

The Parents' Guide to High School Esports



Esports is growing, fast.

Esports has become an official sanctioned high school sport, and players across the country are changing what it means to be a student-athlete. To help parents in this new journey, PlayVS and the NFHS have put together this helpful guide.

- I. About Esports
- II. Benefits of Esports
- III. Esports in Education
- IV. Esports Safety

About Esports

What is esports?

Esports officially stands for electronic sports, not to be confused with video games. Esports takes video gaming to another level with organized competitive gameplay between two teams, governed by its own strict set of rules and guidelines. The difference is comparable to a pick-up basketball game at a park versus a varsity high school basketball game. Esports requires teamwork, communication, critical and strategic thinking, creativity, sportsmanship, and leadership – much like traditional sports.



What does the high school experience look like?

Like any other high school sport or extracurricular activity, your student will attend team meetings, practices, and official matches. However, since esports is played online, there is **no travel required** throughout the regular season. Players compete from their respective campus, supervised by a coach. Currently through PlayVS, students can compete in teams of five for League of Legends and SMITE, and teams of three for Rocket League, three of the most popular titles in esports. Each school year is divided into two regular seasons, Fall and Spring, each with their own playoff season.

Regular Season

- Weekly matches and practices
- On campus, no travel
- State rankings

Playoff Season

- Top teams compete
- Single elimination
- Online finals

What equipment does my student need to participate?

Many school computer labs or libraries already have the equipment needed to participate on campus. All your student needs to compete is a PC, keyboard, and mouse. Additional equipment includes a headset with mic, jerseys, and game controllers.

With their PlayVS season pass, students will receive in-game perks and free copies of games for an even playing field.

Esports Benefits

Esports requires a tremendous amount of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity from players to achieve and sustain success. It reaches beyond traditional sports to create an all-inclusive environment that breaks barriers.

Sense of Community

A [Pew Research Report](#) states that video games play a vital role in teen friendships. The inclusiveness and accessibility of esports allow students to come together over a common passion while providing access to a positive adult mentor in their lives.



84% of Season Zero players reported they finally found a community they could connect with.

Character Development

There will inevitably be challenges and early failures, but players who demonstrate grit and adapt/learn will typically succeed in esports. Fortunately, these attributes are exactly what employers and colleges are telling high schools they are looking for in recent graduates.

Increase Participation

There is a strong correlation between student engagement and student achievement. [NCES reported](#) that students who participated in extracurricular activities perform higher on math and reading assessments.

STEM Engagement

The amount of technology involved with esports enables students to practice and develop STEM skills. Students spend hours analyzing data, game statistics, and strategies, which provide real-world experience and application.

“The kids that are participating here have dramatically **pulled up their grades** to be eligible. It gives this small group a reason to come to school.”

Coach Catherine Turner
Lafayette High School, GA

Esports in Education

We firmly believe that esports has a place in education. It provides many opportunities for growth and learning, such as the creation and practice of “soft skills,” including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Many of the same skills that employers are looking for in recent graduates.

Scholarship Opportunities

Esports can provide a gateway to colleges and universities. The National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE), the main governing body for varsity collegiate esports, has awarded millions of dollars in esports scholarships and aid over the last five years. Currently, more than 200 colleges and universities offer nearly 15 million dollars in scholarships.

Esports majors and careers are becoming increasingly more accessible. There are growing opportunities to find employment in esports-related careers. These opportunities include broadcasting, marketing, graphic design, multimedia production, hospitality, coaching, and management.

Esports Embody ISTE Standards

- Empowered Learner
- Digital Citizen
- Knowledge Constructor
- Innovative Designer
- Computational Thinker
- Creative Communicator
- Global Collaborator

More than 200 colleges and universities offer nearly 15 million dollars in scholarships.



Esports Safety

What are these games rated?

All games offered to high school students for competition purposes are either rated "T for Teen" -- games that are appropriate for students 13 years or older -- or "E for Everyone" -- games for all ages. Players must be 13 years or older to participate in the PlayVS high school leagues.



Should I be worried that my student is playing too much?

The amount of screen time should always be discussed and monitored. Just as in traditional sports, student-athletes must find a balance between practice, games, school work, rest, proper nutrition, social time, and, of course, sleep. One of the benefits of joining a formal esports team is that rules and practice schedules can be set and monitored regarding how much students can play during the week and on weekends. Setting clear guidelines for device and computer-free times and zones in your home will help your student find a proper balance between all of their interests.

Additionally, with an esports coach, parents are able to discuss concerns and develop plans with them to help students stay on top of academics and extracurricular activities.

About PlayVS

PlayVS is building the infrastructure and platform for amateur esports, starting with high schools. We work directly with game publishers and states to build and operate sanctioned leagues across the country. Through the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), PlayVS is empowering students to compete in esports on behalf of their high school, with the opportunity to win a championship, just like any other youth sport. Contact your local school's principal or athletic director to get a program started and learn more at www.playvs.com.

Parent Testimonial

"I very recently saw the YouTube video, 'Esports EXPERT Brings Video Games To High School' posted via *MY HUSTLE*. This was shocking to me because my son Kiernan, from the Shawsheen Technical High School eSports team, was interviewed in this video but he never even told me about it. After sharing the video with my entire family and then on Facebook (for bragging rights of course), I commented on the YouTube video but realized that I couldn't be certain that anyone in your organization would see it.



It's important to me that PlayVS and anyone else involved in launching this program, truly grasped how much it means to me. It has **truly changed my son's entire academic trajectory**.

I can never relay how much I personally appreciate all the hard work and dedication that has gone into this program. When my son, Kiernan from Shawsheen ESports team (in video), came home and said he 'made the J.V. team' - having never had any interests in playing sports, I actually got emotional. He was a self-proclaimed 'outcast' all his academic life up until that point, with very few social options. Was heartbreaking from a parent's POV because he's a bright, funny, caring kid who had no real connections his whole young life. He never felt that sense of belonging at the peer level, that's available for other kids, like student-athletes. **That has changed exponentially.**

PlayVS is **changing the worlds and lives of kids** like Kiernan. Giving them a platform to not feel so alone, at a time in all our lives, when we need it the most.

Thank you!! From the bottom of my heart."

Kelly Birkmaier

Proud Esports Parent

Shawsheen Technical High School

Billerica, MA

"It is great to be with people that you know. **I've made amazing friends.** We stick together. We work together."

Kiernan

My Hustle Interview