

An Introductory Guide to ESports

For young students who are considering a career as an ESports athlete

Section 0: Introduction to this Guide

This is a guide meant to explain as many aspects of what it's like to be an ESports athlete for anyone interested in the industry, but also primarily for people seriously considering having a career as an athlete. There are numerous different components that make up ESports: The state of the industry itself, the financial potential it carries as a career, the effect being an athlete has on your day-to-day life, and so on. This guide will go over all of those topics and more, in as much detail that I can provide, based on objective data and facts I researched and told through my subjective paraphrasing, walking you through what is ultimately *my* view of ESports that I have gathered from research.

Remember that I myself am *not* an ESports athlete, or have any real affiliation with the industry. I am just a spectator who finds lots of interest in the subject, and I acknowledge that this guide is far from perfect, but this guide will help anyone interested in ESports get off the ground and at least understand what kind of industry they're going to be involved with. I encourage anyone who reads this guide to supplement it with their own personal research in any area that they want to know more about.

There are a lot of pros and cons when it comes to the ESports industry, but it's something I find very interesting and fascinating to talk about. There is much I have to say in this guide about ESports, and the remainder of this guide will go over every aspect of the industry that I can talk about. I hope anyone who reads through this guide finds it to be helpful, whether you are someone who wants to become an athlete or just someone interested in learning more about the vast components of the ever-rising ESports industry.

P.S.: To anyone who finds this long guide intimidating, feel free to *skip* through it to the "Additional Content" section at the end of this guide. There, you will find videos containing much of the same information, only in a different format

Section 1: Introduction to the Industry

What is an ESport?

"ESports" are a fledgling form of career sport based around competitive video games; The "electronic" equivalent to physical sports and sport leagues. There are numerous ways someone can become involved

in ESports, they require many of the same things physical sports need: Sponsors, managers, team organizers, advertisers, casters, and so on. But this guide is focused entirely on becoming an *athlete*: i.e. a person who plays and competes in the competitive sport leagues.

ESports are a very new thing that remains to be seen as a fledgling industry still learning to fly, but that doesn't mean it hasn't gathered a lot of promise or interest. The very concept of an "ESport" is intriguing enough of itself to hook in many people looking to be involved in it, which is what has allowed the concept and industry to evolve to where it is now in the first place.

What makes the industry promising?

Before I can go into more detail about the career experience, first I want to address some of the "Why?" Why are there so many people interested in ESports to begin with, and why do so many people have such an interest in ESports as their career path? What makes it worth looking into at all? Naturally, someone looking into ESports is obviously interested in video games and may find a career in playing them appealing, but in order to pursue that as a full time career there needs to be more incentive in the industry to look further into it.

So what makes ESports appealing? Before we go into the financial details, a large reason to address is the audience: ESports gets massive amounts of viewers and grows more and more in viewers every year. ESports was already projected to reach half of a billion viewers in 2022¹, and that metric has long been passed, with viewership on the rise more each year. Sports live and die by their viewership, and with ESports viewership having so much promise, it's a valid question to consider the practicality of a career as an athlete.

The biggest thing a fledgling sports industry such as ESports needs to grow is viewership, which the industry garners more and more of in spades every year. With more viewership brings more attention, and more attention brings more money into the industry, which brings more sponsorships and tournaments, and so on and so forth. The growth the industry has shown is monstrous, and it's the reason why anyone pays attention to ESports at all, so the promise the industry shows is monumental. But promise is just that- "promise." There is much promise in ESports, but that potential has to be made into something concrete for it to have any worth, which is what currently holds the industry back. But to deny the promise it holds would be to ignore all of the facts surrounding the incredible growth ESports have gone through in a considerably short amount of time.

¹ ["Esports Audience Will Pass Half a Billion in 2022: Esports Market Analysis."](#) Newzoo, 19 Apr. 2022

Section 2: The Financial Side

How much money do players make?

