

MINESKI NEWS

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**ESPORTS
AS SPORTS**

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Understanding Esports As Sports

The year 2019 marks esports debut as a medal event in the 30th Southeast Asian Games held in the Philippines. For the millions of esports fans around the world, this was momentous. But for many others, the idea of giving video games a near Olympics-level stage is still baffling.

For sure there is a generational divide between those

who have experienced the simple 2-dimensional video games of the past such as Super Mario and Pac-Man and modern gamers. The truth is that competitive video games these days may be much more sports-like than one might assume, and here are a few good reasons why:



4-DIMENSIONAL CHESS

In the game of chess (which is recognized by the Olympic committee **as a sport**, but not yet an Olympic sport), there are 6 different piece-types, 64 locations on a board, and only two players who take turns, yet supposedly there are already over **120 million possible board states** after just three turns.

Now imagine a chess game where there are 146 pieces each with multiple unique powers, a board allowing free movement with no grid (with forests, terrain differences, and other map objectives), and five players coordinating against an opposing five players. It even adds a 4th dimension: split-second decisions must be made in real time. That's League of Legends, currently **one of the most popular esports** in the world.

PROFESSIONAL LEAGUE OPERATION

If sports leagues have referee associations, esports titles have professional league marshals. To a casual observer, these uniformed arbiters may seem like they're just standing around in the player booths like esports bouncers. Actually, they are watching the players and the games with utmost focus.



If a tennis referee only has one ball they have to keep their eyes on, an esports marshal needs to watch multiple screens at the same time. And these league operations professionals are trained: they have to know how to play the games they're observing almost as much as the pro players themselves. On top of that, they stay up-to-date with all the possible signs of hacking and cheating. Remember, esports is not as simple to run as a sportsfest.

THE ESPORTS BROADCAST



Another unique thing about esports is that the broadcasting of esports is again even more complicated than a traditional sports broadcast. Apart from having your usual team of on-site cameramen, you also have in-game cameramen (usually called "observers") who choose which part of the huge in-game map should be shown on-screen. Production engineers have the added task of bouncing between in-game and out-of-game camera feeds, while also programming the various tooltips and overlays that appear on-screen to enhance the esports viewing experience.

Esports also has shoutcasters (sports announcers) who explain the game and excite the audience and whose incessant “shouting” is an integral part of the esports experience. As you can see, everybody involved in an esports event has to know the games inside and out.



THE PRO SCENE

And of course, just like in professional sports, the esports world has its own professional leagues. If basketball has the NBA Season and football has the FIFA World Cup, there is also the [Dota 2 Pro Circuit](#), the [League of Legends World Championships](#), and even the [EVO Championship Series](#) for fighting games.

These pro leagues have storied professional teams with legendary pro players, fresh-faced new player drafts, coaching and support staff, rivalries, rabid fanbases, iconic moments, and the esports equivalent of endless LeBron-vs-Jordan debates.



Esports is not just a Tetris contest with stage pyrotechnics. It is a living, breathing, ecosystem of players, fans, and organizers that have been taking these games seriously for years, well before esports became a global marketing phenomenon. So the next time you see a bunch of teens talking animatedly about esports, try to hear past the gaming terms unfamiliar to you and hear the passion of true sports fans who just happened to be born in a digital age.



THERE IS MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF “GAMER”

There are already a myriad of reports that both the gaming and esports industries **are growing** with the number of gamers in Southeast Asia alone numbering in the **200 million range** -- almost a third of the population! It is also easy to see why: high-speed internet is **faster and more accessible every year** and in most Southeast Asian countries there are even more **mobile subscriptions than people**.

One thing that gets lost in the excitement, however, is a deeper understanding of what this “gamer” audience actually looks like. There is definitely an opportunity to service and engage this highly passionate market through esports but homogenizing “gamers” into one marketing profile is an easy mistake to make.

