

AN ESPORTS CODE OF CONDUCT

For players, organizers and parents



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An esports Code of Conduct

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In this Code of Conduct twelve Swedish esports organisations have established a number of ethical ground rules for players and organizers. Being a joint effort from some of the most influential esports organisations in Sweden, it is the desire of the creators that the rules outlined here sets the tone for how we interact with each other. The hope is also that the rules can be used as a tool for everyone involved as we strive to create an open and welcoming environment.

The document also contains support for both organizers and players, with practical advice on how organizations and individuals can take action to create and strengthen attitudes and behavior that promotes inclusion.

Because of the changeable nature of esports, this should be seen as a living document that changes and grows according to the needs of players and organizers. The text also contains tips on how parents can help to make esports more open and welcoming.

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PREFACE

Esports have a major strength compared to other sports - it can be practiced by people from completely different situations and backgrounds, and thus the potential for esports to be inclusive is enormous.

This document is a tool to ensure that we realize that potential. Together, we can create an esports environment where as many people as possible can feel welcome, meet, compete and evolve. Esports place in society is unquestionable, and it has already established itself as an important part of many people's lives.

Those of us who are engaged in esports - as players, coaches or parents - have a chance to shape the future. We all have the possibility to create and shape the esports environment we want to see, both for ourselves and for future generations.

To accomplish this, we need to follow a common set of rules and at the same time take individual responsibility for how we treat each other, both online and offline.

That is the purpose of this document - to create an esports for everyone, together!



WHO IS AN ESPORTS ATHLETE?

When we write about esports athletes in this document, we mean in the broadest possible sense. Anyone and everyone that plays competitively against others in a game on a computer, console, or other device can be considered an esports athlete. The document focuses on organized esports, and the skill level is not important in this context. The contents of this document can apply to everyone, from beginners to pro players.

ESPORTS COMPETITION GROUP

This document is managed and developed by Sweden's Esports Competition Group, an independent association consisting of representatives from all over the Swedish esports scene.

The aim is to have as broad a representation as possible, with a mix of non-profit and commercial entities, associations, organizers and players. The idea is to have a comprehensive picture of Swedish e-sport in order to be able to take decisions on how the document should best be used and further developed.

The Esports Competition Group also has responsibility for supporting the organizers and players in Sweden, on regulatory issues that arise in different events. It may recommend sanctions for violations of the rules or act as an advisory body for the organizers. The group will strive to be completely independent to the greatest extent possible, and to improve and maintain the environment in Swedish esports, making it more open and welcoming.

To get in touch with the Esports Competition Group, send an email to:

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RULES FOR A BETTER SPORT

Esports should be an open and welcoming environment, where participants can feel safe, have fun and have the space to become as good as possible. A major advantage of esports is that it can be practiced by people from all kinds of different backgrounds and situations, giving us the chance to include a very broad range of people.

To create such an environment, we need to take individual responsibility for how we behave towards our fellow players, referees and spectators. By following the rules set out below, we make the esports environment a place for everyone.

Note that these rules also apply outside matches and tournaments.

Breaking the rules of a tournament, online or offline, has consequences. Exactly what these consequences are will be determined by each organizer, but the focus should not be on punishing individuals. The rules exist for us to become better at including more people in esports by being open and welcoming.

ETHICS FOR PLAYERS

As esports competitors we should never:

- Express ourselves in an offensive manner about other players or their actions in the game, regardless of whether they are opponents or team-mates.
- Use language, nicknames or other expressions that insult another player's gender, gender identity, origin, physical ability, sexual orientation, religion or age.
- Use language or actions that refer to sexual violence or other violence.
- Act in a threatening or violent manner.
- Cheat.

ETHICS FOR ORGANIZERS

As an organizer of esports events, you have the power to influence how the future will look. By helping your participants to act in a respectful way, you will strengthen both esports in general and your own events and competitions. When you as an organizer adhere to the rules below, you ensure that your event promotes an open and welcoming esports environment.

