

The world of Esports

Your comprehensive guide to a
successful esports program



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**Before
the games
begin...**

1 What is esports?

Esports describes the world of competitive, team-based playing of popular video games. Most often, competitors from different leagues face off using mainstream gaming consoles to play popular titles, such as League of Legends, Rocket League and Valorant.

The esports industry has had a tremendous impact on K–12 education. Not only do esports teams provide opportunities for students to participate in extracurriculars who wouldn't normally engage, students can also receive scholarships to play esports in college.





2 The esports audience

As with any traditional, professional sports league (such as the NFL or MLB), gamers are watched and followed by millions of fans all over the world who attend live events, tune in on TV or stream online. Streaming services like Twitch allow viewers to watch as their favorite gamers play in real time, and this is typically where popular games build their fandoms.

In a 2025 Global Esports Market research report by Statista, it was projected that the number of users in the worldwide Esports market is set to reach 896 million by 2029.

Statista also found that the User penetration is forecasted to be 12.5% in 2025 and is expected to increase to 14.2% by 2029.

The 2024 League of Legends World Championship, also known as Worlds, was the most watched esports event in history. The finals broke the record for esports event viewership with over 6.94 million concurrent viewer.



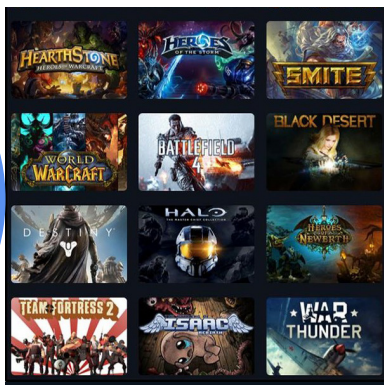
3 Commercial and consumer investment

The esports appeal has garnered the attention of major sports investors.

Owners of traditional teams – including the Patriots, 76ers, Bucks and Mavericks – have invested in professional esports teams. And, corporations such as Kraft, Mark Cuban Companies, FIFA, NBA and Twitch have made significant financial investments in esports.

- The NBA has started an independent league for their game NBA 2K.
- FIFA featured a gamer version of the World Cup, where each franchise had their own esports team.
- The Twitch platform livestreams games to the general public. Players, known as streamers, are funded by donations from viewers and sponsors, where they can make upwards of hundreds of thousands of dollars a month.





CONTROLLERS
AT THE READY?
**LET'S
DIVE IN.**

4 Game genres and popular titles

As with traditional sports, there are different types of esports games. In this ebook, we'll look at the most popular, competitive titles.

Following each game summary, you'll find its rating given by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) so your district can make informed decisions about which games students can play.

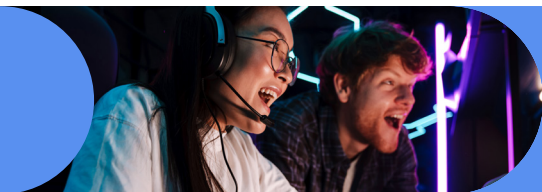
LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

Highly strategic in nature, the objective is to destroy the opposing team's main structure with the assistance of periodically spawned, computer-controlled units that march forward along set paths. Players typically choose characters that have various abilities and advantages that improve over the course of a game and contribute to a team's overall strategy. In League of Legends two teams of five players fight for control of a square battlefield. The game is won when one team destroys its opponent's base, which usually takes 30 to 40 minutes.

Rated: T for Teen

This title's popularity is fueled by appealing to schools due to low PC requirements. With it being an older game, it is not as popular with younger students until they find out about the 6-figure average salaries of professional players.³





ROCKET LEAGUE

Described as “soccer, but with rocket-powered cars,” Rocket League has one to four players assigned to two teams using rocket-powered vehicles to hit a ball into their opponent’s goal and score points over the course of a match. The game includes single-player and multi-player modes, which can be played both locally and online, including cross-platform play between all versions.

Rated: E for Everyone



Rocket League is popular since it’s an easy game to understand but difficult to master. That means students can begin v it in early grades, while it’s still competitive enough to support many professional esports teams. The total prize pool for professional play is \$6M.²

VALORANT

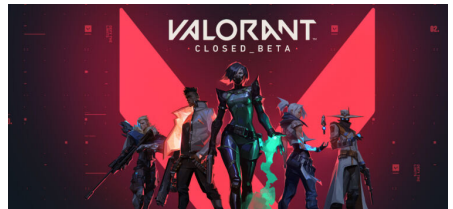
Valorant is an online multi-player computer game, produced by Riot Games. It's a first-person shooter game, consisting of two teams of five, where one team attacks and the other defends. Players control

characters known as 'agents' who all have different abilities to use during gameplay. The game's matchmaking system automatically groups players of similar skill together.

