

General Incorporated Association
Ethics Organization of Computer Software
C o d e o f E t h i c s

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General Incorporated Association
Ethics Organization of Computer Software Code of Ethics

(Purpose)

Article 1 The purpose of the Ethics Organization of Computer Software (hereinafter referred to as "the Organization") is to promote sound production and sales activities of computer software and related digital data (hereinafter referred to as "computer software, etc.") produced and sold by its Members, and to provide information on age restrictions for computer software, etc. to its Members. The purpose of the Corporation is to contribute to the sound upbringing of young people and to the development of culture through the promotion of the content industry by providing Members with information regarding age restrictions on computer software and related digital data (hereinafter referred to as "computer software, etc.").

In addition, the Members shall be deeply aware of the social responsibility of computer software, etc. and the seriousness of its influence on young people, and will produce and sell works based on our own voluntary code of ethics, and will make every effort to improve ethical standards while protecting freedom of expression and striving to achieve our objectives.

(Scope)

Article 2 These Rules shall apply to the titles, content, expressions and depictions therein, of computer software, etc. imported, produced, and sold in Japan by Members of the Corporation, as well as to the printed materials and packages that accompany such computer software, etc. The same shall apply to advertisements, in-store demonstrations, and other promotional materials used to promote the sale of the aforementioned computer software, etc.

The same shall also apply to advertisements, in-store demonstrations, and other materials used to promote the sale of aforementioned computer software, etc.

2 The same shall also apply to computer software, etc. distributed outside Japan by supporting Members.

(Targeted Works)

Article 3 Identified as computer software and other media that run on computer hardware and consist of data intended for display and viewing.

(Structure of this Code of Ethics)

Article 4 The structure of this Code of Ethics consists of "production standards" which establish general principles for the foundations of works, and "sales standards" which establish standards for prohibited matters according to each age group. For the latter, several types of standards may be established according to the age of the target sale audience.

However, the Corporation may revise these Rules as necessary from time to time, taking into consideration trends in computer software, etc. and the fluidity

of social culture.

(Relationship to Other Laws and Ordinances)

- Article 5 The Organization shall research and compile the relevant laws and regulations in Japan, including criminal laws, and shall instruct its Members to conduct sound production activities in a law-abiding spirit.
- 2 The Organization shall research and compile local ordinances related to the sound upbringing of youth, and shall provide guidance to its Members.

(General Principles)

- Article 6 The following are general ethical principles to be observed in the production and sale of computer software, etc.
- (1) Nation, law and social justice
- Respect the customs and sentiments of all races, ethnic groups, and nations.
 - Respect the spirit of democracy.
 - Respect basic human rights and do not use expressions that may defame particular individuals or groups.
 - Respect the law, social order, and morality, be cautious about depictions of conduct prohibited by law, and avoid expressing such conduct in a positive manner.
 - Do not condone violence or crime, or justify militarism, war, etc.
 - Content should be considerate of socially vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and young children.
 - Depictions of physically and mentally disabled people, etc. should be as restrained as possible.
 - Do not disregard human life.
 - Do not disparage any profession.
 - Do not use expressions that disparage specific regions.
- (2) Religion
- Respect freedom of religion, and do not unjustly slander, taunt, belittle, or direct hate speech toward this.
 - Take care not to injure the dignity of religions, religious people, or religious ceremonies.
- (3) Education
- Educators and minors must be depicted with utmost restraint and care.
 - Contribute to the healthy development of children and youth, and take caution not to damage their enrichment and mental stability.
 - Do not justify acts that are legally forbidden to minors.
 - Animals are not to be mistreated unnecessarily.
- (4) Family Relationships
- Marriage and family life must be strongly valued, so do not treat anything that would undermine these values in a positive light.

(Production Standards)

- Article 7 Production standards are standards that must be observed in the development of

computer software, etc.

【Notes】

- (1) Take utmost care not to produce works that frivolously depict gratuitous sex and lack elements such as story, theme, development, and game-like driving forces.
- (2) When creating a work, the artist should devise appropriate settings for depicting nudity and sex scenes, and pay particular attention to the balance between the necessity and development of sex scenes, length, frequency, and their cumulative effect, in terms of composition.
- (3) Aim to enhance and improve the content of the work by utilizing the unique qualities of computer software to strive for originality and ingenuity in the system, scenario, theme, development, gameplay, sound, etc.
- (4) For content dealing with crimes that may be imitated, clearly state on the packaging that the actions depicted constitute crimes and that imitation will result in the commission of a crime, so as not to encourage criminal activity.
- (5) Do not produce legally obscene materials.