As esports organizers, we will:

- Follow the contents of this Code of Conduct.
- Have a plan of action to deal with situations that arise when someone breaches the contents of the Code of Conduct. For assistance in creating an action plan, see the section "Tips for Organizers".
- Moderate public channels such as social media or forums in conjunction with your events, and not allow offensive comments or exchanges.

- Work proactively to create a welcoming environment where everyone feels safe, regardless of gender, gender identity, origin, physical ability, sexual orientation or religion. And also age, where applicable.
- Ensure that the players taking part in a tournament are not using nicknames, team names, skins or anything else that may be offensive.
- Have a zero tolerance policy for language, actions and behaviors that include elements of sexual violence or other violence.
- Have a zero tolerance policy for participants acting in a threatening or violent manner.

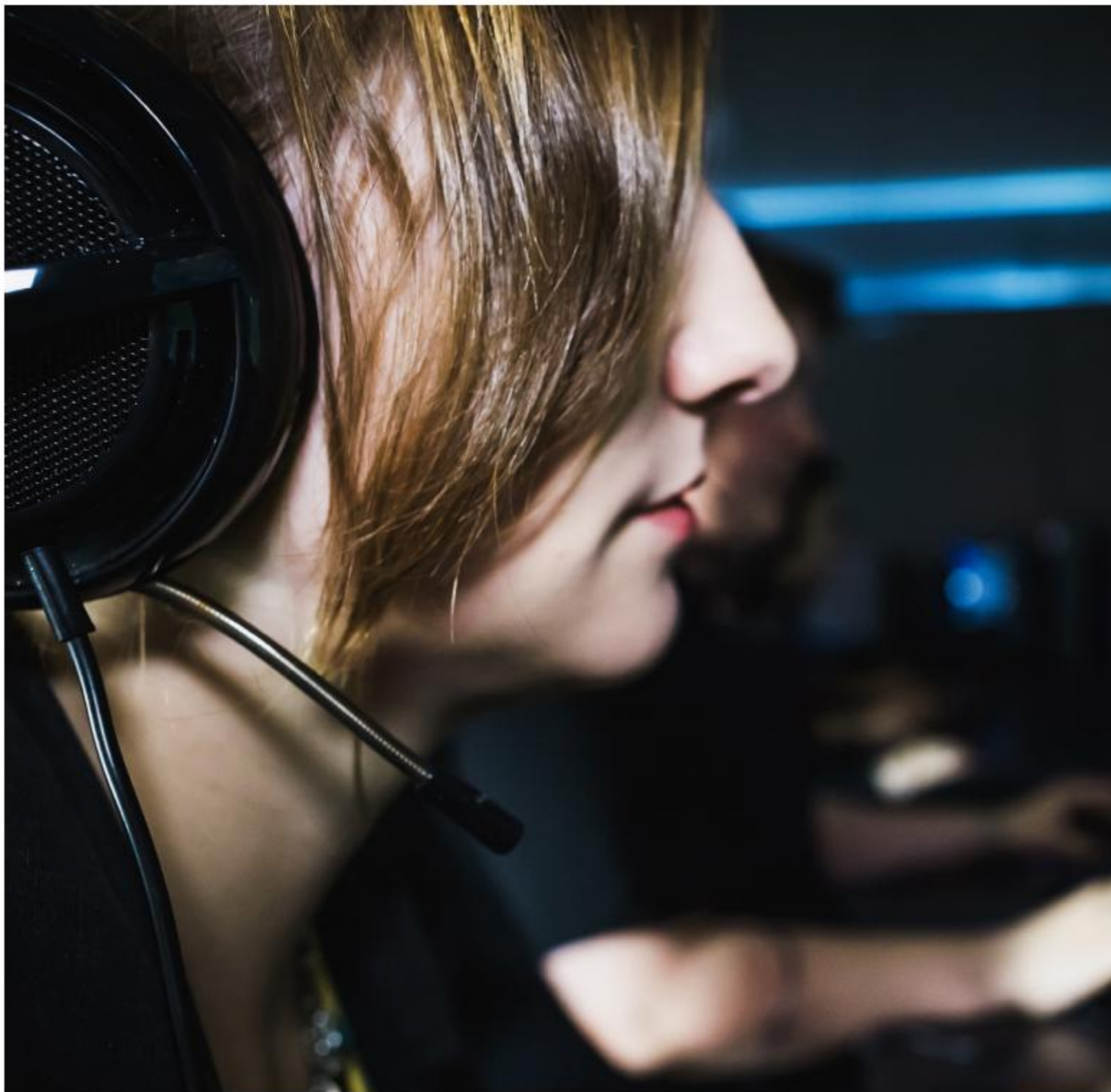
EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Support for **players, organizers**
and **parents**