As a company of gamers ourselves, we know that gamers are as psychographically varied as any other complex market. Here are some categories of gamers which we have identified over a decade and hundreds of esports events.

MOBILE CASUALS

The majority of people who register as “gamers” on reports making use of big data sets actually tend to be casual gamers. They are “casual” because they don’t necessarily identify themselves as gamers though they do still download some simple mobile games such as Candy Crush and Angry Birds. You might be surprised to find out that this audience is actually made up of **grandparents, parents, and children** who may not

necessarily be tech-savvy but still entertain themselves through their mobile devices.

Engaging this audience is difficult from an esports perspective but the important thing to remember is that this audience is not looking to compete or achieve through gaming. They simply want to be entertained, most likely with family-friendly activities.



TRIPLE-A HOBBYISTS

Now this is your stereotypical “gamer”. This type of gamer owns at least a desktop PC or a gaming console and likes to stay up-to-date on the latest triple-A releases. These gamers are playing the latest Call of Duty game and sharing E3 trailers on their Facebook walls.



Despite being a heavily engaged audience games-wise, many hobbyists may actually be unaware of esports, or have heard about it but don't really engage in competitive gaming. In a way, they're like people who regularly play basketball but don't necessarily watch the NBA. Luckily, because they already love gaming, it's not a huge leap for Hobbyists to fall in love with esports as well once they experience the unmatched thrill of a live event.

STREAM WATCHERS

It is impossible to finish 2019 without having at least once heard of [the rise of gaming streamers and gaming influencers](#). It can sometimes baffle non-gamers how people can sit for hours on end just to watch somebody else play a video game, but there is a lot of entertainment value in this sort of vicarious video gaming.



Streaming taps into a powerful need in the human psyche: to be a part of a community. Unlike playing video games alone in your bedroom, to watch somebody stream their gameplay is to watch alongside an audience of potentially thousands of other people. As this audience laughs at the same jokes, shares the same memes, and experiences the same stories, they're

bonded in a way that few other fanbases can match. In a way, it is like a thousand people getting to hang out every night with their favorite streamer. Obviously, the key to this audience is through their streamer of choice.

ESPORTS DREAMERS

Finally, we have our esports bread and butter: the dreamers. These gamers are as hardcore as they come, competing in qualifier tournaments if they can and cheering for the professionals if they can't. They follow esports just like sports fans would, with favorite teams and endless debates about the Greatest of All Time players.



The overlooked trait of esports dreamers is that they are further subdivided into which game they follow. Just like how a basketball fan is not necessarily a football fan, a League of Legends esports fan might not follow the Dota 2 competitive scene. It is important, then, to

know each game community's idiosyncrasies and what it takes to get their respect for a product. But once you have a dreamer's trust, they can become a brand's most passionate advocates.