【Technical Concealment Process】

- (1) Types of technical concealment treatments to be used
Technical concealment treatment refers to mosaic, whiting out, masking, object smearing, etc., so as not to visually depict male or female genitalia. (Hereinafter referred to as "mosaic, etc.").
- (2) Minimum requirements for mosaic, etc.
The image should be processed until it completely functions as a mosaic, etc. (i.e., the shape of male and female genitalia and the conjoined parts are no longer discernible).

(Sales Standards)

Article 8 Sales standards are standards that must be complied with in age-specific sales designations of computer software, etc.

Members are required to be responsible in their production and sales attitude in conformity with social principles, taking into consideration the target age group of each computer software product.

In consideration of this, when selling computer software, etc., Members shall pay attention to the following points and limit the target age groups for sales according to general social principles and ethical regulations.

【Notes】

For children (persons under 18 years of age):

- No sexually stimulating materials.
- No materials that incite cruelty or violence.
- No materials that encourage copycat behavior.

(Age Rating Classifications)

Article 9 The screening categories (ratings) of computer software, etc. produced by Members shall be broadly classified into "general software" and "software prohibited for sale to persons under 18 years of age (R18)".

- 2 General software works
General software works fall under three defined categories.
Specific regulations for each are listed in the Evaluation Criteria for General Software Works.
- (1) Software works for all ages (all ages)
The "All Ages" endorsement refers to software works that are produced within the scope of the "Production Standards" and can be purchased and appreciated by all age groups.
 - (2) Software works recommended for ages 12 and older (E12)
Defined as a software work produced within the scope of the "Production Standards" and targeted at an age group that has a certain level of awareness of social principles, and is intended (endorsed) for persons 12 years of age and older.
 - (3) Software works recommended for ages 15 and older (E15)
Defined as software works created within the scope of the "Production Standards" and targeted at an age group that has a certain level of awareness of social principles, and is intended (endorsed) for persons 15 years of age and older.

(Evaluation Criteria for General Software Works)

Article 10 The criteria for judging general software works shall be divided into three categories, each of which shall be stipulated as follows.

2 **Software works for all ages (All Ages)**

Works that meet the following criteria are considered appropriate for all ages (All Ages).

- (1) Regarding sex and adult entertainment
 - Works must not depict sexual acts.
 - Works must not depict the entire body of a man or woman, or the parts that customarily must be covered up. Visuals must not require technical concealment.
- (2) Regarding law and justice
 - Works must not use expressions that encourage acts contrary to law and order.
 - Violence and brutality must not be the theme of the work.
 - In documentaries and fiction intended to disavow or criticize violence, these works must not contain excessive depictions of violence or cruelty that dilutes this theme.
 - Even violence that may be justified in context must not be depicted excessively in the content of the work.
 - Works must not use expressions that encourage the use of violence.
 - Works must not incite or encourage violence, cruelty, or crime among young people who are in the process of social development and whose judgment is still immature, and must not be likely to hinder their sound development.
- (3) Regarding education
 - Conduct of minors within works must not be contrary to the principles of society.

3 **Software works recommended for ages 12 and older (E12)**

Works that meet the following criteria are considered software works recommended for persons age 12 or older (E12).

Although these software are categorized as general software products, they should not be purchased or viewed by persons under 12 years of age, in accordance with socially accepted ideas. In addition, since there are individual differences in development, growth, knowledge, and maturity, depictions within the software must be designed to be simple in expression so as not to give the impression of eroticism or fear, especially in the expression of sex and violence.

Unless otherwise specified, the criteria in the preceding section shall also apply.

- (1) Regarding sex and adult entertainment
 - Expressions of physical bodily contact between men and women in a clothed state must not involve sexual stimulation.
 - Nudity must not include depictions of genitalia or female nipples.
- (2) Regarding law and justice
 - Expressions of suicide and self injury must only include explanations of before and after the situation given by a third party.
 - The issue of abuse may be raised in the story, so long as wounds are not described and the act is regarded in a disapproving manner.
 - Specific medical procedures may be portrayed so long as the depictions do not involve large amounts of blood.

4 **Software works recommended for ages 15 and older (E15)**

Works that meet the following criteria are considered software works recommended for persons age 15 or older (E15).