SUPPORT FOR PLAYERS, ORGANIZERS AND PARENTS

This document is intended to complement to the rules in the esports Code of Conduct. Here, players, organizers and parents can get practical tips on how to take action to make esports more open and welcoming.

It is not intended as a list of exhaustive requirements that you must meet, but rather as a means to develop in your role in esports.



PRACTICAL TIPS TO BECOME A BETTER PLAYER

The following tips are good to remember when tournaments and matches are at their most intense. Esports can create joy, frustration, anger and happiness. What is important is how we deal with these feelings and that we make an effort to contribute to a more welcoming environment.

Besides making esports a better place, your own performance will benefit from a positive mindset – put simply, you will win more if you are a constructive player!

If you currently are or are aiming to become a professional player, it is also easier to get sponsorship if companies feel that you are well-behaved, responsible, well-spoken, and mature.



● **Online is the same as offline**

Remember that it is each player's responsibility to behave in a way that creates a good environment in chat rooms and in the game. Treat teammates, opponents and admins in the same way online as offline, based on how you would behave if you met them in an everyday situation, even when playing / talking / chatting online.

● **Accept when others feel offended**

Accept that people can feel offended about things that you yourself would not react to. People have different backgrounds and experiences, and this makes us perceive language in different ways.

Even if you are accustomed to a way of joking or talking during contests, it is not certain that everyone involved in the game will experience it the same way. Keep in mind that even those who cannot directly communicate with you (other players and the audience) are affected.

● **Encourage instead of mock**

Remember - we are all human, and we all make mistakes. We are all new to a game at some point. To be constructive and give helpful hints instead of showing frustration helps new players, and contributes to creating a positive environment, as well as increasing the chances of victory.

● **Show empathy**

If you are angry, try to control it before directing your anger at another player. There are no rights and wrongs when it comes to feelings, and you will experience both anger and joy when playing.

However, there are rights and wrongs when it comes to how emotions such as anger are expressed - think about how it feels when another player takes their anger out on you. One rule to remember is to treat people the same way online as you would offline.

● **You win more matches with positive words**

When you play in a team, try to be positive and lift your teammates with constructive dialogue and encouragement. It's much easier to win if the dialogue in the team is open and tolerant - statistics produced by Riot Games show that players with constructive attitudes during difficult moments in the matches win 10% more than the average!

● **Be a good winner**

It's a great feeling to win a game or a contest, and you should enjoy that feeling! But at the same time, don't rub your opponent's nose in it. Think about the frustration you feel when nothing works and a game ends in defeat - in that situation, taunting can be tough to take.

● **Influence others**

Spectators and players that see you behave well towards other players, organizers and admins will be inspired to do the same. Even outside the game, such as on social media, the way you conduct yourself makes an impression, good and bad. Your behavior makes a difference – so choose to be a good role model.

● **Analyze instead of complaining**

If you are angry at a loss, do not take it out on your teammates or find ways to pass the blame - try instead to look at the statistics or the replay and consider how you could have played differently. You'll often find that the skill of your opponents was probably a much bigger factor in the defeat than the performance of you and your fellow players.

