

BRITISH ESPORTS ASSOCIATION

Esports Parent Guide 2019/20:
Everything a parent/guardian needs to
know about competitive gaming



INTRODUCTION

The British Esports Association is a not-for-profit national body established in 2016 to promote esports in the UK, increase its level of awareness, improve standards and inspire future talent.

As a national body, our aims are to support esports and provide expertise and advice. We are focused on the grassroots level of esports and are not a governing body. We help to educate parents, teachers, media, policy makers and government around what esports is and what its benefits are. We're working with schools, colleges and other educational establishments to embrace esports and create some inspiring events and activities.

With 81% of children playing video games nowadays, games are arguably a larger part of their lives than ever before.

With esports on the rise, this area is of great interest to many young people beyond just being a hobby. In this guide, we take a look at everything parents may want to know about competitive gaming, including the benefits of esports, career options, age ratings, how to get started and more.

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WHAT IS ESPORTS?

HOW DOES IT WORK? HOW BIG IS IT?



Esports (or electronic sports) is a term used to describe competitive video gaming.

It's different from standard video gaming in that esports is competitive (human-vs-human) and usually has an engaging spectator element to it, like traditional sports.

Esports tournaments usually consist of amateur or professional gamers competing against one another for a cash prize.

Think of esports as competitive video gaming where skill and professionalism are celebrated. The pro gamers who play at this level know the games inside out, much like a professional footballer or athlete would in their respective fields.

Some countries class esports as a sport, others don't (including the UK). Currently, the game publishers/developers and tournament organisers set the rules, and are responsible for ensuring integrity and handing out penalties where necessary.

There are many different games played competitively, with the likes of League of Legends, Dota 2 (multiplayer online battle arena games) and Counter-Strike and Fortnite (shooters) among the most popular. Rules and strategies can differ greatly depending on the game in question. To give you an example of the different team sizes, League of Legends is 5v5, first-person shooter Overwatch is 6v6 and Rocket League (arena football with rocket-powered cars) is 3v3. [See more esports games here](#) and some of the common [esports tournament formats here](#).

Some games are played on consoles like Xbox One or PS4, while others are played using PCs. Matches can take place online over the internet, or at a physical event via a LAN (Local Area Network) connection. Matches can be viewed by spectators in person at a venue (usually for the grand finals) or over the internet via streaming platforms such as Twitch, which broadcast the games live online.

Players will usually play for a set team/organisation, which, like traditional sports, will have their own fans and followers. For example in the UK some of our most well-known esports teams include Fnatic, Excel Esports and London Spitfire.

To give you a sense of the scale of esports, some of the biggest tournaments offer millions of pounds in prizes (like the Dota 2 International and Fortnite World Cup which have some \$30m up for grabs), and are watched by millions of fans. These are the exception, however. Other tournaments may have a \$1m prize pool or less; amateur tournaments can often have prizes and viewers in the low thousands or hundreds, rather than millions.

For more info on esports, see our ['what is esports' downloadable guide here](#).

THE BENEFITS OF ESPORTS

Esports engages a wide demographic of young people and is intrinsically a fun, team-building activity that promotes leadership, character development, communication and social skills.

Esports has more than 400m viewers across the world, and in the UK it's the second most popular sporting activity for boys to watch on screen - behind only football.

It can improve confidence, strategic thinking, problem solving abilities, reading comprehension and phonics skills and can help with the development of digital and cyber skills.

Skills can be transferred across into physical sports and schoolwork, and esports offers a multitude of career pathways.

It can also boost behaviour, concentration and attendance levels in schools. Last but not least, when played in moderation, video games and esports can be good for mental health - they're fun to play and can be a stress-reliever.

FURTHER READING

- ◆ [Download British Esports' Benefits of Esports PDF here](#)
- ◆ [School pupils survey shows esports increases concentration, behaviour and attendance levels](#)
- ◆ [Deputy Headteacher explains how esports has transformed her Alternative Provision School](#)
- ◆ [See our schools pilot report for more info](#)
- ◆ [British Esports' library club pilot also found how esports can be a beneficial activity for children](#)

WHAT ARE THE CAREER PROSPECTS?

