

# The SmokeScreeners Rating System

## Introduction

The staff of the *Quit Doc Research and Education Foundation* has developed a system to rate movies looking only at tobacco use. You can use this form on the opposite page to report the amount and type of tobacco use in movies that is known to sway kids and teenagers.

Below is an explanation our form. The notes explain why each category is important. We have also tried to give you more details on each answer in order to keep the scores accurate and consistent.

We hope that you will use this system to review films that you see in the theater, on video, or on DVD. We encourage post those results on the SmokeScreeners web site at [www.smokescreeners.org](http://www.smokescreeners.org), or email your results to us at [bhummel@quitdoc.com](mailto:bhummel@quitdoc.com).

## Completing the Ratings Review Sheet

There are six main issues to focus on as you keep track of the smoking that you see in movies. Follow along on the ratings sheet as we look at each of these issues.

**Use by actors:** The actors seen smoking in movies can influence teenagers. This influence is larger for the starts of the movie than actors seen only in the background.

To score this section, you must keep track of *which actors/actresses were seen smoking in the film?* You should keep track of how many actors or actresses you see in each of the following categories:

- (1) *Non credited extras* (actors not listed in credits)
- (2) *Credited non-stars* (actors listed in end credits)
- (3) *Stars* (actors listed in opening credits)

By the way, an unlit cigar, cigarette, or pipe is considered to be a "background extra".

The impact of actors is so important that you actually add up the scores of all of these categories that included cast-members who used tobacco. The maximum score for this category is 6 points.

**Where people smoke:** Studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between the amount of movie smoking to which teenagers are exposed and the likelihood that they will begin smoking. The main reason seems to be that the amount of fictionalized smoking causes adults and adolescents to overestimate the amount of smoking in real life. It makes the activity seem more normal.

For our purposes, an "incident" will be defined as use by a single character in a single scene. If three individuals smoke in a single scene, that is three incidents; if one character smokes in three different scenes, that is also three incidents.

You will need to count the number of times you see actors smoking outside and inside. Remember that smoking inside of a car is counted as inside. At the end of the movie, tally up

the totals and circle the **worst category** that applies and assign the appropriate number of points:

- (0) *Nowhere* (no smoking appears in the film)
- (1) *Outside* (smoking only occurs outside)
- (2) *Inside with a maximum of 5 incidents* (any indoor smoking in less than 5 distinct scenes)
- (3) *Inside with 6 or more incidents* (indoor smoking in 6 or more distinct scenes)

**Extent of tobacco use:** Here, simply total up the number of outside and inside smoking incidents from the previous section to see *how many incidents of smoking were depicted in the film*. The following points will be assigned based on the *total number of incidents*:

- (0) *0 Incidents*
- (1) *1-9 Incidents*
- (2) *10-20 Incidents*
- (3) *20> Incidents*

**Perceived message:** You will have to make a judgment call as you answer the following question: *Did the smoking scenes seem to be for or against tobacco use?*

- (0) *No use, use only by extras, or Anti-Tobacco* (clear anti-tobacco message)
- (1) *Balanced* (pros and cons of tobacco use are discussed)
- (2) *Neutral* (tobacco use is present but not discussed)
- (3) *Pro-tobacco* (clear pro-tobacco message)

Please note that you will assign *no points* if the only actors seen smoking were non-speaking characters in the background

**Negative Special circumstances:** You need to *Add 3* additional points if any of the following situations were seen in the film:

- *Tobacco use by young people obviously under 18 years of age.*
- *Tobacco use around children or pregnant women.*
- *Tobacco use in a normally accepted non-smoking area such as a school, medical facility or designated non-smoking area.*
- *Specific, obvious brand depiction.*

**Positive Special circumstances:** You need to *Subtract 3* points if any of the following situations were seen in the film:

- *If the Tobacco use dramatically and realistically depicts negative aspects of tobacco use (For example: Person dies of lung cancer from smoking).*
- *If the tobacco use accurately represents the smoking behavior of an actual (as opposed to fictional) historical figure.*