



CANADA'S CENTRE  
FOR DIGITAL AND  
MEDIA LITERACY

## Understanding Television Rating Systems and Codes

Regulation of television content in Canada is primarily a voluntary system. Broadcasters, cable systems and specialty channels follow voluntary codes of conduct that address issues such as violence, gender representation, ethics, and advertising to children.

The Canadian television industry has also developed a TV classification system. Canadian television services are responsible for classifying certain Canadian or foreign programming that they show.

Below you'll find information about the Canadian television ratings system and the voluntary broadcasting codes.

### Canadian Television Rating System

Our TV classification (or rating) system is designed to work with a filtering tool called the V-chip. V-chip technology, which is integrated into most new TV sets, allows viewers to use the classification system to block certain programming.

Three TV rating systems work with the V-chip: Canadian English, Canadian French, and the U.S. system used by American broadcasters. To add to the confusion, not every television for sale in Canada is configured to work with all three systems. (Before you purchase a new set, be sure to ask which rating systems it will work with.)

In Canada, children's programming, drama and comedy programming, "reality-based" shows, and feature films must all be classified.

The rating system uses seven age-based categories, similar to Canada's film classification systems. Each classification includes information on violence, nudity and sex, and coarse language. The ratings icons must appear in top left-hand corner of the screen at the beginning of each TV program. Keep in mind that French-language broadcasters and American channels that broadcast directly in Canada use different ratings systems.

The English classification categories are:

<b>E</b>	Exempt
<b>C</b>	Children
<b>C8+</b>	Children eight years and older
<b>G</b>	General programming, suitable for all audiences
<b>PG</b>	Parental guidance
<b>14+</b>	Viewers 14 year and older
<b>18+</b>	Adult programming



For detailed information about these categories, see the [Canadian Broadcast Standards Council](#) website.

### **Canadian Broadcasting Codes**

In response to public concern and demand, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) developed broadcasting codes as guidelines for radio and television stations.

While adherence to these codes is voluntary, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) requires that TV services follow the Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming, the Sex-Role Portrayal Code and the Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children as a condition of licence.

The codes are administered by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC), which responds to complaints from the public about television and radio content.

The Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children is administered by [Advertising Standards Canada](#).

For more detailed information on the voluntary codes, see the [CBSC website](#).

For information on how to lodge a complaint, see the tip sheet [Television: Taking Action](#).

