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# GOVERNMENT NOTICE

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## DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

No. 832

31 August 2001

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

#### FILM AND PUBLICATION BOARD

#### 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 all film material (in all formats), interactive computer games and publications intended for distribution and/or public exhibition in the Republic.

Classification is intended, primarily, to protect children from exposure to potentially disturbing and harmful materials and, in so far as sex and sexuality is concerned, from premature exposure to adult experiences. The process involves the imposition of appropriate age restrictions, to be enforced by cinema, computer games and video outlet managers, and the giving of consumer information directed at parents and guardians for making appropriate viewing, gaming and reading choices for their children.

##### 2 *Guiding principles*

A classification committee, drawn from a panel of examiners 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 the classification guidelines and the experience of the examiners;
- the relevant sections and schedules of the Act, and
- the human rights values of the Constitution.

In making their decisions, examiners aim to strike a reasonable balance between competing interests and the protection of children from potentially disturbing and harmful 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 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.**

**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.

The classification guidelines, published below, **which were developed in consultation with the public last year**, are used in the examination and classification of what may be regarded as general, mainstream materials. Guidelines for the classification of materials which are either rated XX and prohibited from distribution and/or public exhibition, or classified X18 and restricted for distribution and/or exhibition to adults only by holders of licences to conduct the business of adult premises, are set out in the schedules to the Act.

#### 4 **Invitation for public feedback**

The classification guidelines currently used by the Board are set out below. 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 in the light of public feedback. Comments, criticisms and suggestions may be sent to the

Chief Executive Officer  
Film and Publication Board  
Private Bag X9069, Cape Town 8000  
Fax to 021 465 6511  
or e-mail to [fpbmail@fpb.wcape.gov.za](mailto:fpbmail@fpb.wcape.gov.za).

The closing date for receipt of any public feedback is one month from the date of the publication of the guidelines in the *Government Gazette*.

### **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.

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

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 strong language.

Drugs	There are no scenes condoning, promoting, glamorising or encouraging the use of drugs, including alcohol and cigarettes.
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.
Violence	There are no scenes of violence, irrespective of genre.

Because films classified "A" contain no classifiable elements, no consumer information is provided

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

**This is an advisory category.** It alerts parents to the fact that the film contains some material that might confuse or upset some children who watch it alone. 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 on the theme. A "PG" classification with consumer information alerts parents to minimal classifiable elements.
Language	Strong language (swear-words, threats, abuse, profanity or prejudice) is infrequent and occurs only within context.
Drugs	There are no scenes condoning, promoting, glamorising or encouraging the use of drugs, including alcohol and cigarettes.
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 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 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.

**"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.
Drugs	Scenes of drug use may occur. They are brief and within the context of the story. No instructional detail is given and drug use is not glamorised.
Prejudice	If bias or negative stereotyping occurs, it is resolved within the context of the story. The overall message supports human rights values.
Nudity	Brief scenes of nudity may occur. These will be in context and without lingering close-ups.
Sex	There are no scenes of explicit sexual activity. Any scenes of implied sexual activity must add to the development of the plot, characterisation and theme. There will be no lingering close-ups or suggestive audio effects.
Violence	Violent scenes may occur. These do not last long and are neither graphic nor gory. They take place in the context of the story. Violence is not shown as glamorous. Its consequences are clear. Where threat, menace or suspense occurs, it will not be disturbing to children of 10 years and older.

Consumer information is provided, depending on how often and how intensely classifiable elements occur.

**"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 adult than in films classified "10", "PG" or "A". They may include troubling social or moral issues, but these are handled with sensitivity. Outcomes are positive and viewers aged 13 will be able to understand them.
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- Language** There may be strong language within context. There may be language and dialogue exploring anti-social values, occurring within context as part of the plot or characterisation, but with positive resolutions.
- 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.
- Nudity** Scenes of nudity may occur, without lingering close-ups and within the context of the story, enhancing the plot or character development.
- Sex** There may be brief scenes of implied sexual activity, related to the development of plot, theme or character. There is no suggestion of abuse, violence or exploitation in such scenes.
- Violence** 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.
- Consumer information is provided, depending on how often and how intensely classifiable elements occur.