The biggest question people always have about ESports is how much money do players make? Earnings are the biggest thing people searching for careers look at, and for good reason, as you need solid earnings to be able to sustain yourself with a full-time career. So the immediate question is how much money do these players earn? Well there's a lot of factors, but let's start with the average "salary." Salaried pro gamers earn on average around \$4,000–\$5,000 per month or \$50,000–\$60,000 a year² which isn't a bad salary, but it's not always consistent.

You are not *guaranteed* a salary at first, you need to qualify to join an organization which gives you that salary. Without that salary, you have to earn your earnings only through tournament winnings or through other means. So if you secure a consistent salary from an organization, that's how much you could earn on average, but there's still several other factors impacting how much money players make. Similarly to regular sports, it's a variable number depending on many factors such as the amount of money in the game, tournament winnings, additional salaries, and so on. There is not a consistent answer for how much money ESports athletes make.

How much earnings come from tournaments?

Aside from your salary, a large chunk of your earnings will come from potential tournament earnings, and here is where your finances become less certain. Tournament earnings are HIGHLY variable and the competitive game of choice does matter. With different games comes different organizations sponsoring it as well as the support from the game's developers. There is unfortunately no concrete answer for this question, as it is highly variable.

It's also worth noting that tournament earnings are highly variable based on placements, so the amount you earn from tournaments is directly parallel to player and team skill, meaning consistent income from tournaments only comes to the upper echelon of athletes. That outcome is unfortunate, but if you're someone who's able to consistently place well in big tournaments, the earnings can be a great additional bonus to your income. However, the average player is not going to be able to achieve that consistency without much talent and practice, so it is not recommended to focus on tournament earnings as a main part of your income unless you are certain you can place very high very consistently.

² ["How Much Do Esports Players Make."](#) Esports Grizzly, 27 Mar. 2022

How likely are you to get consistent income as an athlete?

The answer to that question depends. There's many factors: The competitive game of choice, player skill, tournament earnings and opportunities, whether or not you're sponsored, and so on.

Having a sponsor is your most consistent choice of obtaining income but the possibility of getting into an organization is questionable. With ESports becoming more mainstream, there will be more organizations looking to sponsor more young and up-and-coming players, but the discussion falls into hypothetical territory. Consistent income from a career as an athlete is certainly possible but it varies so greatly depending on your choices; The uncertainty lies mainly in whether or not the income is consistent, not just with the amount of income.

It's worth noting there's other careers that can synergize alongside an ESports career for income, notably a lot of athletes have a secondary career streaming their games on platforms such as Twitch or YouTube, which if successful acts as a consistent source of income. You are not locked to just ESports as an athlete, which is something to remember.

Section 3: The Games Themselves

Can competitive games last?

What makes competitive gaming so different from competitive sports is the difference between the longevity of competitive games and sports. Sports are just sports, and can last forever so long as people keep playing them; A sport won't ever "die." However, games are different: new video games are always being made, and as ESports grows, so does companies' interest in creating games specifically designed for competitive play. With more games being made, it begs the question, how long do games last in the competitive spotlight?

The answer is: It depends. Games have the potential to "die," whether that means falling from the competitive spotlight or to be shut down entirely, although the latter is very uncommon. When a game "dies," that means it is no longer provided any support from its parent-company. They stop updating it, or stop funding tournaments and sponsors entirely, making it "dead" in the eyes of mainstream ESports. A dead game can still have players, but the scene turns a lot smaller and less promising from a career-standpoint.

In the rare cases a game is shut down or made unpurchasable, then there's no salvaging it, you would very likely have to move on to another game. That doesn't always mean you start from scratch, as organizations and sponsorships can carry over from game to game, but you'd be essentially starting over with learning and practicing the new game you choose.

It is ideal to choose a game proven to have a long lasting competitive scene, and compensating developers who try to keep the game's competitive scene alive for as long as possible. You do not need to worry about games such as League of Legends, Fortnite, or Overwatch losing their competitive scenes for the foreseeable future. The games that tend to "die" are ones without much player or developer attention to begin with, so for someone trying to become an ESports athlete, it is crucial you attain an eye to determine what's worth playing, and what's not.

What kind of games are played competitively?