Also find ways to analyze your own game with an open mind and consider that there are ways in which you personally can improve on mistakes you made.

● **Respect referees and organizers**

If you participate in a tournament, treat the referees and organizers in a respectful manner. You are of course entitled to criticize what you see as a miscarriage of justice, but flaming or acting aggressively toward referees or organizers during a tournament does not benefit anyone - the verdict will not change and you will lose focus on your performance.

TIPS FOR ORGANIZERS

Here are some practical tips on how you as an event organizer can use the contents of this document. The content can be adapted for your materials and events, but it is important that the core values of striving to create a more open and welcoming environment in esports are retained.

See these tips as a support mechanism - do not feel pressured to implement them all at once. Instead, regard them more as a way to develop and become a better organizer. Choose to implement a few to begin with, and when they have become part of your routine, you can add more as you go.

● **Establish ethical rules**

Make sure to establish codes of conduct for participants at your event. If there are concrete and explicit ethical rules, they act as preventive measures - you reduce the likelihood of problems arising. It also ensures that any measures are effective. In the esports Code of Conduct you will find ready-made ethical rules that you can use, and you can also add your own rules or rework them to fit your organization or event. If you do so, it is important that you do not remove any of the existing rules - they should be seen as a solid basic foundation to work from.

● **Connect the ethical rules to your entry form**

You can enclose these ethical rules in the registration for the competitions you organize - you probably already have practical or game specific rules that you communicate to your entrants, where this code of ethics will fit naturally.

It can then be designed as a list of bullet points, where participants actively tick a box to show that they have understood and accept the conditions for participation in the competition.

Participants are then also obliged to take responsibility for following the rules - if they breach them, you as the organizer retain the right to take action.

Advice on appropriate measures can be found under the heading "Consequences of breaking the rules".

When the players then confirm their registration for the tournament (locally or online), a referee can remind them of the rules and their responsibility to comply with them. This minimizes the risk of players not understanding what is expected of them.

By making the ethical rules a compulsory part of the entry process, you as the organizer show that these issues are important, and it is thus very likely that participants will take them seriously, not least because

there are real consequences if they violate them. Make it easy for your participants to do the right thing and behave in the right manner.

● **Personal information in the entry form**

One way to increase the weight of your rules - both ethical and practical - is to require participants to register personal data (such as their full names) in order to be able to participate in your tournaments. This has two advantages - firstly, the players will most likely feel that it is important to really read and comply with the rules. Secondly, it makes it easier for you as an organizer to follow up on the players' actions.

If more organizers make use of the system, it also makes it easier to maintain a common front with regard to players who violate the rules. If a player is suspended from one competition, another organizer can refer to that ban. Note, however, that it can be problematic to require personal data from participants, because it makes it difficult for persons with protected identities to participate.

● **Have a clear plan of action**

Being prepared in advance for events that can happen on your LAN or in your tournament is extremely valuable.

If you have already decided on guidelines for how to deal with a player who insults an opponent, it will be



much easier to make a good decision quickly while under pressure. Get the key people at your event together in good time before it takes place and plan for different situations.

How do you deal when a player behaves badly in the chat?

How do you respond to critical questions about your rules?

It is difficult to cover all the situations that may arise during a tournament, but the better you plan, the easier it will be to handle tricky situations when they occur.

Assume that the players want to follow the rules and contribute to a positive environment, and try to educate and support rather than punish. The gains to be made from planting a new seed of thought in the mind of a

player are much greater than just trying to remove the problem from the tournament. A simple example of how you can establish a plan of action is to start from these three headings:

Risk assessment

What risks do you see for your event - what can happen?
What would those events lead to?

Measures

How will you act when different problems arise? When should it be done? Assess how quickly you must take action to deal with different situations. Are there costs associated with your efforts? Who is responsible for taking action?

Goal

What is the goal of your action plan? How do you want the participants and the outside world to perceive your event?

