



USK

# USK Ratings on Physical Media and their Packaging Variants

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CORRECT LABELLING

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# Introduction

This guideline provides information about the legally-binding rating of games on physical media and their packaging according to the Children and Young Persons Protection Act ("JuSchG"). Since we receive frequent inquiries regarding the correct implementation of the current standards, the most common forms of rating displays used in retail publications will be described in the following document. The examples illustrated (pages 8 to 18) were therefore agreed upon with the Ministry for Family, Children, Youth, Culture and Sport of North Rhine-Westphalia as the competent body of the Supreme Youth Protection Authority for computer and video games and the shareholders of the USK, BIU e.V. und GAME e.V.. In this guide you will also find the USK's recommendations regarding labelling and display questions that refer to advertising, pending ratings and redeem codes.

We hope that this guideline will be of practical assistance to you and would like to thank you for your active commitment to youth protection.

We would also like to thank the following companies for providing the visual illustrations (which should be understood as examples only): Koch Media GmbH, Microsoft GmbH, Nintendo of Europe GmbH und Take Two Interactive GmbH.

This guide does not apply to age ratings for online games and apps according to the IARC procedure. More information can be found [here](#).

Berlin, November 2015

Felix Falk  
CEO, USK

# 1. General Information

These instructions illustrate the statutory rating of physical media with films and their packaging. We have tried to cover the majority of physical media and the different ways of packaging available today.

The regulations of the size and positioning of the ratings on physical media and their packaging are stipulated by the first Amendment Act of the Children and Young Persons Protection Act , effective from July 1st, 2008, in Article 12, Section 2, JuSchG:

“Labelling codes according to Section 1 should be clearly visible on the physical media itself as well as the packaging. The label of at least 1,200 mm<sup>2</sup> shall be applied to the front surface of the cover, bottom left, and to the image medium in the size of at least 250 mm<sup>2</sup>.

The Supreme Youth Protection Authorities can:

1. dictate particulars regarding content, size, form, colour and positioning/ fixation of rating icons and
2. grant exception permits regarding fixation of ratings to physical media or its packaging.”

Here you can view the full Children and Young Persons Protection Act:

[http://www.usk.de/fileadmin/documents/Publisher\\_Bereich/2011-01-26\\_JuSchG.pdf](http://www.usk.de/fileadmin/documents/Publisher_Bereich/2011-01-26_JuSchG.pdf)

Please note that the examples used in these guidelines do not apply to age ratings for online games and apps according to the IARC procedure. You can find more information [here](#).

## 2. The USK Ratings

The age ratings issued by the USK in a joint procedure with the Supreme Youth Protection Authorities are statutory ratings. They are under copyright and trademark protection. We reserve the right of legal actions in case of misuse.

**These are the official ratings in accordance with Article 14, Section 2 JuSchG:**

- Freigegeben ohne Altersbeschränkung  
(Approved without age restriction)
- Freigegeben ab sechs Jahren  
(Approved for children aged 6 and above)
- Freigegeben ab zwölf Jahren  
(Approved for children aged 12 and above)
- Freigegeben ab sechzehn Jahren  
(Approved for children aged 16 and above)
- Keine Jugendfreigabe  
(Not approved for young persons aged under 18)

**The ratings:**

Rating 250 mm<sup>2</sup> for physical media

Rating 1,200 mm<sup>2</sup> for the packaging



## 2. The USK Ratings

### 2.1. Design and technical specifications

The USK ratings must be applied to all physical media that are to be made accessible to children or adolescents in public. The following requirements for the application of the ratings to physical media and their packaging must be met under Article 12, Section 2 JuSchG:

**Physical media:**

Size: at least 250 mm<sup>2</sup> (1.50 cm x 1.50 cm)

Position: integration into the printed area

**Packaging:**

Size: at least 1,200 mm<sup>2</sup> (3.46 cm x 3.46 cm)

Position: front side, bottom left

The rating can be integrated into the print template (there is no requirement for integration into the artwork). Alternatively, the rating can be applied to the case or the cover using a permanent sticker (non-dischargeable without assistive equipment) that is clearly visible from the exterior. If the colour design of the background blurs the square contour of the rating, it has to be visually delineated, e.g., by using a frame.

