ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - Volume 3 Issue 8

This month's ThinkUKnow newsletter is classified PG – parental guidance is recommended for young readers. It will focus on the importance of classifications in guiding what content is appropriate for children and young people. Three events prompted the theme of this month's newsletter: the first was my recent viewing of Snow White and the Huntsman (M). I was shocked to see that half of the audience was under 12 and the cinema staff was happily providing booster seats for them. The second was a newspaper article claiming that parents had been tricked into seeing Ted (MA), mistakenly believing it was a family movie. Finally, the horrific incident in the USA where a gunman shot moviegoers at the premiere of the Dark Knight Rises (MS); one of the victims was a 6 year old girl.

These events had me questioning why so many parents allow their children to see movies and other material which experts advise are inappropriate for their age group?

Why are classifications important?

In Australia, the Classification Board is responsible for assigning classifications to material as specified under the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995. Broadly, these classifications include G, PG, M and MA15+ for films and computer games, with R18+ and X18+ also applicable to films. G, PG and M are advisory categories and serve as recommendations, whereas MA15+, R18+ and X18+ are legally

Time2Talk

This section provides some useful conversation starters for talking with young people about their use of technology.

Do you think classifications are important?

Why do you think films and games are classified?

Would you see scarier things in an MA-rated movie or on the internet?

How do you think content should be classified?

Develop rules

It's important to have rules around what type and when media can be consumed online or on a mobile device. If you don't allow your child to see an M-rated film at the cinema, then M-rated games, shows and films shouldn't be allowed at home.

You can set up parental controls on your gaming consoles to restrict certain classifications of games being played. You can find out more information on how to do this here. Link to Monitoring apps on mobile devices can be a little bit trickier as they use self-generated classifications. It's a good idea to talk to your child about what apps they are able to download and what apps

enforceable.

The classification decisions are based on the guiding principles of protecting minors from viewing content that may harm or disturb them and that everyone should be protected from unsolicited material which they may find offensive.

Classifications are an important first step in deciding what movies your child sees or what games they play, but they are not the only step. Classifications should prompt further inquiry into the content of the film or game and don't be tricked into thinking games' classifications are any less important than films! Search online for reviews of the content (see www.commonsensemedia.org) and think about how appropriate it may be for your child. At the end of the day it's your decision to allow your child to see G, PG or M content.

How can I monitor what can be accessed online?

It's easy to monitor what films your child sees when it's you driving them to and from the cinema but this can get a bit trickier when they are accessing content online. Here are some steps you can take to minimise any exposure to inappropriate content online:

Talk about the issues

Discuss with your child what steps they should take if they ever see something which upsets them or makes them feel uncomfortable. This might be minimising the window and looking for a parent, or walking away from the gaming console or phone. Let your child know that they won't be in trouble for coming across the content and that letting a parent know what they've seen is better than trying to deal with it on their own.

Some young people may deliberately seek inappropriate content online because they are curious and feel embarrassed asking a parent for information. It may be beneficial for you to talk about the difficult issues such as sex and self-harm, otherwise your child may find the wrong information online instead of the truth.

they require your permission for. Find out more about app safety here.

You may also wish to enable parental controls on computers which restrict adult content as well. These may be available as part of your operating system or form part of a content filter program.

Learn more

Finally, if you are unsure of what websites your child frequents, ask them! Take an active interest in their online activities so you have a better idea what type of content they may come across.

If you're unsure if the games, apps and websites your child is using are appropriate for them, check them out and do some more research. You may even find that you too enjoy the same activity as your child!

ThinkUKnow e-newsletter archive

Previous editions of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter will shortly be available to the public via the ThinkUKnow website and no longer restricted to members only. The ThinkUKnow Project Team decided that the information and advice in these e-newsletters were important for all visitors to the ThinkUKnow website.

So is there still value in registering as a member? Of course! It means that each month, the e-newsletter will make its way to your inbox before it is available online. As a member, you can also download our resources and fact sheets.