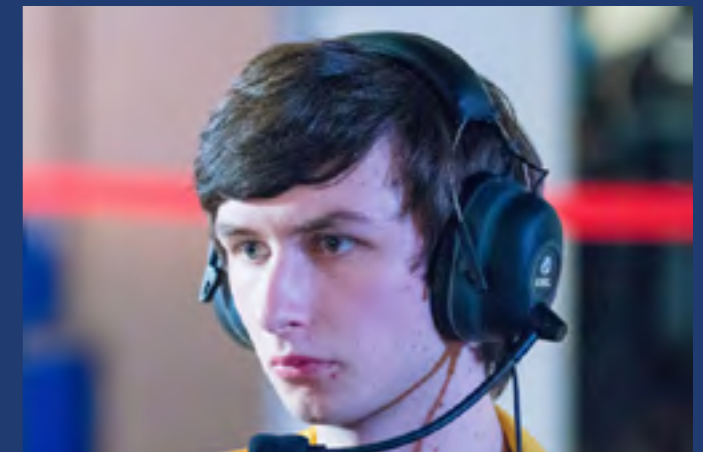
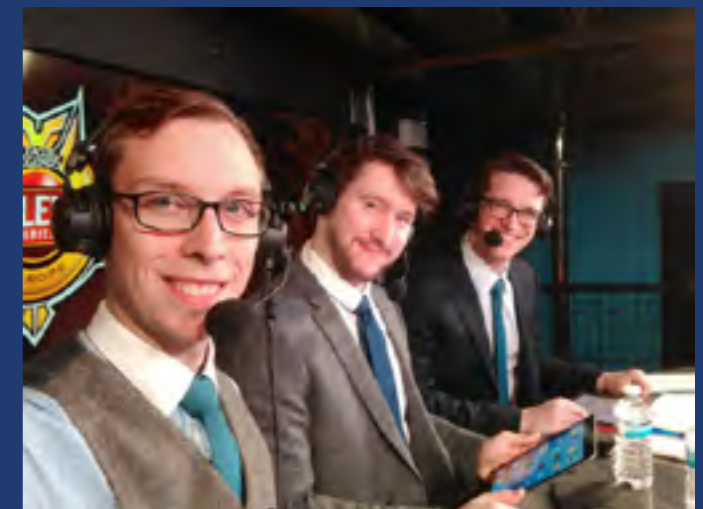
Esports has created many new jobs around the world - and the number is continuing to grow.

For example, in 2019 the number of esports jobs in the UK posted on jobs board website [Hitmarker](#) has risen by 163% year-on-year.

When some people think of esports, they think of pro gamers - the players that compete at the top level, earning thousands, or even millions of pounds.

That's great, but esports offers so much more than this too. Like traditional sports, there are commentators, event managers, journalists, content creators, photographers, coaches, sales and marketing executives and many others. See our [esports career advice section here](#) for more information on the different roles available and how you can get started.

Having an interest or skills in esports can also pave the way to other careers. For example, the wider video game industry is expected to grow to some \$180 billion by the end of 2021, with the global games audience estimated at between 2.2 and 2.6 billion people. This offers many more career options, like [games development](#), [publishing](#), [streaming](#) and more.



HOW TO GET A CAREER IN ESPORTS OR GAMES

There are many ways to get involved.

VOLUNTEERING IN ESPORTS

This can be a great way for someone to learn a role, see if they like it, and open doors into the industry.

We always suggest contacting some of the bigger esports companies within the UK, such as ESL, Gfinity, Twitch, GAME/Insomnia and so on, as well as esports organisations like Fnatic/Excel to see if they have jobs or work experience opportunities.



STUDYING ESPORTS

There are also more education courses cropping up, for example several universities now offer courses in esports. You can see some of the [UK colleges and universities running courses in esports here](#).

For younger people, we will always recommend prioritising education over embarking on an early career in esports. Many amateur players will play in their spare time while studying. Some, once graduating, decide to pursue esports as a career, but it's always a good idea to focus on education first.

Further Reading: [Getting a career in esports: What you need to know & how to get started](#)

HOW CAN MY CHILD JOIN A TEAM OR BECOME A PRO?



It's a good idea to keep practicing, maybe create a showreel containing top plays and achievements, and reach out to teams to get some experience with them. It's worth reading up on the age restrictions and careers sections in this guide for more info, above and below this section. Games vary massively between one another, so it's a good idea to get specialist advice in that game, for example from a commentator, current pro player or via the game's community on platforms like Reddit. There's also some more advice from us here:

- ◆ [PRO GAMER JOB SPOTLIGHT](#)
- ◆ [ADVICE ON HOW TO GO PRO](#)
- ◆ [INTERVIEW WITH FORMER HEROES OF THE STORM PRO PLAYER JAMES 'BAKERY' BAKER](#)

Your child can always put a team together in their school or college and enter our [Championships](#) (see section below).

ARE THERE ANY AGE RESTRICTIONS?

Each game has its own age rating. Pan European Game Information (PEGI) is the single video games age rating system that is in force across Europe. This means it is illegal for a retailer to sell a video game to someone who is below the game's official PEGI age rating. However, some minors ask their parents to buy the game for them. Please check a game's rating before buying.

There are five age ratings: 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18.