For physical media smaller than 2,000 mm<sup>2</sup>, the rating may be reduced to a size of ca 144 mm<sup>2</sup>. If the publisher can attest that for technical reasons another realization of display is not feasible and an Exception Permit has been requested by the Supreme Youth Protection Authorities, an exception to this regulation may be permitted. For physical media smaller than 1,500 mm<sup>2</sup> and for the deviant colour designs, the Supreme Youth Protection Authorities can permit further exceptions (cf. 2.3 Exception Permits).

**Graphic templates** of the USK ratings containing detailed print and size instructions are available [here](#).

## 2. The USK Ratings

### 2.2. Distributor classification of infotainment or edutainment products

Distributors of games or game programmes for information, instruction or education purposes may label their products “Infoprogramm” (infotainment) or “Lehrprogramm” (edutainment) if they are clearly appropriate for and not harmful to the development of children or adolescents (Article 14, Section 7 JuSchG). The size and positioning of these ratings is subject to the same specifications as the ones for the USK ratings.

Further information is available [here](#).

### 2.3. Exception Permits

Generally, a deviating label can only be granted if an Exception Permit is applied for in accordance with Article 12, Section 2, Clause 2 JuSchG, at the relevant authority. The application can be informal and should contain a sample of the intended labelling. A sample in digital form can be permissible if representative for the final product. The application for Exception Permits is to be addressed to:

**Ministerium für Familie, Kinder, Jugend,  
Kultur und Sport NRW**  
**Haroldstraße 4**  
**40213 Düsseldorf**  
**Germany**  
**E-Mail: [poststelle@mkffi.nrw.de](mailto:poststelle@mkffi.nrw.de)**

### 3. Physical Media: Discs



Size of the rating: at least 250 mm<sup>2</sup> (1.50 cm x 1.50 cm)

Positioning: integration into the printed design



## 4. Plastic Cases

### 4.1. with paper sleeve



The USK rating is printed on the paper sleeve along with cover artwork and is visible from the exterior.

Alternatively, the USK rating is applied to the paper or plastic sleeve as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple discs** within a single plastic case, each disc is printed with a USK rating and the packaging itself with the highest rating of all discs.

## 4. Plastic Cases

### 4.2. with reversible paper sleeve



Front cover with USK rating

Back cover without USK rating



The USK rating is printed on the paper sleeve along with cover artwork and is visible from the exterior. The back cover may show the artwork without the USK rating.

Alternatively, the USK rating is applied to the paper or plastic sleeve as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple cartridges/discs** within a single plastic case, each disc is printed with a USK rating and the packaging itself with the highest rating of all products.

## 4. Plastic Cases

### 4.3. with additional sleeve



If the plastic cover is labelled as defined in 4.1 or 4.2 of this guide, the additional sleeve itself does not need a printed or permanent rating sticker. A removable sticker on the sleeve or on the plastic wrapping around the packaging suffices.

**Alternatively**, the USK rating is applied to the outer sleeve as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple plastic cases** within a single outer sleeve, each plastic case is printed with a USK rating and the packaging itself with the highest rating of all products.

## 5. Cardboard Slipcover



The USK rating is printed on the cardboard slipcover together with the cover artwork and visible from the exterior.

**Alternatively**, the USK rating is applied to the cardboard slipcover as a permanent sticker.



## 6. Hardcover / Digipacks



**The USK rating is printed on the case along with cover artwork and is visible from the exterior.** The digipack does not need a printer or permanent sticker USK rating as long as the digipack is secured in the case with plastic wrapping or a seal in a way that prevents the case being removed before the sale.

**Alternatively,** the USK rating is applied to the hardcover/ digipak as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple discs** within a single digipack, each disc is printed with a USK rating and the digipack itself with the highest rating of all discs