The answer is: A lot. So long as a relevant game has any kind of multiplayer-competition aspect, there is likely to be a community of varying size who play it competitively. But those smaller, niche communities are not the ones chosen to be at the forefront of ESports. However, the genre of games still has a lot of variety at the top echelon of ESports: Shooters, MOBAs, fighting games, RTS games, etc. are well represented genres in popular ESports.

The kind of games you pursue will be determined by the type of games you like to play, so there is some flexibility in choosing what kind of game you focus on besides merely the financial potential. If you are able to secure yourself a good standing in the field you like, then you don't have to worry much about other factors surrounding your game, and can continue to advance as a pro in that field. If you prefer shooter games, for example, there's numerous choices to pick from, all of which have a solid backing from the industry, meaning you are free to advance your career in that genre as you'd like. The divide in genre representation within ESports is not an even one, but there still remains flexibility within whatever genre you choose to focus in.

Section 4: The Player's Lifestyle

How does a career as an ESports athlete affect your daily life?

The daily life of an ESports athlete has a lot of overlap with the life of a regular athlete in the sense that most of your time will be spent practicing. A large chunk of your time every day will be spent practicing your game of choice, because the better you get, the more you will be rewarded on your career path,

because of the reasons stated in previous sections. But don't take this all from me, because I am not an ESports athlete, so instead this section will go over some responses from an interview that *Upcomer* did with professional player Enzo "WarKr0Zz" Conte.³

As I stated earlier, daily practice regiments are very important for Enzo, who sometimes plays for up to twelve hours a day. But that occasional half of a day isn't just playing and nothing else, as Enzo regularly streams himself playing to an audience, which lets him potentially get viewed by other professionals and organizations. Playing the game isn't always the most important thing, as Enzo likes to spend time with family and friends before large tournaments or events to clear his head and put him in a better mental state.

When asked to give advice for anyone trying to break into ESports, Enzo said it was "very difficult." To quote part of his response: "You have to be really good from the beginning. After that, it's all about rhythm." The "rhythm" he speaks of is in regards to practicing and playing, as striking a balance between that and your personal life will eventually reward you back for all the time invested, or rather that is his version of it.

Enzo is only one professional athlete of thousands, and while I could go through several player interviews, his perspective is good enough as an introductory window to some of the ways the career of an ESports athlete changes your daily life. You have to spend much time practicing, on top of balancing your personal life whether that includes studies, jobs, hobbies, and so on. How you utilize and optimize all of that time is up to you, but if you are successful in your career then it is worth it, but not everyone can break into the same success as Enzo has.

Should I pursue an ESports career if I have other hobbies?

Of course, whether or not you can handle everything on your plate is something that I cannot tell anyone. There is no direct way to answer this question, because hobbies can vary and mean practically anything, so just remember the massive time sink that comes with being an ESports athlete. A large aspect of the career is your own commitment and dedication, and the success you find is parallel to the amount of time and work you put into it. The key word to this career is "commitment," as you need a lot of time and effort to make a breakthrough.

³ Lee, Aabicus, and Enzo Conte. "[The Life of an Esports Professional: Interview with WarKr0Zz.](#)" *Upcomer*, 18 Apr. 2019,

If there's more things you want to pursue alongside a career as an ESports athlete, then that is definitely possible, but the difficulty to balance those things could prove to be unmanageable depending on innumerable independent factors. If you want a long-term career and wish for it to be successful, then you very well might have to give some things up to pursue that career to its fullest. The question of whether or not that's worth it is something that I cannot give a general answer for, and is something anyone looking to be a successful athlete will have to carefully think about and answer on their own.

The bottom line is that ESports is a very committal career if you want to do it full-time and long-term. It's pretty similar to regular sports in that aspect, in that it's a gigantic time sink of practicing and playing in order to gain enough skill to break mold and kick off that career. Whether or not it's worth pursuing if you wish to advance other hobbies is up to you, but I advise you give your situation very careful consideration while making that decision if you want to pursue a serious career as an ESports athlete.

If ESports and my life end up not mixing, can I drop ESports?

