is strong, coarse, aggressive or sexually explicit may be used within context for the development of plot or character.

**Prejudice** Depictions or descriptions of prejudice or negative stereotyping that encourages, incites or promotes hatred based on any group-identifiable characteristics will not occur unless, from the point of over-all impact, such depictions or descriptions are unavoidable and necessary to drive home a pro-social message.

**“18”: Not for persons under the age of 18 years**

Legally restricted to adults only and may not be displayed among or next to products intended for children.

**Theme** There are no restrictions on themes.

**Violence** There are no depictions or descriptions of explicit extreme violence.

Sex and	There may be depictions or descriptions of adult sexual activities, which are not explicit and do not involve visual presentations of the genitals in the case of sexual intercourse.
Nudity	There may be depictions or descriptions of nudity containing genital detail but not in the context of sexual intercourse.
Language	There are no restrictions on language.
Prejudice	Depictions or descriptions of prejudice or negative stereotyping that encourages, incites or promotes hatred based on any group identifiable characteristics will not occur unless, from the point of over-all impact, such sequences are unavoidable and necessary to drive home a pro-social message,

### ***Glossary of words and phrases***

This glossary or list of definitions gives the meaning of key words as they are used in the guidelines.

<b><i>abusive</i></b>	rude, disrespectful, harmful, showing contempt
<b><i>bias</i></b>	prejudice; a slanted and unjust attitude (usually towards minor or outsider groups)
<b><i>classification</i></b>	placing in categories or groups according to the frequency and intensity of classifiable elements (strong language, nudity, prejudice, sex, and violence)
<b><i>close-up</i></b>	an image in graphic detail, as if seen from very near
<b><i>context</i></b>	surroundings or background; the whole picture; the other parts of a film, video or game which come before and after a particular incident and helps to clarify its meaning
<b><i>discreet</i></b>	restrained, modest, inoffensive; an image shown from a distance, without lingering on close-up detail
<b><i>expletive</i></b>	oath, swearword or curse
<b><i>explicit</i></b>	candid, leaving nothing to the imagination: focusing on close-up detail
<b><i>exploitative</i></b>	making use of someone or something for selfish or improper reasons
<b><i>extreme</i></b>	exceptionally intense, graphic or prolonged fantastical not realistic, not of this world (eg. fairy tales, science fiction)
<b><i>frequent</i></b>	often
<b><i>frequency</i></b>	how often something occurs
<b><i>gory</i></b>	bloody; detailed, graphic images of violence
<b><i>graphic</i></b>	vivid, showing all the details

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<b>gratuitous</b>	lacking good reason; elements in a film, video or game which add nothing to the development of theme, plot or character
<b>implied</b>	not shown or said directly but strongly suggested or hinted at
<b>incite</b>	arouse, stir up, inflame
<b>instructive</b>	instructing or showing how to do something
<b>intensity</b>	strength, power, force (in film, the intensity of a scene depends on how long it is, its sound and lighting effects, language, context, and whether it is shot from a distance or close-up)
<b>legally restrictive</b>	limiting by law
<b>mainstream</b>	produced for the general public and available in ordinary cinemas and stores
<b>menacing</b>	threatening; suggesting harm and arousing fear
<b>mild</b>	moderate, slight, understated
<b>negative</b>	insulting, hostile
<b>nudity</b>	nakedness
<b>prejudice</b>	pre-judgement; bias; negative or hostile attitude (usually towards minority or outsider groups) based not on facts or individual experience but on group stereotypes
<b>positive</b>	outcome a result or conclusion that supports human rights values; an overall message in accord with the view that it is important to strive to be a decent human being
<b>profanity</b>	blasphemy; language showing lack of respect in regard to religious or sacred matters
<b>protagonist</b>	the main character in a film or game; the hero or heroine
<b>sexual activity</b>	kissing, caressing, embracing, love-making; physical intimacy between two people (in mainstream films, even in the "18" category, images of sexual activity are never as explicit as in adults-only "X18" material, eg. there is no focus on the genitals)
<b>stereotype</b>	a fixed idea which reduces individuals to a standard, usually prejudiced group mould
<b>strong language</b>	includes swear words, threats, abuse, profanity or prejudice
<b>swearword</b>	expletive, oath, curse, foul language
<b>theme</b>	subject matter; what a film is about

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