

The V-Chip: Options to Restrict What Your Children Watch on TV

The V-chip allows parents or other caregivers to block television programming that they don't want children to watch. Most programs are assigned a rating based on parental guidelines established by the television industry. The ratings provide information about the content and age-appropriateness of most programs, except news, sports and unedited movies on premium cable channels.

Parents can program the V-chip to block programs based on these ratings, which include two elements:

- An age-based rating that provides guidance about the age group for which a program is appropriate
- Content descriptors in the form of initials indicating that a program may contain suggestive dialogue (D), coarse or crude language (L), sexual situations (S), or violence (V).

The ratings are:

TV-Y –programs aimed at a very young audience, including children from ages 2-6.

TV-Y7 –programs most appropriate for children age 7 and up.

TV-Y7-FV –programs with fantasy violence that may be more intense or more combative than other programming in the TV-Y7 category.

TV-G –programs suitable for all ages; these are not necessarily children's shows.

TV-PG – parental guidance is recommended; these programs may be unsuitable for younger children.

TV-14 – programs that may be unsuitable for children under 14.

TV-MA – programs intended to be viewed by mature, adult audiences and may be unsuitable for children under 17.

Ratings appear in the upper left corner of your television screen during the first 15 seconds of each program and often after commercial breaks. The ratings also are listed in various publications that provide local TV listings.

How to program the V-chip

Since 2000, V-chips are required for all newly manufactured TV sets 13 inches or larger. Personal computers that include a television tuner and a monitor of 13 inches or more must also have a V-chip.

Parental controls for the V-chip in your TV, digital-to-analog converter box, or set-top box, can be set using the remote control that came with your equipment. Follow these general steps:

- Using the menu key on the remote control, locate the “main” or “setup” menu, then find an option that may be called “locks,” “block,” “parental controls” or “V-chip.”
- You should get a prompt to create a password that will enable you to lock TV channels and types of programming.
- Using the “menu,” “select,” “number” and “arrow” keys, select the channels and specific ratings assigned to TV programs you want blocked.
- Save your settings by pressing the appropriate key, as prompted.

These steps may vary depending on the equipment you are using. If you have difficulty programming your V-chip, consult your equipment manual for specific instructions.

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC’s Consumer Help Center at www.fcc.gov/consumers.

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

Last reviewed: 05/26/17