However, it's important to note that online games are not subject to a legally enforceable age-rating system and voluntary ratings are used instead of PEGI and the International Age Ratings Coalition (IARC). In the UK, PEGI age ratings only currently apply for boxed video games.

We advise you to look at a game's content and age rating before deciding if it is suitable for your child to play it.

For a handy infographic on all the major esports games and their age ratings, [see our downloadable esports age guide here](#). There's also [further info here](#).

WHAT ABOUT ENTERING TOURNAMENTS?

In terms of entering or attending tournaments, rules and regulations may vary. Children younger than 13 have taken part in esports tournaments before, such as Vainglory player MrKCool and Rocket League player ScrubKilla, the latter of which has gone on to earn a living as one of the world's best Rocket League players.

For those under 17, the parent or guardian will usually need to give their consent for their child to take part in a live tournament at an event.

In terms of attending events, please note, some events contain 16+ or 18+ games may allow tickets to be sold to those younger than that, and/or require a parent or guardian to accompany a minor. Always check an event's age restrictions before buying tickets.

If your child is interested in or has received an offer to play for an esports team/organisation, always read any contracts carefully and understand the age restrictions for a specific game or tournament. If you are unsure of anything, please seek professional legal advice - there's some info on this [here](#).

[You can see some of the grassroots UK tournaments here](#). There are many more around - find the game your child enjoys playing and reach out to its communities on social media, Reddit, Facebook and so on for specific info on smaller online cups.



BRITISH ESPORTS CHAMPIONSHIPS



The British Esports Championships is our own competitive video gaming competition for students aged 12+ in schools and colleges across the UK.

The Championships are open to all secondary schools, Further Education (FE) Colleges and Alternative Provision (AP) schools in the UK and are PC-based. They cover the following games:

- ◆ **5v5 League of Legends: multiplayer online battle arena game (PEGI 12 age rating)**
- ◆ **6v6 Overwatch: a vibrant first-person shooter (PEGI 12)**
- ◆ **3v3 Rocket League: football with rocket-powered cars (PEGI 3)**

The first season began in October 2018 and the Spring 2019 Grand Finals took place in April 2019 at Insomnia Gaming Festival at the Birmingham NEC. You can watch [highlights here](#) and see the [school winners](#) and [college winners](#) here

Matches are played in schools and colleges in a safe environment managed by teachers and our team of admins.

For more info check out the code of conduct in our [handy downloadable guide](#) and our [Championships hub](#). You can also [sign up to participate in Season 2 of the 2019/2020 Championships from December 2nd here](#).

ARE THERE HEALTH IMPLICATIONS?

Playing video games is a sedentary activity, however when played in moderation as part of a balanced lifestyle it offers many other benefits ([see the separate section above](#)).

Playing for a few hours a day is fine, we recommend taking regular breaks, encouraging physical activity/exercise, eating healthy and sleeping well - this is proven to actually boost a player's performance in game.

Doing simple wrist, back and hand exercises can also prevent repetitive strain injury (RSI) which some pro players have known to develop.

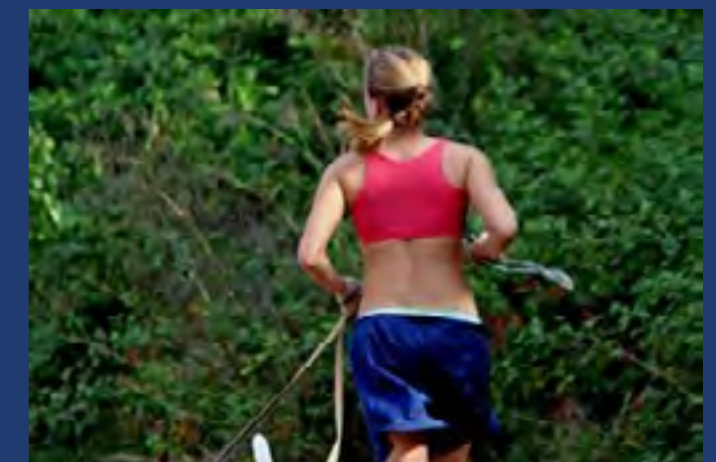
There's some advice here which may help:

- [Keeping fit and healthy: Exercise, sleep and dietary advice for esports players](#)

- [8 ways esports players can improve their wellbeing and performance](#)

- [Mike "Gegan" Ellis Sports profile: 'After exercise, I have much better gaming sessions with less tilt'](#)

- [How often should you practice? Info and guidelines](#)