● Openness creates trust

When situations occur that you as a organizer have to deal with, it may be tempting to take a decision on the possible consequences behind closed doors. It might feel more comfortable, and doing so minimizes the risk of possible objections that the organizer might have to respond to.

But a clear and well-drafted plan that is open to the public is probably better than leaving yourself open to suspicion, and it increases the chances that your decision will be accepted.

Obviously there are circumstances that make being transparent difficult, and on some occasions privacy may be a contributing factor. But the more open you can be with how decisions are taken, the better – this way, you build trust.

● **Working towards the same vision**

In order to be consistent and thorough in your efforts to create events that are open and welcoming, it is important that everyone involved is aware of your



approach and that you share the same tools to get there.

As you start planning your event, ensure that you give everyone involved an opportunity to learn about the rules you want to implement. Also be clear about who to turn to or where to go if they have questions or if they have to deal with queries from participants.

This might take the form of a simple short presentation that takes a few minutes, where the person responsible for ethical issues at the event informs staff about the concrete rules and the feeling you want to convey. The point is that everyone should have the same picture of what you want to achieve and the tools to get there.

Another good tool to have in terms of outlining your vision is a clear equal opportunities plan. Designing such a plan will help you as an organizer to ensure that participants feel welcome and safe. It does not need to be advanced - the most important thing is that it is actively used, and that it is clear to everyone involved in the event.

● **Be consistent**

To effectively work with the culture of your event, it is important that you are consistent in how you deal with problematic behaviors. Do not ignore events or occurrences because they seem tough to deal with, and

do not let negative behavior pass unnoticed!

If the participants at your event experience your actions as consistent and standing up for what is right, the likelihood is that more people feel safe will increase.

It may also help to have a person who is in charge of ethical rules and to whom all comments and questions can be referred to. This way, that person can deepen their knowledge and become your expert in the field, while you avoid the confusion of sending mixed messages to the participants.

● **Arrange separate competitions**

Esports has few limits when it comes to the groups that can be included, and indeed that is one of its greatest strengths - yet women and LGBT people, for example, are significantly underrepresented. One of the biggest reasons for this is the lack of secure environments where marginalized groups can be introduced to esports.

A tool you can use to work for greater diversity in esports is to organize distinct competitions, directed only at a specific group. This creates a safer environment, making the step to start competing easier to take. Separate competitions are not an ultimate goal, they should instead be seen as a step on the road to a more welcoming esports environment.

Hopefully the need for separate competitions will disappear as soon as possible. The criticism usually directed at separate competitions is that it is unfair to other groups - the counter-argument to this is that the more established groups already have a big lead, and they have been able to shape esports according to their own preferences.

Therefore, there is a need to give other groups space to develop. Greater diversity in esports benefits everyone and leads to the development of the sport.

One thing that may be helpful to think about when you want to make targeted action against specific groups is to ask people belonging to that group which action or actions are most relevant - this way, you ensure that the energy is directed towards aspects that can make a real difference.

● **Have role models that set the tone**

Regardless of whether it is an international competition with hundreds of thousands of viewers watching the stream or a small local LAN party, most esports have role models that players and spectators look up to and listen to.

One way to create an inclusive atmosphere is to encourage these role models and give them a platform to speak about why it is important to have an open and welcoming attitude in esports.

The role model might be a good player, a respected

commentator or a streamer. If in addition they belong to an under-represented group in esports, the chances are good that people from other backgrounds will feel welcome at your event. You will show that diversity is essential to you.

- **Have the rules on public display**

By visually reminding participants of the rules at your event, you increase the likelihood that they will be followed. Put up signs at the entrance to the premises, paste them in the Facebook group, let them roll on the monitors with other information such as the schedule and sponsorship messages, broadcast them regularly via a video from the stage. Make the rules visible, all the while trying to get them to fit as naturally as possible in the context, so that they are not perceived as intrusive.