Although these software are categorized as general software products, they should not be purchased or viewed by persons under 15 years of age, in accordance with socially accepted ideas. In consideration of the fact that they are still minors, however, depictions within the software must be designed to be simple in expression so as not to give the impression of eroticism or fear, especially in the expression of sex, violence, or other expressions that may incite copycat behavior.

Unless otherwise specified, the criteria in the preceding section shall also apply.

- (1) Regarding sex and adult entertainment
 - The progression, actions, or feelings leading up to sex may be expressed so long as sexual acts themselves are not depicted.
 - Text, audio, or sound effects may hint at sexual activity, either alone or in conjunction with descriptions, and may be somewhat suggestive.
 - Suggestive expressions associated with sexual activity may be included so long as these expressions are modest.
 - Nudity must not include depictions of genitalia.
 - May include revealing or provocative clothing designs, underwear, or swimsuits.
- (2) Regarding law and justice
 - Fights involving weapons or tools may be depicted.
 - May include slanderous or abusive language that demeans others.
 - May include heavy bleeding but must not graphically depict wounds.
 - Expressions of suicide and self harm must not depict specific methods, sequences of events, or detailed scenes of wounds.
 - Meaningful issues of abuse may be raised within the story, so long as the content

is simplistic.

- Crime or anti-social behavior may be depicted so long as the means and methods of the crime are not clearly described.

(3) Regarding education

- May include expressions of underage drinking or smoking that are treated as acts by a third party. However, the acts should not be depicted in a positive light.
- Regarding the use of narcotics, stimulants, paint thinner, sleeping pills, etc., avoid using specific names for these substances even if necessary for the content of the work, and include expressions that regard their use as a criminal event.

5 For software titles recommended for ages 12 and older (E12) and ages 15 and older (E15), prohibited language and any expressions that may be considered extreme in terms of sex or violence must not be used in the printed materials included in the packaging, in the title, in advertisements, at in-store demonstrations, or other promotional materials for sales promotion of the computer software, in addition to prohibited language specified separately by the Corporation.

(Evaluation Criteria for R18 Software)

Article 11 Software works prohibited for sale to persons under 18 years of age (R18) should be considered from the perspective that they include elements that developing young people, who are still learning the principles of society, should be protected from.

2 Software works that meet any of the following criteria shall be designated as software prohibited for sale to persons under 18 years of age (R18).

(1) Sexual expressions

- Legally obscene materials are not eligible for evaluation.
- Graphic depictions of the progression, actions, or feelings leading up to sexual acts.
- Text, sound, or sound effects that suggest sexual acts, either alone or in combination with descriptions, and give an overly arousing impression.
- Blatantly sexually suggestive expressions that are indecent or lewd.
- Depictions of the parts of male and female bodies that should customarily be concealed in an arousing manner (e.g., the connected lower bodies of men and women, the lower body of a single man or woman in a lustfully stimulating manner, female breasts exposed in a lustfully stimulating manner, highly exposing clothing, etc.).
- Sexual expressions that do not follow the progress of the work and ignore the game or storyline, or works primarily focused on the depiction of female nudity.
- Direct depictions of men and women engaged in sexual acts, even if necessary for the content of the work.
- Depictions of sexual violence such as rape, gang rape, sexual torture, etc. intended to pique interest.
- Depictions of abnormal sexual behavior such as sado-masochism, homosexuality*, etc. in detail and with the intent to pique interest.

**Translator's note: some aspects of the Code of Ethics are controversial among game developers.*

- Artwork that includes depictions of genitalia and excretions.
- Works of art, paintings, comics, photograph publications, sketches, and other

materials containing sexual expressions intended to pique interest.

- Any depiction that requires technical concealment with mosaic, etc.

(2) Crime and anti-social activity

- Expressions that condone or glorify anti-social groups or persons such as gangs, motorcycle gangs, delinquent groups, etc.
- Expressions that deny or ridicule the law or social morality, or condone or glorify criminal or antisocial acts.
- Descriptions of criminal tactics in a intriguing and provocative manner, that stir up criminal or immoral sentiments, or that significantly stimulate such thoughts.
- Expressions that, by depicting the manner and methods of a crime or anti-social act, may result in the teaching of the means of the crime or anti-social act.
- Use of firearms, knives, swords, knives, deadly weapons, or other property in excess of what is necessary, or, those that depict killing or wounding scenes in detail and concretely, such as extreme attacks with bare hands, and that are extremely objectionable.
- Detailed and realistic scenes of murder, robbery, rape, injury, assault, indecent exposure, etc., that are extremely repulsive.
- Scenes of suicide, self-injury, accidents, abuse, lynching, torture, autopsy, surgical procedures, scenes of childbirth, etc. that are depicted in a detailed and specific manner, have an excessive sense of realism, and that arouse strong unpleasant emotions.
- Expressions that deny the sanctity of life and the dignity of the dead.