OUR TOP 11 TIPS ON HOW TO STAY SAFE ONLINE

- 1** Never reveal your personal details, login information, contact info to strangers you've met online, or arrange to meet someone you only know online
- 2** This includes joining things like WhatsApp groups with people you haven't met, which reveals your mobile number to everyone in the group
- 3** Be aware of your digital footprint. Avoid publicly posting information that can reveal personal details, for example location of your street
- 4** Set limits - have a schedule and try to stick to it (see the 'are there health implications' section for advice)
- 5** Take breaks regularly
- 6** If you're ever unsure of anything, ask your parent/guardian, teacher or close/trusted adult first
- 7** Be polite and respectful to other players
- 8** Think before you post and type - is this something you would say in real life? Consider who is or could be on the other end of the screen
- 9** If someone is being toxic or abusive to you online, avoid retaliating. Consider muting them, blocking them and reporting them using in-game tools
- 10** Avoid the use of services that break a games terms of service, for example gold farming or elo boosting. Buying accounts is usually not only illegal but in some cases these can be shut down long after the account has been bought or sold, leaving you out of pocket and without an account to play on
- 11** Check out the [BBC Own It app](#). This features a special keyboard, combines machine-learning technology with the ability to keep a diary of their emotions to allow children the chance to record how they're feeling and why. In response, the app can offer and help support, giving advice if their behaviour strays outside safe and sensible norms

I'VE HEARD ABOUT 'GAMING ADDICTION' AND 'CYBER BULLYING'... WHAT SHOULD I KNOW HERE?



Last year, the World Health Organisation added 'gaming disorder' to its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a pattern of gaming behaviour characterized by "impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences".

It's worth remembering addiction comes in many forms, and of course is not exclusive to gaming.

The description adds: "For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behaviour pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months."

For extreme cases, in October 2019 the National Health Service (NHS) announced the opening of a specialist gaming addiction treatment centre in London.

That is certainly not the case for the vast majority of gamers, who enjoy playing in their spare time or getting involved within esports without being addicted to it.

UK games industry trade body Ukie also responded to the World Health Organization's classification in [this useful article](#).

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport recently published a report looking at immersive and addictive technologies. They have recommended the UK Government regulate video game loot boxes under gambling law and ban their sale to children, but largely praised esports. Loot boxes are in-game digital packs that players can buy (usually with real money) in order to gain random in-game items.

There are parental controls that can be set up around some games (see the more relevant links at the bottom of this article for some guides).

In terms of cyber bullying and digital safety, the internet of course allows many people to easily and instantly interact with one another - this can be a good thing and a bad thing. Like real life, it's a good idea to understand which games your child is playing and who they are regularly interacting with. Cyber bullying of course a wider topic not exclusive to gaming that can affect people on social media and other technologies.

There are many helpful resources with more general advice at the bottom of this article that may help.

There is also a stereotype still held by some that video games are played by unsociable people alone in darkened rooms. When it comes to today's video games and esports, that couldn't be further from the truth (see benefits of esports section above).

Esports is inherently social. If you're a player on a team, you will need to converse with your teammates, with your coach, manager and other staff (this can be both online and in person). If you're a commentator (aka esports caster), you'll be talking about the matches to a co-host live, if you're a fan, you'll likely be talking with other fans on social media, forums and elsewhere.

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S INTEREST IN ESPORTS?



There are many things you can do! Why not start by sitting down with them and playing the games they enjoy together?

Look at their favourite games and do some research in this space. Have a look at livestreaming platform [Twitch](#) at the people and esports tournaments involved in that game.

Talk to them about what they want to do in esports and see if there's anything you can do to help, for example taking them to an event.

Further reading: [What's it like being a parent of an esports player and how can they support their child's interest in gaming?](#)

You can also hear from the mother of 15-year-old Fortnite player Jaden 'Wolfiez' Ashman from Hornchurch, who finished second in the Fortnite World Cup with his Dutch duo partner Dave 'Rojo' Jong. They received \$2.25m (£1.8m) to split among them, meaning Jaden took home just under £1m himself.

MORE ARTICLES THAT MAY BE USEFUL

- ◆ [Fortnite guide for parents](#)
- ◆ [Which esports games are suitable for children?](#)
- ◆ [A-Z of esports terminology/game jargon](#)

OTHER GAMES AND PARENT RESOURCES

To find out more about how to set up parental controls on your child's console:

- A parents guide to PlayStation
- More PlayStation family info
- A parent's guide to Xbox
- More Xbox family info
- Nintendo Switch parental controls

To find out more about staying safe online:

- NSPCC
- Internetmatters.org
- Parentzone guide
- ChildNET
- MumsNet

For wider information about video gaming visit:

- Ukie
- Ask About Games
- AnyKey

If you have concerns your child's gaming is becoming unhealthy, please visit:

- GameQuitters
- HealthyGamer.gg

CONTACT US

Do you have a question this guide hasn't addressed?
You can contact the British Esports Association [here](#).