- **Show your diversity**

By working actively to show that your event is diverse, you will strengthen the groups that are underrepresented in esports. More people from those groups might dare to take the plunge and show up at your event if they feel seen and represented. This can involve everything from how you advertise - for example, consider the gender or skin color of people in the images you use to promote the event - to the diversity in your team. A diverse working group will also help you broaden the perspective and identify more important issues to work with at your event.

● **Clarity about communication**

Decide what tone you want in chat rooms, both in-game and in community spaces related to your event (Facebook groups, forums, and so on). Inform participants about how you expect them to behave and follow up communication. Also ensure that your crew communicate the same message and do not present conflicting ideas or solutions.

If you think someone has crossed the line, be consistent in terms of taking it up with them. Remind them of the rules and explain why it is important. By being clear and consistent you will create positive culture, where participants are expected to maintain a good tone and where not doing so becomes the exception.

A dedicated effort aimed at improving how participants communicate with each other, and where violation of your ethical rules is consistently followed up, could eventually lead to self-moderation, meaning that the participants themselves see that the rules are maintained without the organizers having to get involved. It simply becomes a habit to communicate constructively.

● **Meet before the match-up**

If you hold a physical event, you can ensure that all participants in a particular contest meet a short time before the tournament starts. This way, they become

less anonymous to each other and the problem of not perceiving the individual on the other side of the screen as a person is also reduced. For example, it might be a short meeting in conjunction with a regular briefing where prospective opponents shake hands - the point is to create an opportunity to reinforce empathy and to allow for good sporting behavior during competition.

● **Encourage positive behavior**

The idea of this document is to encourage a more open and welcoming approach in esports. Highlighting the most positive examples and rewarding them sets the tone for your event. A player who has displayed particularly good teamwork and sportsmanship could be given an award or a prize, like for example a new keyboard or a hard drive.

● **Create inclusive facilities**

Everyone comes to esports from different backgrounds, and ensuring that your premises reflects that fact is an important step towards being more inclusive.

It could be about having a wheelchair ramp at the entrance, offering a secluded place for prayer, or having gender neutral restrooms. One way to get help to develop your premises to accommodate more people could be to contact organizations who are accustomed to working with diversity issues, such as a local LGBT group or a disability rights organisation.

● **Consequences for violations**

The idea and purpose of the ethical framework is to get participants to think before they act and to create good habits. The punishment for rule violations should not be seen as an end in itself – it is a tool to reach out to the offender and a way to provide security for participants.

If a person violates your ethical framework, make sure to explain how it happened and why you decided to take action. Otherwise it could create greater anger and more misunderstandings.

In the worst case scenario you might even end up reinforcing the behavior, rather than planting a seed for new patterns of thought. You as organizers must first assess if the person violated the code of ethics and, if you come to the conclusion that this is the case, you also need to assess the degree of seriousness of the offense.



Suggested consequences when a player has broken the rules are:

- ◆ A warning (after two warnings, the next penalty on the scale is imposed)
- ◆ Immediate forfeit of the round / map
- ◆ Immediate forfeit of the game
- ◆ Expulsion from the tournament and possible suspension from other esports events.
- ◆ Suspension from esports events

In addition to these penalties, deduction of prize money may be an option for events which have a prize pool.

Communication is very important when it comes to penalties. If what is expected of the players is made clear to them in advance, and you as the organizer are consistent in your interpretations of the rules, the chances are good that players accept your authority and that they understand why certain behaviors are problematic.

FOR PARENTS OF ESPORTS ATHLETES

Esports is a relatively new phenomenon that became firmly established in the early 2000s. It is about individuals or teams competing against each other in computer or video games. Some of the biggest games are League of Legends, Dota 2, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Hearthstone and StarCraft II.

One of the world's largest esports tournaments is the Dota 2 International contest, whose finals in 2015 had 4.6 million viewers and a prize pool of almost US\$18.5 million. Esports is also one of the fastest growing sports in the world. It is now a natural part of the lives of many young people, where they spend a lot time playing the games and on the social platforms where they are discussed.

