



Family Matters

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Specialists

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Video Games: Parents Beware!

by Beth Fleming, family life field specialist

Parents today often assume that ratings will inform them of a video's suitability for their children. However, the "E" designation for "Everyone" may not be a true indicator of appropriateness for children, according to Iowa State University Professor Craig Anderson.

Dr. Anderson is a leading expert on the relationship between video games and aggression, having done extensive studies since the 1980's. He has testified before the U.S. Senate and provides some warnings and recommendations for families, based on these studies.

His studies confirm that repeated exposure to violent video games desensitizes an individual to real-life violence.

According to Anderson, "Although playing a violent video game on an occasional basis is unlikely to produce any long-term harmful consequences, repeated exposure to violent media of any type is an important risk factor for later aggressiveness." Adults need to carefully examine video game content before children are exposed to it.



Anderson has found that video ratings do not reflect the level of violence - with many teen videos being extremely violent.

He offers the following advice to adults before they purchase or rent video games.

- Play the game or have it demonstrated for you.
- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Does the game involve characters trying to harm others?
 - Does this harm happen frequently...more than once or twice in 30 minutes?
 - Is the harm rewarded?
 - Is the harm portrayed as humorous?
 - Are non-violent solutions not mentioned or less 'fun' than the violent ones?
 - Are realistic consequences for using violence absent from the game?

Anderson states that if two or more answers are 'yes,' then parents should think very carefully about the lessons being taught before allowing children access to the game.

Anderson further encourages adults to be aware of what children are playing and restrict time spent on video games. He advises parents to teach non-violent problem solving by talking about violence wherever it is observed and explaining its harmfulness. He encourages adults to share their concerns with retailers and support screening of inappropriate video games.

Information Source: Iowa State University New service

Repair or Replace?

When something stops working, the question of whether to repair it or get a new one can be a challenging one. The decision is affected by cost factors:

- 1) cost of repair,
- 2) cost of buying new,
- 3) life expectancy of the item - how soon will it need to be replaced anyway?

There are other considerations besides cost.

A new product can have extra benefits, including better features and energy efficiency. However, throwing away old products fill landfills and waste resources. With so many factors to weigh, how can a consumer know which is best?

Consumer Reports offers a few general rules based on surveys and product studies.

- It is usually not worth paying to have an item repaired if:
 - Purchase price was less than \$150,
 - the repair will cost more than half the price of a new item, or
 - the item is more than 3 years old (except some major appliances).
- If an item is under warranty, definitely have it repaired or replaced.
- Even if the item is off-warranty, complaining to the manufacturer may yield results, especially if the warranty expired recently. Ten percent of those who complain get some type of worthwhile response.

There was a time when repairs were almost always the logical first step, so what has changed? One reason: the number of repair shops has dropped by half since 1992, especially for electronics items. High cost of labor, and dropping cost of new products also tip the scale in favor of replacement. The complexity of many products, especially those with electronic components, can make problems difficult to diagnose or costly to repair. For example, even if only one tiny component is damaged, an entire circuit board may need to be replaced.

Before deciding to throw away an item:

- 1) Make sure it is really broken – the problem may be a loose plug, a tripped circuit or a bad surge-protector outlet.
- 2) Refer to the instruction manual or the manufacturer's website for typical trouble-shooting steps.
- 3) Search on-line for help.
- 4) Contact the manufacturer.
- 5) Talk with a repair shop.

Consumer Reports (October 2005) offers a list of product brands that are more-reliable and those that are less-reliable, as well as a time-line chart to guide repair or replace decisions.

If disposing of an item, consider recycling. A free website operated by Consumer Reports (www.greenerchoices.org) links to a Recycling Center that is searchable by zip code, listing local recycling options.

Sales Tax Holiday

On Select Clothing and Footwear
Friday and Saturday
August 4-5, 2006

Iowa's annual sales tax holiday waives state and local sales tax on purchases of most clothing and footwear priced below \$100. Plan ahead to take advantage of this opportunity to save 5-7 percent.

- Make a list of items needed and wanted.
- Know sizes before you shop.
- Consider pre-shopping (checking out store selection and sizes in the days before the tax holiday weekend).

For more information about the sales tax holiday, go to <http://www.state.ia.us/tax/>



Featured Website

<http://www.fueleconomy.gov/>

Find information on improving gas mileage, alternative fuel vehicles, and more.

Summertime C

Americans' top sources of vitamin C are oranges and orange juice. Surprisingly, there are other choices that have more vitamin C than an orange and supply the recommended dietary allowance for vitamin C. Compare these options for getting vitamin C.

- One cup strawberries (84 mg)
- One green bell pepper (95 mg)
- One kiwifruit (72 mg)
- Half a papaya (94 mg)
- One orange (69 mg)
- One cup of cooked broccoli (101 mg) or Brussels sprouts (96 mg)



Raspberry Smoothie (Serves 1)

The National Cancer Institute suggests these three common ingredients to make a delicious smoothie that adds fruit to your diet:

- **1 cup** un-sweetened, frozen fruit (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, peaches)
- **¾ cup** 100% orange juice (or any 100% juice)
- **½ cup** fruit-flavored, low-fat yogurt

Blend all ingredients well in blender, and drink! Using frozen fruits helps thicken the smoothie. If you use fresh fruit, add some ice cubes to the blender.

High potassium foods

Vegetables that are high in potassium include sweet potatoes, tomato products (paste, sauce and juice), beet greens, white potatoes, white beans, lima beans, winter squash, soybeans, spinach, lentils, kidney beans and split peas.

High-potassium fruits include prune juice, bananas, dried peaches, dried plums/prunes, dried apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, plantains and oranges.

Other foods high in potassium include yogurt, clams, blackstrap molasses, halibut, tuna, rockfish, cod, milk, pork and rainbow trout.

Outdoor Summer Grilling

Summer is the time for grilling food outdoors to keep the heat out of the kitchen. Prepare twice as much, so that you can re-heat in the microwave for another day's meal. Cook once and eat twice, saves time and energy! Grilling is not just for meat. Add foil packets of vegetables to the grill or try fruit and vegetable kabobs. Clean-up is easy!

Follow these reminders to keep food safe when grilling:

- Thaw meat in the refrigerator (not on the kitchen counter).
- Marinate foods in the refrigerator. Do NOT re-use marinade that was on raw meat.
- Preheat charcoals for 20-30 minutes and preheat gas grill for at least 5 minutes to kill bacteria.
- If you partially cook food in the microwave, oven or stove to reduce grilling time, do so immediately before putting the food on the grill.
- When taking foods off the grill, use a clean plate.
- Food should not be off the grill or out of refrigeration for more than 2 hours (1 hour in hot weather).

