

BROCHURES ON OTHER TOPICS

Tell me your nickname and I'll tell you who you are!

Computer games and data protection

Money Money Money!

Computer games and money

Gamegirls and Gameboys

Computer games and gender

Shot in the head!

Computer games and violence

Loser!

Computer games and contact risks

Stars from the generation games

Computer games and media culture

Let's Play!

Computer games and the right to play

Turn that thing off!

Computer games and time

free of charge at games.jff.de.

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Game Life – the information brochure for parents on computer games was developed by the JFF-Institut für Medienpädagogik and the Medienzentrum Parabol on behalf of the Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Familie, Arbeit und Soziales.

Examine violence critically: You should make it clear to your children, that violence as a solution for conflicts should be opposed. Violence is contrary to the socially accepted values. At the same time, teenagers often encounter violence in their everyday life and in the world. It is almost impossible to keep children and teenagers from it completely. Computer games can be a good opportunity to have a discussion about violence. Nowadays, there are games in which gamers must make moral decisions and must decide between showing mercy or taking revenge, for example. You can use these moments to talk about violence. Here you should be careful not to condemn gaming completely, especially when talking to older teenagers. They tend to get defensive, making an open discussion exceedingly difficult.



Additional information about computer games and „gender“ can be found at www.games.jff.de.

LINKTIPS

Entertainment Software Self-Regulation Body (USK)

The USK is responsible for assessing computer games in Germany. Here you can find information about age ratings of certain games.

www.usk.de

Brochure „Dealing with computer games safely“

The information brochure of the foundation Medienpädagogik Bayern answers detailed questions about youth protection, among other things.

www.stiftung-medienpaedagogik-bayern.de > Materials

Speaker Network Bayern

The foundation Medienpädagogik Bayern offers an extensive network with contact information for experts on the subject media education in Bavaria.

www.stiftung-medienpaedagogik-bayern.de > speaker network



Shot in the head!

Computer games and violence

A TYPICAL SITUATION IN FAMILIES

A mother watches her son play a video game, in which many violent and - in her eyes – brutal scenes can be seen. She is not just shocked by the very realistic depiction of violence. She is also worried about the joy her son experiences when he shoots at other people - even if they are just virtual characters.

WHAT DO MANY PARENTS THINK ABOUT THIS?

Parents try hard to show their children, that violence is not a solution to a problem and that violence should be opposed in general. However, computer games often revolve around violence and therefore work against the parents' own ideas for parenting. Furthermore, violence depicted in games often shows a high degree of realism. It's frightening and unsettling. How can children play something like that voluntarily?

WHAT DO MANY TEENAGERS THINK ABOUT THIS?

Preoccupied by the game up until now, the parents come in and annoy you by complaining that the game is so brutal. But they just don't understand, that it's not about the violence. It's just fun to compete with your friends and find out who is better. Of course, the thrill and the action are part of it too. Besides you can find far worst things on the TV or even in a newspaper.

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Basically, it can be stated, that the topic violence is deeply rooted in our world and culture. This is evident from a mere glance at the evening television program or the world of novels. The impact of violence in computer games has been wildly debated among parents as well as politics and science in Germany. The question to what extent the depiction of violence can influence the development of children and teenagers is complex and not easy to answer.

On the one hand, it has been shown, that teenagers are well aware of the difference between fiction and reality – children, however, find this difficult. On the other hand, the actions and illustrations can appear very brutal, can scare younger players especially and can in general depict violence as an easy and effective solution for conflicts. It is clear, that nothing is without effect. However, the easy equation virtual violence = real violence is not correct. If children, based on their own experiences, view violence as an appropriate way to solve conflicts, this attitude is reinforced by violence in computer games.

Important for parents: Even if violence is often a central element of computer games, it is not the focus for most teenagers. Rather, they want to achieve the game objective (e.g. be the last to survive, rescue hostages, be a hero etc.). We also know this pattern from other games such as “cops and robbers”, which are not online. However, the depiction of violence in computer games, the roles that are offered and the realistic story lines are different to classic games.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Pay attention to the age rating: To protect children and teenagers the USK age rating plays a key role. It serves to protect children and teenagers from content, that might harm their psychosocial development. You should make sure, that your children only play games that are appropriate for their respective age group.

The colorful symbols of the USK can not only be found on the games that are sold in the store. The USK is also part of a world-wide provider identification system that many major app stores have joined. These stores only offer apps, where the providers have filled out a questionnaire assessing negative impacts and risks for children and teenagers. The USK age rating is automatically generated using that information.

Some apps and online games have different or no age ratings. In such cases it is advisable to search for further information online or to assess the content of the game yourself.

Pay attention to teenagers and their environment: It is important to adhere to this, when older family members (e.g. siblings, parents) play in the presence of or with younger children. Of crucial importance is the dialog with your child. Mere technical protection via filter software is often not enough. Furthermore, it is possible that young people play computer games at their friends' houses which they are not allowed to play at home. Therefore, talking to other parents about this topic can be helpful.



Additional information about computer games and „contact risks“ can be found at www.games.jff.de.