Of course! However, depending on how far along in your career path you got, dropping it could become more complicated, but never impossible. ESports for many people starts on the scale of a hobby before the opportunities arise to advance it into a serious career path, so if you start to take it seriously and realize it won't bode well, it's easy to drop it at the earlier stages before any serious developments happen.

If you get farther along your ESports career, dropping it will create higher complications. If you found a sponsor and are part of an official team, you will have to go through legal procedures to be officially dropped, but there will never be a span of time where it is impossible to leave. You will never be literally bound to your sponsor, the procedures to fully remove yourself from them will just take some time.

However, if you've gotten that far already, then chances are you are focusing on ESports as your sole career focus, and may not have other reliable sources of income after you detach from it.

If you become that person, then it is vital that you secure a reliable source of income before you fully exit from your ESports career, otherwise you could potentially be financially floundering for a period of time. Just make sure you are prepared on all fronts to make that career shift if you've already put a lot of time into ESports. Always have a backup plan when it comes to things like these, as being unprepared for a sudden career change could put you in a very tough decision. But don't take that as ESports being a cursed career or anything, but depending on the amount of progress you've made, the more precautions you need to take when going through the procedures to make a hard switch.

This is a lot to take in- Are ESports even fun?

Playing video games as a career sounds like an easy and fun job to pick up, but the unfortunate reality is that it is not so simple. That description has been proven to be extremely misleading and simplistic, because you have to treat it like a real career, and put tons of effort into making it successful. If everything I have described does not sound like “fun,” then perhaps it isn’t the career for you. What you consider as a “fun” career is entirely subjective, but you should always aim for something that you can enjoy. There’s a lot more factors to consider for an athletic ESports career than what initially meets the eye, so whether or not you are willing to put in that dedication is up to whether or not you think you are worthy for the task.

Don’t think it’s all boring, because of course ESports can be fun! The sense of community, accomplishment, and the experiences of traveling and going to tournaments are unforgettable for anyone who can obtain them. If ESports still interest you, you can definitely make it fun! But it has to be fun enough for you to commit to it as your full-time career. That commitment is a price you have to pay for every kind of career, however, so don’t let that fact alone dissuade you. Just know that you’re going to have to work hard to make ESports more fun, which has proven to be doable, otherwise there wouldn’t be nearly as many athletes in the scene as there are now!

Section 5: Career Viability

So, are ESports a viable career option?

This guide has gone through a lot of information regarding ESports: The industry itself, the financial potential, and the way these athletes lead their daily lives. The question anyone should be naturally left with is whether or not all of this would be worth it: Are ESports *viable*? The key-word here is *viable*, because while small careers with ESports can happen, can it be viable to pursue long-term as a full time career? The answer to this question will be the decider for many people looking to be a full-time ESports athlete. However, it is a question with no answer. There is no career that is inherently optimal; Everything regarding career viability is dependent on the person who is considering it.

So if there is no answer, why do I bring it up? Because I want to give some kind of answer, even if it is impossible. There are many pros and cons to the industry that people reading might have naturally been counting in their heads, and in this section I am going to point them all out. Then you can take a step back and consider all of the listed pros and cons, and use them to come to your own conclusion about whether or not that career would be viable.

The Pros:

The biggest positive for the ESports industry is its monumental potential and rate of growth. ESports have been growing more and more viewership with each passing year, accruing an unprecedented amount of interest. There are millions of eyes on the industry, including thousands of sponsors and investors, and that number continues to grow. The amount of interest means there's more potential for massive growth, exploding the industry into a potentially massive scene; The potential with ESports is too large to ignore as a pro.

While it takes effort, there is definitely a path towards earning enough income as an athlete. The skill and secondary factors it takes may be immense, but it's certainly doable, and many top athletes are very well off in their positions with sponsors, tournament winnings, and smaller sources of additional income. There's more money that's being pumped into the scene from all fronts, meaning the chance to get in the scene and earn that money only grows with time.

There are a large number of competitive games with large player bases and industry-backing to choose from, spanning numerous genres. No matter what kind of games you like playing casually, chances are there will be some viable competitive game that will fit exactly what you're looking for. You can comfortably commit to playing your game of choice without feeling like you're forcing yourself to enjoy it, because while everyone's tastes vary, there will be at least one game that suits your tastes that can last very long as an ESport.