(3) Education

- Expressions that include drinking or smoking by minors.
- Expressions that encourage drug addiction or curiosity, such as the use of narcotics, stimulants, paint thinner, or sleeping pills, and gambling or similar activities, by depicting them in concrete detail, condoning or glorifying these activities, or stimulating a gambling spirit.
- Violence or abusive language against vulnerable groups (such as children, the elderly, the physically or mentally disabled, and animals) that may entice copycat behavior.

(Prohibited Items for R18 Software Works)

Article 12 Matters that cannot be depicted or that have conditions for depiction in software works prohibited for sale to persons under 18 years of age (R18)

(1) Depictions of sexual activity

- Never create legally obscene materials.
- Mosaic or other technical concealment must be applied to all visual shots (whether full-shot or close-up shots) that resemble the conjoined parts (genitals) of a man and woman in positions of sexual intercourse.

(2) Depictions of genitals

- Do not directly depict genitalia.
- Hidden commands, cheat codes, tricks, etc. that reveal genitalia or the interior of genitals are not permitted.

- Prohibited data may not be included (in software files), even as internal data (inaccessible to the end user).
- (3) Depictions of genital caressing
 - Visual depictions of the caressing of exposed male or female genitalia must be technically concealed.
 - Visual depictions of caressing the genitals using sexual devices must be technically concealed.
 - (4) Sado-masochism and other expressions
 - Visual depictions of genital caressing and torture, the use of instruments such as enemas, or related expressions must be technically concealed.
 - Visual depictions of urination, defecation, etc. must be technically concealed in the same way.
 - (5) Do not produce content that violates the human rights of those deemed socially-disadvantaged groups, such as young children.
 - (6) Regarding age limits
 - No real, existing human being under the age of 18 may appear in works prohibited for sale to persons under the age of 18.
 - In R18 software, no descriptions may be used that imply or identify human beings or human-like characters depicted in sexual activity or erotic nudity as being under 18 years of age.
 - R18 software must not be packaged in such a way that makes it easy for people under 18 years old to get hold of them.
 - Do not use gratuitous exposure of sexually suggestive or sexually explicit expressions on the cover or spine of the package.
 - (7) Expressions of homosexuality (lesbian, gay)
 - The above sexual expressions must be technically concealed for homosexual activity the same way as for activity between men and women.
 - (8) Misleading expressions, such as those that are merely similar to or homonyms of any prohibited items must be clarified as such within the story.
- 2 Regarding portrayals of sexual violence
 Depictions of rape, gang rape, and other forms of aggravated violence that shockingly offend public morals concerning human rights violations against women and girls, and feel senselessly cruel, are prohibited.
- 3 Any matter that significantly violates social acceptability but that is not otherwise specified in these criteria will be decided by deliberation in accordance with the guidelines established by the Corporation.

(Precautions for R18 Software Works)

- Article 13 Precautions to be noted when producing software works prohibited for sale to persons under 18 years of age (R18).
- (1) Regarding depictions of sexual acts
 - Depictions of pubic hair should not be excessive.
 - Refrain from depicting the interior of the anus or genitalia.
 - (4) Regarding sado-masochism and other expressions

- Sadism, masochism, and the like may be rough or brutal, so care should be taken to avoid excessive depiction of degradation, pain inflicted, etc.
 - Since depictions of excrement may be obscene, unsightly, repulsive, etc., care should be taken to keep them simplistic and modest.
- (3) Do not endorse the sex trade.
 - (4) Do not depict childbirth frivolously.
 - (5) Representations of homosexuality (lesbian, gay)
 - The same precautions should be exercised with respect to depictions of homosexual activity as with depictions of activity between women and men.
 - (6) Incest (blood related, direct descent, or within the third degree of kinship) must not be depicted gratuitously.
 - (7) Do not depict necrophilia gratuitously.
 - (8) Bestiality, or acts similar in character and conduct to bestiality, must not be depicted gratuitously.
 - (9) Avoid directly naming male or female genitalia by audio or text.
 - (10) Produce works that do not offend public order and morals.
- 2 Any matter that significantly violates social acceptability but that is not otherwise specified in these criteria will be decided by deliberation in accordance with the guidelines established by the Corporation.