

CONTENTS

Your World

How You're Coping With Covid-19

Your Life

Tricky Social Media Dilemmas, Solved

Your Year

A Survival Guide to Back to School

Share This Now

Set a Goal for the New Year

Glossary

There are 16 tricky glossary words throughout this issue underlined in blue. Can you find them all? Go to [Scholastic Choices Online](#) for activities to help you master these words.

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Are E-Sports Real



Illustration by JAMES SHEPARD

Real Sports?

DEBATE



Online gaming is a growing industry, and some colleges offer scholarships to e-athletes. But should playing a game online be considered a sport? Two *Choices* advisers weigh in.

YES

“E-sports offer as many benefits as traditional sports.”

—Eleanor Livings,
a high school sophomore
in Delaware



NO

“E-sports are not physically demanding enough.”

—Zaid Fattah,
a high school senior
in California



Right at the beginning of my freshman year of high school, I broke my foot and had to miss my entire volleyball season. I was devastated by the injury, and, even worse for the team, I wasn't the only one sidelined. Throughout the season, my teammates got sick and injured, to the point that we rarely had a full team practice. These barriers highlight the limitations of traditional sports. E-sports, meanwhile, aren't as dependent on a player's →

I play basketball both online and in real life. The difference is, I can comfortably sit on my living room couch and play the basketball video game *NBA 2K20* for hours on end while barely breaking a sweat. On the other hand, I can't even last an hour on the basketball court without needing a water break. By the end of the game, my T-shirt is drenched in sweat, my arms feel heavier than the *Titanic*, and my legs are on the verge of collapsing. This is why I →

TEEN PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAMILIES

● DEBATE

YES (continued) condition, yet provide many of the same benefits as traditional sports. That's why they should be considered real sports.

I'm not the only one who recognizes e-sports' legitimacy. According to the gaming industry analytical firm Newzoo, e-sports is a \$1 billion global industry. Professional gamers compete for up to \$1 million in prize money. And more than 200 colleges offer e-sports scholarships. College e-athletes attend practices where they work on strategy and skills, just like traditional athletes.

Not only are e-sports legitimate sports, they also have advantages over traditional sports. Perhaps the most important benefit of e-sports is their accessibility. When I broke my foot, I was sidelined for just one season, but many people have disabilities and physical differences that prevent them from ever

"Perhaps the most important benefit of e-sports is their accessibility."

playing traditional sports. E-sports are more accessible than many other sports—there are even adaptations that let gamers use their voices to operate the controls. Opponents may claim that

e-sports don't provide the same physical workout as traditional sports. While it's true that playing *Fortnite* might not leave you as

sweaty as playing tennis, e-sports can improve your hand-eye coordination, focus, and cognitive abilities. Plus, e-sports athletes are much less likely to sustain debilitating injuries like concussions and broken bones than traditional athletes.

E-sports are much safer and more accessible than traditional sports yet still teach the importance of competition, collaboration, and strategy, which is why I believe they should be considered real sports.

NO (continued) believe that even though it's a fun hobby, playing video games is not a real sport. Pushing buttons on a controller is simply not physically demanding enough to meet the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of a sport: "an activity involving physical exertion and skill."

Not only are video games too sedentary to qualify as real sports, they also negatively affect the health of players. In a 2019 survey of e-sports athletes, the American Osteopathic Association found that 56 percent of the gamers who responded experienced eye fatigue, 42 percent reported back and neck pain, and 36 percent reported severe wrist pain. Even worse, almost half of the e-sport athletes surveyed got no physical activity in a given day.

While it's true that traditional athletes can sustain injuries while playing games like basketball, volleyball, and football, the health benefits of

"Only games requiring extreme physical exertion qualify as true sports."

traditional sports offset the risks.

These benefits include improved cardiovascular health, a reduced risk for diabetes, and greater joint flexibility. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that teens get an hour of physical activity daily. Playing any traditional

sport is a great way to meet this requirement.

Some video game connoisseurs might argue that gaming is a real sport because spectators watch you compete. But many games that can be watched by spectators are not sports. Competitive chess matches, for example, can be observed both online and in real life, but chess is a game, not an athletic event. Only games requiring extreme physical exertion qualify as true sports.

As both a gamer and traditional athlete, I'm interested in the future of e-sports. However, video games are not traditional sports and should not be held in the same regard as sports like football, baseball, and soccer.

HOW YOUR SPORT STACKS UP

Both e-sports and traditional sports like soccer offer physical and mental advantages to players. Here are a few benefits of each:

An E-sports Athlete Has:

IMPROVED MEMORY:

Studies have shown that playing 3-D video games can promote growth in the part of the brain that controls memory.

STRONG EYESIGHT:

Some games train the brain to process visual information faster and to distinguish between subtle variations in color.

HEIGHTENED HAND-EYE COORDINATION:

Performing different actions with each hand at the same time boosts coordination.

SHARP COGNITIVE SKILLS:

Gamers and soccer players both have to make snap decisions, which require cognitive flexibility.

ROBUST ENDURANCE:

Soccer players have the edge here, but e-athletes raise their heart rates repeatedly during hours-long matches.

A Soccer Player Has:

REFINED MOTOR SKILLS

Games like soccer develop players' leg and torso muscles, which are involved in big movements like kicking and running.

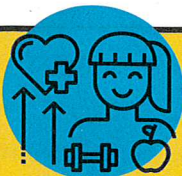
STRONG BONES

Repetitive movements like dribbling and passing the ball strengthen the skeleton.

EXCELLENT CONTROL AND BALANCE

Constantly shifting between walking, running, and sprinting with the ball improves players' balance.

Both Athletes Have



HEALTH HACKS FOR GAMERS

Follow these tips to make sure you don't crash before your avatar does.

SNACK TO SCORE: Keep your energy up with fruit and nuts—and don't forget to hydrate.

STRETCH TO STAY LOOSE: Rotate your shoulders 10 times, then touch your toes 10 times.

SLEEP TO RESET: Getting enough sleep gives your eye muscles a chance to relax.