The daily life of an ESports player is devoted mainly to practice, but there's still fun to be had! If you enjoy the game you're pursuing, then playing it for practice will remain fun. You have to sink an insane amount of time to improve, but the improvement you feel will feel extremely rewarding; The success you can find will overshadow any of the grievances that come with balancing your personal life with your practice sessions. As an athlete, you can also engage with your game's specific community, giving an opportunity to potentially make new friends to practice with, making the process more enjoyable. If at any point your life and ESports don't mix, you can always leave the scene and readjust, it only takes some time.

The Cons

While the industry holds undeniable promise, there is still a lot of room to grow for ESports. Despite the insane potential, it is still just "potential." ESports has proven it can soar higher, but it's yet to rise above

the clouds; It's undeniably popular, but popularity can only carry the industry so far. There is no telling what the future holds for ESports, and while it's projected to grow, it should never be forgotten that it could potentially crash and burn, no matter how slim the chances are.

There is certainly potential for income, but it remains very inconsistent. Getting a sponsorship deal, winning big tournaments, and securing those benefits is something not every person is going to be able to do, and that is a fact that cannot be changed. The potential for income is one of the highest priorities of anyone searching for a career, and the inconsistency with money that plagues ESports is a very significant con. If you can't secure that money, you CAN'T last in the industry, and have to rely on other sources of income. Unless you prove you're good enough, you cannot use ESports as your sole provider of income.

While there are many different types of game genres played at the top level of ESports, there are still restrictions on what you can make a successful career out of; Restrictions are still restrictions. If there's already a competitive game you enjoy playing that doesn't have the audience needed to attract bigger tournaments and sponsors, competing in that game and making a successful career becomes much more difficult. Finally, while the chances are always very slim, there's always the looming possibility that your game dies and becomes unplayable at a competitive level, handicapping your established career.

The sacrifices you'll have to make with your personal life are numerous: Most of your free time will have to be allocated to practicing for your career, which can create tough complications depending on your life's current status. If it becomes too much to handle, extra complications will only pile up as you prepare to jump ship and make a career change. ESports do not immediately become your full career, so in the beginning, these issues will be further compounded depending on factors such as if you're already employed in another occupation or not. No matter how much you plan, innumerable things can go wrong while trying to balance your ESports career with the rest of your life.

I could go on for longer talking about more pros and cons, but that goes over every detail previously discussed in this guide. That will be the end of it from me, but I recommend looking into some more of the pros and cons yourself.

Section 6: Conclusion

And with that, this guide is officially concluded. With the pros and cons listed, on top of everything else, it is ultimately up to YOU if you want to tackle the still-mysterious landscape that is the ESports industry.

Thank you for sticking to the end of this guide, and to conclude, I will go over some final things before wrapping everything up.

Firstly, it's important to be reminded that I am NOT an ESports player- I am merely someone with an interest in *observing* the industry as a *viewer*. You can find a plethora of detailed information from actual players, but I made this guide to serve as just your introduction: There are many more layers to the industry, but I wanted to lay out only the basics to anyone interested.

The purpose of this guide was not to persuade anyone from choosing or declining a career in ESports. I've presented objective information while including my own subjective summary and opinions while staying true to the facts presented; I'm not trying to keep people in or out of the industry, but rather to present this information to anyone interested in learning more.

Throughout this guide we have looked at an overview of the current industry, the financial side, the way games themselves are played and treated, and a window into how a career as an ESports athlete affects your life. If you take all that information, dig more into it, and decide you wish to pursue that career, then I wish you the best of luck! If you walk away wanting to stay as far away from ESports as possible, then that's also a valid outlook! All I wanted was to show people a little sliver of an industry still in its infancy. Thank you for reading!

Additional Content:

Alongside this written guide, I have created a series of short videos that go over much of the same information. For anyone who does not wish to read through this entire guide, they act as a less detailed yet more digestible version of the same topic. Each section's video will be linked in this section for you to watch:

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