

How to Start Your Esports Program



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 our partnership with 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.

Follow this step-by-step guide to get an esports program started at your school today!

- I. Sign up on PlayVS
- II. Get your Administration's Approval
- III. Connect with your IT Department
- IV. Determine your Program's Capacity
- VI. Build your Program

1. Sign up on PlayVS

The PlayVS team is comprised of former high school teachers, administrators, and IT directors who can help answer any questions you may have regarding esports. Whether you are starting a program from scratch, or have been playing for years, our team can help!

1. Visit PlayVS.com to create an account. No commitment necessary.
2. Provide a school email and contact information.
3. Schedule a call with a PlayVS representative. We recommend you invite key stakeholders to join the call: Administrators, Athletic Directors, and the IT Department.

2. Get Your Administration's Approval

Principals and Athletic Directors can help ensure that esports are recognized, funded and promoted on campus, along with other activities and sports.

Esports in Education

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

Esports Benefits

- Sense of Community
- Scholarship Opportunities
- Increase Achievement
- Character Development
- Embodies ISTE Standards
- STEM Engagement

Easy Implementation

PlayVS manages the schedules, displays team and player stats, and provides real-time support for coaches. Coaches can add and arrange players to build optimal lineups. Similar to traditional sports, PlayVS holds a Fall and Spring season during the school year, however each season will have its own league champion.

PlayVS League Overview

- PlayVS and NFHS support
- Fall and Spring seasons
- Weekly matches played after school
- Multiple teams per sport
- State rankings
- Single-elimination playoffs
- No travel - all matches are on campus
- **No additional equipment** - computer labs or libraries already have the equipment needed to participate

3. Connect with Your IT Department

Your IT department can verify which games can run on your school computers. Keep in mind that players can bring their own laptops from home as long as a reliable Internet connection is available. Give your IT department the PlayVS Hardware-Network Specifications and Game Download Instructions. Work with your IT department to complete the necessary requirements for successful game days.

1. Provide the school's IP public address to PlayVS in the settings section of your Coach Dashboard.
2. Unblock the games in the internet filter and firewall. Our whitelists are provided in our Hardware-Network Specifications.
3. Download and install games. Check out our Hardware-Network Specification list for necessary game and computer specs.
4. Account for weekly game updates throughout the season. Our Game Day Protocol recommends opening game clients at least one hour prior to match time to ensure the latest update gets installed.

PlayVS Tip: Give your season schedule to the IT department to ensure that network maintenance does not interfere with game days.

4. Determine Your Program's Capacity

With administrative and IT support, you can determine your program's capacity. There are three main factors that will help you start and scale your esports program: student preferences, IT capabilities, and coach availability.

1. *Number of students interested per sport.* Hold an interest meeting to determine how many teams you will be able to form and for which games. League of Legends and SMITE require 5 starting players. Rocket League requires a team of 3 starting players.
PlayVS Tip: Have a computer ready so students can quickly sign up on PlayVS.com.
2. *Number of computers that can run each game* (determined from your IT department). Keep in mind that you can have multiple teams within the same sport so the number of computers is your biggest limiting factor.
3. *Number of coaches and their availability.* Coaches must be present at all PlayVS matches, including rescheduled matches. Consider adding an assistant coach for additional teams and esports.

5. Build Your Program

Holding practices, events, and tryouts are good next steps for building your program. Some coaches use our Discord channel to organize scrimmage matches against other schools in their state or across the nation. Here are some other suggestions that may help build your program:

- Host tryouts to determine teams and student leaders.
- Start fundraising for new equipment or jerseys.
- Make announcements on social media and during morning announcements.
- Display flyers with game information.
- Invite and verify players and coaches on PlayVS.com.

PlayVS Tip: Some teams may travel to local game centers or colleges for their scheduled matches if needed. Confirm any off-site matches with a PlayVS League Official.

Take Your Program to the Next Level

Once started, there are many ways to continually grow your program. Contacting other stakeholders, schools, and media may help provide additional support for your teams. While playing and analyzing games, players can develop skills and camaraderie.

Chat with your administration and teams about opportunities to enhance your program.

- Contact local press about your new program with PlayVS.
- Encourage local and rival schools to build their own programs.
- Host mini tournaments (Also a great way to fundraise!).
- Analyze professional gameplay and matches.
- Pair new players with veteran players for mentorship.
- Scrimmage against other schools to practice different strategies.
- Provide an informational session or esports night for parents and the community to learn more. Check out our Parents Guide!
- Stay connected through our mailing list, Discord and socials for additional resources and webinars!