Despite their enormous popularity, parents can often find it difficult to understand how the games work or what the attraction of them is. This document strives to support esports to build positive norms and to help fulfill the great potential that exists for it to be an inclusive space. The structure of esports is somewhat unique, in that people from very different backgrounds have the opportunity to participate, to a much greater extent than other sports.

One of the challenges facing esports is the lack of

support structures, such as a parental presence. It is much more difficult for a young sport to build positive frameworks without help from the adult world, so it is therefore important that you as parents get involved in your child's esports interest. Here are some practical tips on how you as a parent can increase your knowledge of esports and support your children:

● **Ask questions**

As a parent, it can sometimes be difficult to come across as vulnerable or lacking in knowledge to your children – most of us expect to be able to answer most of the questions our child asks. It might even feel frustrating that we do not understand much of the child's main interest.

The solution may sound simple - ask questions! Genuinely curious questions will often go a long way towards deepening your understanding. Many young people are more than willing to talk about their last game, or the character they play at the moment, but few get the chance to talk about it with a parent who really engages with them. Dare to give them the time and attention to share their world with you – the payback is truly worth it!

● **Show that you value their interest**

Previously the primary meeting points for young people were physical locations such as the local recreation

center, but nowadays a lot of social interaction has moved to online environments.

Games and social media are genuinely important for young people's social interaction and the building of self-esteem. There are many opinions on this development, but the fact remains - digital social interaction is important to adolescents and esports is an example of this. As a parent, you need to show that you value the interest and the time your child spends on esports, the same way as you encourage and value other hobbies. Doing so is a prerequisite for being



able to talk about esports in a constructive way - if you do so, your children will talk to you about things that happened in the game environment, both positive and negative, in a natural way.

● **Learn the basics of the game**

You do not need to be an expert on your child's game, but a basic knowledge of it will help your communication with them immensely. A common example of a conflict surrounding the game is meal times. Matches vary in time, but they can often take 45 minutes or longer. If a parent knows roughly how long the games are, it becomes easier to set the deadline for when the last game before dinner will start. Of course, everyday life cannot only be guided by the game, but having to leave in the middle of a game in League of Legends is comparable to being taken from a football match before it is finished.

A player who leaves before the end of the game also suffers a penalty, such as a temporary suspension. It also causes problems for the team - it is very difficult to win a game with too few players. Compare that situation with a basketball team that has to play a full game with only four players on the court.

● **Play together**

For some parents, it might sound far-fetched to sit down at the computer or TV and engage in esports with their child. It may seem complicated or difficult. But in

reality it is no different than playing football or reading a book with them. The energy you put in to mastering the game will be repaid many times over when you share your child's favorite interests, and when you together experience all the emotions that esports creates. As a bonus, you increase your knowledge of the game, which makes it much more likely that your child will spontaneously bring up the events in and around the games - they know that you already understand.

● **Go to a LAN party**

Take your kids, or go yourself. To be at a LAN party, where people get together over a weekend to play games, as a curious onlooker or even as a participant, will go a long way to enhancing your understanding of esports. It will give you a chance to meet everyone involved in esports, from the organizers to the players, fans and commentators. There is no better way to get an overview of what esports is all about.

● **Get involved in esports events**

View the LAN party or tournament like any other sporting event! You've probably driven your children to practice for other sports, or sold hot dogs or coffee when they played a game - why should esports be different? So help out by carrying chairs at the LAN party, by carrying computers or by going with them to a tournament in another town. Parental presence in esports is extremely important when it comes to creating positive norms!



● **Contact clubs and federations**

A good way to ensure that your children get the most out of esports is to contact a club or federation that conducts esports activities. There are a lot of associations that organize weekly online and physical events. Being part of a club or federation gives your child a chance to meet others to play with, helps them develop their skills and, perhaps most importantly, teaches them about the democratic nature of clubs and federations.

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For a more open and welcoming esports!

RESPECT ALL COMPETE



DATASPELSBRANSCHEN
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