The game is played in a series of rounds until a team wins a total of 13 rounds in a game. For the attacking team to win a round, they must eliminate all the defenders with their weapons and abilities, or plant a bomb known as a 'spike' in a designated site. For the defending team to win a round, they must eliminate all the attackers with their weapons and abilities or defuse the 'spike' in time.

Rated T for Teen

This is a popular shooting game due to animation and ability turn off any reality to eliminations in the game. This and Overwatch are the games schools tend to stay away from, along with other mature titles like Call of Duty and Rainbow 6.⁴





5

Esports in higher education

Currently, 260 institutions have varsity teams registered to compete in national tournaments with the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE), up from only 185 in 2023.⁵

Meanwhile, more than 30 different games are played in collegiate esports, including 5-on-5 teamwork-oriented games, 1-on-1 strategic card games, free-for-all games and more. Some of the longest running and most popular games in collegiate esports include League of Legends, Rocket League, Super Smash Brothers, Counter Strike: Global Offensive, Hearthstone and Overwatch. But new games continue to debut in collegiate esports. For example, Valorant from Riot Games was released in June 2020, and is already attracting the attention of collegiate esports teams and athletes, with 17 institutions fielding Valorant teams.⁶

SOFT-SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

As with traditional team sports in higher education, students in esports must build a number of soft skills to be a successful team member, including:



- Attitude
- Communication
- Creative thinking
- Work ethic
- Teamwork
- Decision-making
- Social Emotional Learning
- Time management
- Motivation
- Flexibility
- Critical thinking
- Conflict resolution

BENEFITS OF ESPORTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Recruitment

Having an esports team can help provide the same recruitment boost as other popular sports at the school, attracting students who are interested in the school's competitive ranking. Furthermore, having a specialized facility for the program that prospective students can visit can be rather appealing to see.

Retention

For those students and athletes who are interested in the world of video games, designing and constructing a specific esports program helps to foster a sense of belonging and community, keeping students interested in returning.

Relevancy

The growing popularity of esports and its relevance to contemporary culture, creates opportunities for institutions to build esports-centered courses focusing on developing career options in the gaming industry and beyond.



6 Building an esports program in higher education

Collegiate programs can grow from several places. Many schools have a student-led club that they use to explore the world of esports. There are programs housed in many different departments such as Student Life, Student Activities, Athletics, IT or Computer Science. Successful programs see esports as a cross departmental program that benefits many on campus.

1. The first step for a collegiate program is to understand the type of program they would like to start with and develop a group to execute it. This can be achieved by aligning the goals of the campus with the wants of the student body.
 2. They must confirm representatives from IT, facilities and administration are all involved to understand the program and how best to fund it. Once everyone understands the project, the dedication of resources and planning must start. Depending on the type of program you start with, this looks different on different campuses.
- From there, the next steps include:
3. Identify a facility.
 4. Develop a launch plan.
 5. Hire staff and students as needed based on the type of program desired.
 6. Build a feedback loop within the program to understand its markers for success and how to manage and grow the program.

It takes about 6 months to a year of preparation to launch an esports program.

READY TO PRESS PLAY?

Talk with an Insight expert to start
building your esports program.

About Insight Esports

Insight Enterprises, Inc. is a Fortune 500 solutions integrator helping organizations accelerate their digital journey to modernize their business and maximize the value of technology. Insight's technical expertise spans cloud and edge-based transformation solutions, with global scale and optimization built on 35 years of deep partnerships with the world's leading and emerging technology providers.



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IPS – https://www.ips.insight.com/en_US/what-we-do/vertical/education/esports.html

Commercial – https://www.insight.com/en_US/what-we-do/vertical/education/esports.html

¹Statista (2024, August) Esports – Worldwide Market Report 2024

²Collins, D. (2023, Jan. 26). How Much Money do Pro League of Legends Players Make? SVG.

³Nowakowski, I. (2022, Sept. 16). RLCS 2022-23 Season Information and Sign-Ups. Rocket League Esports.

⁴esafety Commissioner. (2023). Valorant.

⁵The National Association of Collegiate Esports. (2025). NACE: About.

⁶Burns, S (2021, August 9). Expanding Esports in Higher Ed: Benefits and Guidance for New Esports Programs. Educause.