## 7. Special Packaging (e.g. steelbook, wood, fabric)

### 7.1. Common packaging variant



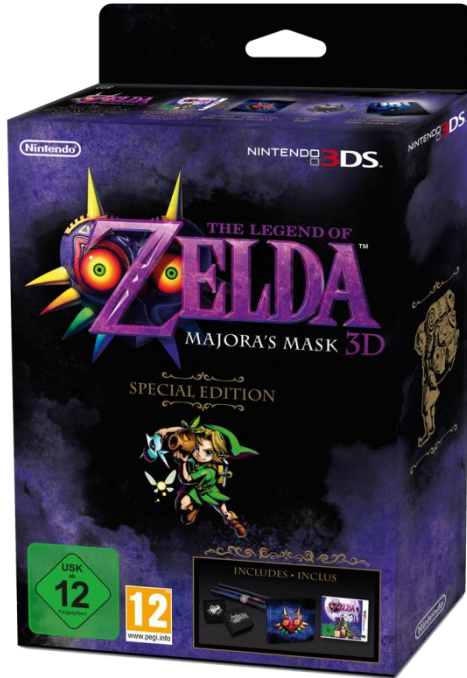
The **USK rating** is printed on the special packaging together with the cover artwork and is visible from the exterior.

**Alternatively**, the USK rating is applied to the special packaging as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple discs** within a single special packaging, each disc is printed with a USK rating and the special packaging with the highest rating of all discs.

## 7. Special Packaging (e.g. steelbook, wood, fabric)

### 7.2. Special packaging in seperate case



The **USK rating is printed on the case along with cover artwork and is visible from the exterior.** The special packaging does not need a printed or permanent USK rating sticker as long as the packaging is secured in the case with plastic wrapping or a seal in a way that prevents the case being removed before the sale and the physical media within the special packaging displays the rating.

**Alternatively,** the USK rating is applied to the case as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple discs** within a special packaging, each disc is printed with a USK rating and the case itself with the highest rating of all discs.

## 7. Special Packaging (e.g. steelbook, wood, fabric)

### 7.3. Boxset with affixed sleeve band



If the plastic cover is labelled as defined in 4.1 or 4.2 of this guide, the box itself does not need a printed or permanent rating sticker. The USK rating is printed on the sleeve or on the front of the attached onsert (paper booklet) that is around or on the boxset respectively. Also, a removable USK rating sticker on the box or on the plastic wrapping around the box suffices

**Alternatively**, the USK rating is applied to the box as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple plastic cases** within a single box, each plastic case is printed with a USK rating and the box itself with the highest rating of all plastic cases.



## 7. Special Packaging (e.g. steelbook, wood, fabric)

### 7.4. Cardboard box with flapbox



If the plastic cover is labelled as defined in 4.1 or 4.2 of this guide, the box itself does not need a printed or permanent rating sticker. A removable sticker on the cardboard box or a plastic wrapping around the box suffices.

**Alternatively**, the USK rating is applied to the cardboard box as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple plastic cases** within a single cardboard box, each plastic case is printed with a USK rating and the cardboard box itself with the highest rating of all plastic cases.

## 8. Hardware and Game (bundle)

**The USK rating is printed on the bundle box (hardware and game in in the same packaging) together with the cover artwork und visible from the exterior.**

**Alternatively,** the USK rating is applied to the bundle box as a permanent sticker.



If the bundle box contains a **game packaging that is labelled as defined in 4 to 8 of this guide**, a removable sticker on the bundle box or on plastic wrapping around the bundle box suffices.

**Alternatively,** the USK rating is applied to the packaging as a permanent sticker.

In the case of **multiple games** within a bundle box, each disc is printed with the respective USK rating and the bundle box itself with the highest rating of all discs.

For the packaging inside the bundle box as well as the bundle box itself, the previously described rating display guidelines apply accordingly.

## 9. Film and game (bundle)

**On the discs themselves the respective rating from the self-regulation bodies (USK or FSK) is to be displayed in the proportions set out by Article 12, Section 2 JuSchG**

In case of different ratings, the higher rating issued must be displayed on the **shared cover** in accordance with Article 12, Section 2 JuSchG.

If the USK and FSK ratings apply to the same age group, the rating that hold greater marketing relevance for the production company should be displayed.

## 10. Re-labelling

### 10.1. Second-hand games

In general, second-hand products that display the old USK ratings (before 2008) must not be re-labelled with the larger rating icons valid since 2008. If no USK rating has been issued, no rating sticker may be applied autonomously.

However, second-hand products must also be distributed age-appropriately according to the old USK rating on the packaging. Unrated second-hand products may only be distributed to adults, regardless of the nature of the game itself.