**"16": 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 "13", "10", "PG" or "A". They may include troubling social or moral issues.
- 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.

Violence There may be scenes of intense violence. But these occur within context. They are part of the development of plot or character, or illustrate dramatic events.

Consumer information is provided, depending on how often and intensely classifiable elements occur.

**"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.**

Theme A variety of adult themes are possible.

Language Strong language may be used often.

Drugs There may be scenes of drug abuse. But these are in the context of the story or character development.

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 prolonged scenes of nudity. If the context is sexual, there is no focus on genital contact.

Sex Scenes of sexual activity may occur but none involving children. There is no bestiality and no extreme sexual violence. There is also no sexual violence of a kind that might incite viewers to cause harm to others.

Violence There may be scenes of sustained and graphic violence. The outcome is not necessarily positive.

Consumer information is provided, depending on how often and how intensely classifiable elements occur.

**Interactive Computer Games**

There are four categories for interactive computer games: "A", "13", "16" and "18". These categories have nothing to do with how easy or difficult a game but, like the classifications for films, they are based on how often and how intensely classifiable elements occur.

**"A": 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.

Language No strong language.

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 in regard to race, ethnicity, gender or religion.
Nudity	There are no scenes of nudity.
Sex	There are no references to sexual activity.
Violence	There may be minimal violence in playful, comic or highly stylised settings. There are no sequences that will threaten a child's sense of security or well-being.

**"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 cigarettes. 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 glamorise 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.

**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.

**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.

**Glossary of words and phrases**

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

**abusive** rude, disrespectful, harmful, showing contempt

**bias** prejudice; a slanted and unjust attitude (usually towards minority or outsider groups)

**classification** placing in categories or groups according to the frequency and intensity of classifiable elements (strong language, nudity, prejudice, sex, and violence)

**close-up** an image in graphic detail, as if seen from very near

**context** surroundings or background; the whole picture; the other parts of a film, video or game which come before and after a particular incident and clarify its meaning

<b>discreet</b>	restrained, modest, inoffensive; an image shown from a distance, without lingering on close-up detail
<b>expletive</b>	oath, swearword or curse
<b>explicit</b>	candid, leaving nothing to the imagination; focusing on close-up detail
<b>exploitative</b>	making use of someone or something for selfish or improper reasons
<b>extreme</b>	exceptionally intense, graphic or prolonged fantastical not realistic, not of this world (eg. fairy tales, science fiction)
<b>frequent</b>	often
<b>frequency</b>	how often something occurs
<b>gory</b>	bloody; detailed, graphic images of violence
<b>graphic</b>	vivid, showing all the details
<b>gratuitous</b>	lacking good reason; elements in a film, video or game which add nothing to the development of 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, 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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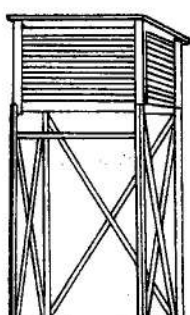
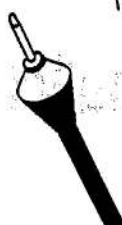
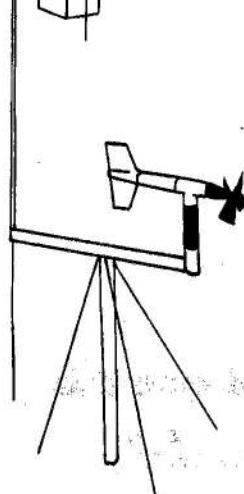
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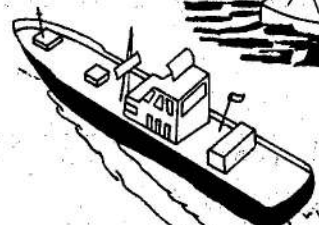
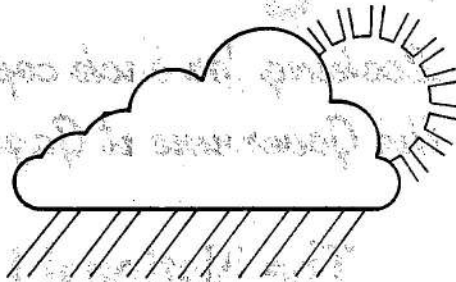
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