

## About TV Ratings

Saturday, July 29, 2006

**RATING LABELS** In 1996, Congress asked the broadcasting industry to establish a voluntary ratings system for TV programs. The industry did so by creating the ratings system known as "TV Parental Guidelines." The TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board makes sure that the rating guidelines are applied accurately and consistently to television programming. Rating labels were created to help parents determine which programs provide suitable viewing for their children. Each label corresponds to the degree, if any, of the following content contained in the designated program: Violence (V), Sex (S), coarse Language (L), sexual Dialogue (D). The rating labels appear in the corner of your television screen during the first 15 seconds of each television program. They are also included in the television listings of many newspapers. Ratings are assigned to all television programming except news, sports, and unedited movies on premium cable channels. There are six possible ratings that a program can receive:

**Children's Programming:** TV-Y Program deemed appropriate for all children, including ages 2-6.

TV-Y7 Program designed for children age 7 and above. May include mild fantasy or comedic violence.

TV-Y7-FV Program contains more intense and combative fantasy violence. General Programming:

TV-G Program suitable for all ages, although not designed specifically for young children. Contains little or no violence, no strong language and little or no sexual dialogue or situations. TV-PG Parental Guidance

Suggested. Program contains material that parents may find unsuitable for younger children. Program contains one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D).

TV-14 Parents Strongly Cautioned. Program contains material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age. Program contains one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).

TV-MA Mature Audience Only. Program specifically designed for adult viewing, therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. Program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S), or crude indecent language (L). The following are three methods parents can use to block inappropriate television

programming: the V-Chip, the Cable "Lockbox", and Set-top boxes. **THE V-CHIP** The V-Chip is a technology that electronically reads television programming ratings and allows parents to block programs they believe to be unsuitable for their children. Using the remote control, parents can program the V-chip to block certain shows based on their ratings. If your television is equipped with V-chip technology, the option should appear as part of your television's menu. Personal computers that include a television tuner and a monitor of 13 inches or greater are also required to include V-chip technology. **SET-TOP BOX** If your television does not contain the V-chip option, you can get a Set-top box, which works the same way as a built-in V-chip. **THE "LOCKBOX"** This option, available to Cable subscribers, prevents viewing of any channel on which objectionable programming may appear. Cable operators are required to make "lockboxes" available for sale or lease to customers who request them. "Lockboxes" may also be purchased from other commercial distributors.