## 10. Re-labelling

### 10.2. Import games

According to Article 12 JuSchG, computer and video games on physical media can only be made available to children and adolescents when a USK age rating has been issued. This rating must also be printed on the disc and packaging of import games. If these conditions are not fulfilled then the game may only be sold or made accessible to adults. When selling and sending these products via mail order, a shipping methods must be used that requires the recipients to verify their age.

An infringement as set out by Article 28, Section 1 JuSchG takes place when a tradesperson either deliberately or negligently makes unrated or falsely labelled physical media available to children or adolescents in Germany. This remains the sole responsibility of the retailer.

If the disc itself has a USK rating but the packaging does not, then a permanent sticker can only be autonomously applied to the packaging (and not the plastic wrapping) if it can be guaranteed that the game in question has been rated by the USK in the exact same version (including packaging, language version, manual, cover, code). When it cannot be guaranteed without a doubt that the game has been submitted and rated in this version, a USK rating sticker must not be applied to the packaging at all.

## 10. Re-labelling

### 10.3. “Retro” games (pre-1994/pre-USK)

According to Article 12 JuSchG, computer and video games on physical media can only be made available to children and adolescents when a USK age rating has been issued. This rating must also be printed on the disc and packaging of retro games. If these conditions are not fulfilled, then the game can ultimately only be sold or made accessible to adults. When selling and sending these products via mail order, a shipping methods must be used that requires the recipients to verify their age.

An infringement as set out by Article 28, Section 1 JuSchG takes place when a tradesperson either deliberately or negligently makes unrated or falsely labelled physical media available to children or adolescents in Germany. This remains the sole responsibility of the retailer.

If the disc itself has a USK rating but the packaging does not, then a permanent sticker can only be autonomously applied to the packaging (and not the plastic wrapping) if it can be guaranteed that the game in question has been rated by the USK in the exact same version (including packaging, language version, manual, cover, code). When it cannot be guaranteed without a doubt that the game has been submitted and rated in this version, a USK rating sticker must not be applied to the packaging at all.

## 11. Advertising for Games

The USK recommends that the USK rating should be included on all print and other advertising material.

In the case of promotional trailers for cinema, television or online advertising the USK rating should be displayed in a clearly visible manner. This can either be done fullscreen at the beginning (size: about 50% of the screen; length: at least 2 seconds) or in the lower left corner during the trailer (size: about 15% of the screen; length: at least 4 seconds). An accompanying voiceover should additionally inform about the issued rating (Text: "USK ab \_ Jahren").

## 12. Rating Pending

### **Visual icon for still unrated games**

If you advertise products that do not have a USK yet because of a pending submission process – e.g. as part of a pre-ordering campaign involving packshots – we will provide you with a standardised visual icon. As soon as a USK rating has been issued, the respective rating icon must be used according to the legal provisions (cf. Article 12 JuSchG). This also applies to online advertisements and promotion as set out by Article 12 Youth Media Protection State Agreement (“JMStV”).

#### [Visual icon “USK Rating Pending”](#)

Please note that the icon “USK Rating Pending” does not represent a legal rating and the icon must not be used on physical media and its retail packaging!



## 13. Redeem Codes

Purchasable redeem code cards that can only be used for a specific title via online activation should display the applicable USK rating. If the code can be used to access or activate a range or dynamic library of different titles, no USK icons should be displayed on the card containing the redeem code.

Please be aware that the rating display on a code card only represents a recommendation and is not subject to the trade restrictions involving selling to children and adolescents set out by the Children and Young Persons Protection Act (“JuSchG”). It remains the responsibility of the provider of the game according to the provision set out in the Youth Media Protection State Agreement (“JmStV”) to ensure that the online material is distributed in a legally compliant manner (e.g. using technical means such as youth protection programmes), so that children or adolescents of the respective age group are generally not exposed to unsuitable content.

## 14. Imprint

### **USK bei der Freiwilligen Selbstkontrolle Unterhaltungssoftware GmbH**

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10119 Berlin  
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[kontakt@usk.de](mailto:kontakt@usk.de)  
[www.usk.de/en](http://www.usk.de/en)

### **Pictures und Illustrations**

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Microsoft GmbH  
Nintendo of Europe GmbH  
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