



RATINGS BEST PRACTICES GUIDANCE FOR STREAMING SERVICES

Today there are a growing number of streaming platforms available to children and families. According to an August 2020 survey of parents conducted on behalf of the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board (the Board), 84% of children are watching some content via streaming services. Given the rising popularity of these new platforms, many of which do not use the TV Parental Guidelines, the Board developed the following ratings guidance to encourage a consistent ratings experience for parents regardless of whether they and their families are watching content via traditional TV networks or through streaming services.

1. Video streaming services in the United States should include age-based ratings and applicable descriptor information (together, “TV Ratings”) for online video assets that were shown on television with ratings and for all movies and episodes of programs originally produced for the streaming environment (other than with respect to news, sports, advertisements or promotional materials,, promotional materials or movies rated by the Motion Picture Association (MPA)).
2. For all video assets that are rated, video streaming services should display TV Ratings on-screen at the time that a consumer initiates the playback of a video asset. This display shall be either: (1) an overlay of the TV Ratings icons at the beginning of video playback; or (2) inclusion of the TV Ratings icons on a stand-alone advisory bumper card that appears on-screen immediately in advance of video playback. (For the purposes of clarity, on-screen display information need not be “burned in” or otherwise permanently attached to a video file; the information merely must be visible to the end user at the time that video playback is initiated.)
3. Video streaming services should also include age-based ratings within the product experience (e.g., as part of narrative program summaries contained on program description screens or within online menus and navigation guides), to the extent practicable after taking into account technical and other reasonable limitations (such as screen size and platform capabilities).
4. Video streaming services should at a minimum strive to replicate the ratings experience available for programming that is shown on television, including the use of an age-based rating and applicable descriptors. Services that wish to do so also may include additional information, such as a parental advisory bumper card or similar, or additional details about the types of content that are contained within a video asset (e.g., to indicate the presence of smoking or non-sexual nudity).

5. Video streaming services should apply TV Ratings to all content that has been shown on television with ratings and all content that is originally produced for the streaming environment, including on an episode-by-episode basis for episodically rated programs. (Note: Feature film content that has been rated by the MPA and not edited for television should incorporate and display the applicable MPA rating and descriptor.)
6. Although they may apply TV Ratings on a per-episode basis for additional content, video streaming services shall at a minimum apply ratings on a per-series or per-season basis with respect to content acquired from a third party that was not originally shown on television with TV Ratings in the United States. Alternatively, services can apply a Not Rated (NR) classification if the streaming service's parental control functions can recognize an NR classification and if those functions would preclude viewers from accessing NR content when parental controls have been activated.
7. Unless the content has been edited, video streaming services should apply to a program the same TV Ratings in the streaming environment as were applied to that program when it was shown on television with ratings. When programming is sold or licensed to third party streaming services, if the programming was previously rated, the entity that initially rated the program shall upon request provide the third party service with the applicable TV Ratings information.
8. Video streaming services will continue to study ratings capabilities and, if practicable in the future, apply TV Ratings to additional content, including, for example, archival content that originally was shown on television prior to the adoption of the TV Parental Ratings system.