**Choosing age-appropriate video on demand and online content for your family**



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**We asked David Austin from the**[**British Board of Film Classification(link is external)**](http://www.bbfc.co.uk/)**to explain how the organisation helps parents and children choose what to watch online**

The British Board of Film Classification is here to provide age ratings and content information to give you the tools to help you keep your family safe when viewing films, videos and, increasingly, website content.  
It’s easy to choose the right films and videos for you and your family to watch at the cinema and at home on DVD or Blu-ray, because we classify them with ratings that are instantly recognised and understood. They are given an age rating, along with content advice to help you make fully informed choices about what you and your children watch.  
But what about online? Recent figures released by Ofcom show that tablet computers are an increasingly popular means of entertaining children. It found that 11% of three- to four-year-olds have a tablet device of their own, and one in three children aged between 5 and 15 years old have their own device.

**The public helps write our guidelines**

With an increasing number of adults and children watching films and videos online, how can you be sure the material they’re looking at will be suitable for your children?  
For the cinema and on DVD and Blu-ray, the BBFC classifies films according to our published[**Classification Guidelines**(link is external)](http://www.bbfc.co.uk/what-classification/guidelines). The Guidelines are based on large scale public consultation and updated every 4-5 years. The last review of our guidelines in 2013 involved more than 10,000 members of the public from across the UK, including, for the first time, teenagers.   
To protect children, it’s a legal requirement for films and videos released in cinemas and on DVD and Blu-ray to be classified.

**Online and VoD content**

There is currently no law requiring online video content to be age rated.. Following a government pilot, online UK music videos will now be rated by age by the BBFC before being displayed on YouTube and Vevo, but this will only be applied to music videos produced in the UK.  Other platforms do not have to submit their content to us for classification, or to display official BBFC ratings to help guide their customers.    
Yet the public wants trusted age ratings online. In 2011, the BBFC commissioned research into what information, if anything, the public would find helpful when making viewing choices online for themselves and their families. The research found that 90% of parents with children under 16 consider it important to have consistent BBFC classifications for video on demand (VoD) content.

**Helping parents make the right choices**

Encouragingly, many VoD providers are also keen to ensure children are watching age appropriate material.   
Many major VoD platforms such as Netflix, iTunes, BT TV and Blinkbox work with us voluntarily, carry content we classify and display our trusted age rating symbols (U, PG, 12, 15 and 18). Some VoD providers also let parents calibrate parental controls based on BBFC ratings. This helps parents to ensure their children are watching age appropriate content online, in the same way they can when they buy a child a DVD or Blu-ray disc, or take them to the cinema.  
You can check whether the VoD platform you subscribe to uses BBFC age ratings by looking at the [**Digital Age Ratings**(link is external)](http://www.bbfc.co.uk/what-classification/digital-age-ratings) page on our main website.   
Our website also allows you to search for detailed classification information about every film given an age rating by the BBFC. This information is called **[BBFCinsight(link is external)](http://www.bbfc.co.uk/what-classification/what-bbfc-insight" \t "_blank)**.   
BBFCinsight is aimed particularly at parents and offers a summary of how and why a film was rated at any given category. A video explaining how to use BBFCinsight is available here.   
Our ratings and BBFCinsight for films are also available via our free iOS and Android app. The app makes it easy to check the age rating and BBFCinsight for a film when you’re away from home. The app stores data each time you access it, so you can check some age ratings even without a network connection.   
If a VoD film has an online BBFC age rating you can read more about the film by checking the BBFCinsight, as you would with a film you were going to see at the cinema or on DVD or Blu-ray.

**Working with the mobile network operators**

The BBFC also works with mobile network operators to ensure adult content we would rate 18 is put behind filters. This helps ensure that the most inappropriate and potentially harmful content is placed out of children’s reach. However, these protections only apply to content accessed via 3G and 4G mobile networks. Once a device moves onto public wifi or home broadband, this filter does not apply. Each home broadband provider, for example, operates different levels and types of filtering.  
The mobile network EE also offers an additional default filter for content based on the BBFC’s PG rating to ensure younger children are protected from inappropriate material on their mobile internet device, again when accessing content via 3G or 4G.

**Worried about content?**

You can report any possibly unsuitable online content – film, still images or even plain text – that your child sees using their mobile phone to your mobile operator. They will process your query within five working days. If the mobile operator requires further advice, the query will be passed to the BBFC - and you can also come to us for more information.   
We adjudicate on individual cases and judge whether the content should be placed behind a filter. You can read more about how the BBFC works with mobile operators [**here**(link is external)](http://www.bbfc.co.uk/what-classification/mobile-content).

**Get in touch**

We always welcome your feedback. Please send questions or suggestions about our service to[feedback@bbfc.co.uk(link sends e-mail)](mailto:feedback@bbfc.co.uk?subject=Enquiry%20%5Bvia%20www.ParentInfo.org.uk%5D). 

**Experts:**

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