THE FIRST RULE OF ESPORTS IS THE SPELLING

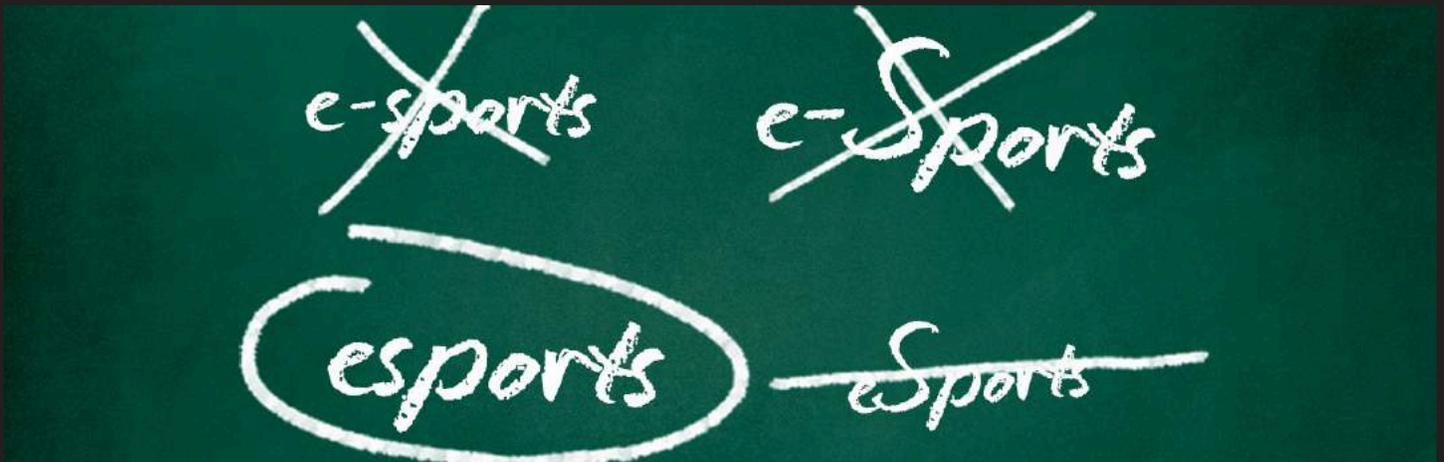
For those of us who have worked in the esports industry long enough, we have naturally developed a sort of advocacy with regard to the spelling of “esports”. Like a secret handshake of sorts, using the correct spelling -- no capitalization, no dash, spelled like a normal word -- lets endemic esports people know who are immersed in the industry already from those who might still need to be taught what “GG” means.

Note: “GG” means “good game”, and is used as a greeting, as congratulations, as a formal way to concede a match, or as trash talk, depending on the context.

HOW NOT TO SPELL ESPORTS

These are the most common mistakes when spelling esports: e-sports, eSports, or an egregious combination of the two, e-Sports. Many non-endemic agencies can be forgiven for using these spellings as these are how the word used to be spelled. For those who still use these spellings, we beseech you to resist the urge to use these outdated forms.

Apart from these misspellings, there is one more cardinal sin: calling esports “egames” or “e-games”. Just uttering this will make most esports professional visibly wince. On a more practical note, some countries like [the Philippines](#) use the term “egames” to refer to online gambling such as digital poker websites. This is, obviously, not the same thing as esports.



HOW TO SPELL ESPORTS

It is spelled like an ordinary word: esports. You can capitalize it at the start of a sentence or in a headline, and it has a singular and plural form.

The [Associated Press Style Guide](#) agrees with this form of the word, and in the absence of any other respected style guide declaring their official spelling of choice, there's no counterargument to this spelling. Dictionaries have also yet to make a formal call, defaulting passively to either "esports" or "e-sports" for the meantime by popular usage in lieu of an industry consensus (help us spread the word!).

WHY DOES THE SPELLING MATTER

For those who love the industry and would like to see it prosper, using a spelling of the word that is ordinary is one clear way to legitimize esports. Using "e-sports" has the feeling of keeping the phenomenon within the realm of novelty. It is technically a [grammatically correct](#) hyphenation of "electronic" and "sports", but just like how email can be spelled without the dash, removing the dash is a nod towards the word's ubiquity and common usage.

Using the "eSports" spelling is even worse, as the only grammatical precedent for this use is in branded proper nouns, and not real words. This spelling makes esports look like a gimmick rather than the legitimate pillar of modern digital entertainment that it has become.

Using the normalized "esports" spelling sends a subtle but powerful message: this is an industry, it is becoming mainstream, and it is becoming established in the English language. Most importantly, it tells everyone who is new to the industry that esports is here to stay.





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If you want to connect with us,
please send us an email at business@met.events

 [Mineski Esports PH](#)

 [Mineski Global](#)

 [\(02\) 8 361 1871](tel:(02)83611871)

9th Flr Santolan Town Plaza Bldg.,
276 Col Bonny Serrano Ave., San Juan, Metro Manila, Philippines