ORANGE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL ESPORTS LEAGUE

2017-18
CODE OF CONDUCT AND PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

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CODE OF CONDUCT

PREFACE

Esports encompass a thriving community, practiced by people in various situations and from different backgrounds. This provides great potential for esports to be inclusive. We strive to promote an inclusive community at the aggregate level, and solid leadership and gamesmanship at the individual level.

This document is a tool to ensure we realize that potential. Together, we can create an esports environment where people can feel welcome, meet, compete, and evolve. There are a variety of figures engaged in the community, including players and organizers (such as coaches and general managers). This code will focus on the role these figures place in the Orange County High School Esports League, hereinafter as OC League, and how it impacts the experience of those engaged in the community.

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

1.   WHO IS AN ESPORTS PLAYER?

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

2.   RULES FOR A BETTER SPORT

Esports should be an open and welcoming environment, where all parties involved feel safe, have fun, and develop their skills. To create such an environment, we need to take personal responsibility for how we behave toward our fellow players, tournament staff, and spectators. By following the rules set out below, we make the esports environment a place for everyone.

Note that these rules applies to outside matches as well, and is not limited to OC League tournaments.

3.   ETHICS FOR PLAYERS

Players include those who are on the active roster, and those who are associated with the team in other capacities. As a player adhering to the rules below, you ensure that your event promotes an open and welcoming esports environment.

3.1.   Player Code of Conduct

3.1.1.   Offensive expression. Avoid expressing ourselves in an offensive manner toward other players or their actions in the game, regardless of whether they are opponents or teammates.

3.1.2.   Offensive language. Avoid using language, nicknames or other expressions that insult another player's gender, gender identity, origin, physical ability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

3.1.3. **Team dynamic.** Always support our team, communicating positively and with respect.

3.1.4. **Violent language.** Avoid using language or actions that refer to sexual violence or other violence.

3.1.5. **Violent actions.** Avoid acting in a threatening or violent manner.

3.1.6. **Cheating.** Avoid cheating or hacking.

3.1.7. **Private information.** Avoid sharing our account information or any other private information that could put ourselves or our peers at risk.

3.1.8. **Harassment**. You may not harass other players, team members, or other associated parties.

3.1.9. **Sexual Harassment.** You may not sexually harass other players, team members or other associated parties. There is zero tolerance for any sexual threats or coercion or the promise of advantages in exchange for sexual favors.

3.1.10. **Discrimination and Denigration**. You may not offend the dignity or integrity of a country, private person, or group of people through contemptuous, discriminatory, or denigratory words or actions on account of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability status, gender identity, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, sexual orientation, or any other reason.

4.   ETHICS FOR ORGANIZERS

Organizers include both students and adults who hold roles in making decisions for and overseeing elements of the OC League. Organizers help participants make respectful decisions, which strengthen esports, events and competitions. As an organizer adhering to the rules below, you ensure that your event promotes an open and welcoming esports environment.

4.1.   Organizers Code of Conduct

4.1.1.   Player's Code of Conduct. Abide by all standards outlined in Section 3.1.

4.1.2.   Act accordingly. Have a plan of action to deal with situations that arise when someone breaches the contents of the Ethics for Players

4.1.2.1.   For assistance in creating an action plan, see the section "Tips for Organizers."

4.1.3.   Moderating. Moderate public channels, such as social media or forums, in conjunction with your events, and not allow offensive comments or exchanges.

4.1.4.   Safe Spaces. Work proactively to create a welcoming environment where everyone feels safe, regardless of gender, gender identity, origin, physical ability, sexual orientation, religion, or age.

4.1.5.   Offensive Summoner names. Ensure that the players taking part in a tournament are not using nicknames, team names, skins, or anything else that may be offensive.

4.1.6.   Offensive and violent language. Have a zero tolerance policy for language, actions and behaviors that include elements of violence, including sexual violence.

4.1.7.   Reporting. Encourage bystanders and spectator to immediately report any abuse they witness.

5. CONSEQUENCES FOR BREAKING THE CODE OF CONDUCT

5.1. Subjection to consequences. Any team member found to have violated or attempted to violate the Code of Conduct is subject to consequences. The nature and extent of the consequences shall be made in the sole discretion of the OC League officials. Execution or results of consequences must comply with the 2017-18 Orange County High School Esports League Tournament Rules.

5.2. **Options for consequences.** Failure to abide by the Code of Conduct may result in any of the following:

5.2.1. **Warnings.** Low severity or first-time offenses may be offered a written warning, along with supplemental opportunities for mediation.

5.2.1.1. **Additional warnings.** After a minimum of two written warnings, an OC League official reserves the right to impose more severe consequences, as seen in Section 5.1.2-6.

5.2.2. **Loss of side selection for current or future game.** In this case, the opposing team may be given the privilege of side selection.

5.2.3. **Immediate forfeit of game or match.** In this case, the tournament referee has the right to call for immediate forfeiture due to misconduct.

5.2.4. **Player suspension from the entire tournament.** In this case, a single player may be suspended, while the team may continue to compete with a replacement.

5.2.5. **Player suspension from tournament live events.** In this case, this bars a player from attending the live events in totality.

5.2.6. **Team disqualification.** In this case, if three or more players on a single team have violated the Code of Conduct, the entire team may be disqualified.

5.3. **Administering consequences.** The OC League officials will review any reports of misconduct at meetings scheduled at their own discretion.

5.3.1. **Protocol for administering consequences.** If a party is found guilty of misconduct, the protocol for administering consequences is followed as such:

5.3.1.1. **Email.** For written warnings, an email may be used to notify the guilty party. If the guilty party is under the age of 18, their parent must receive a copy of the email.

5.3.1.2. **Phone call or in-person.** For consequences in relation to Section 5.2.2-6, the OC League officials must speak with the guilty party via phone call or in-person. If the guilty party is under the age of 18, the parent, guardian, teacher or school administrator must be present.

5.3.2. **Right to publish.** The OC League officials reserve the right to publish or notify team members, including general managers, and the public on any consequences administered.

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

This section is intended to complement the rules in the 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 to be a list of exhaustive requirements that you must meet, but rather a means to develop your role in esports.

A. TIPS FOR BECOMING 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.

In addition to 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.

I. **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 manner both online and offline, based on how you would behave if you met them in an everyday situation, even when playing/talking/chatting online.

II. **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.

III. **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.

IV. **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.

V. **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 show that players with constructive attitudes during difficult moments in the matches win 10% more than the average!

VI. **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.

VII. **Influence others**

Spectators and players that see you behave well toward 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.

VIII. **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.

IX. **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.

B. TIPS FOR BECOMING A BETTER ORGANIZER

Here are some practical tips on how you as an event organizer can use the contents of this document. 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.

I. **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.

II. **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.

When the players 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.

III.   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 name) to participate in your tournaments. Here, the players will most likely feel that it is important to carefully read and comply with the rules, and make easier to follow up on the player's' 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.

IV.   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. Again, the benefits of engaging students to help shape the rules and consequences are invaluable.

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.

   i.   A simple example of how you can establish a plan of action is to start from these three headings:

   1. **Risk assessment**
      a)   What risks do you see for your event - what can happen? What would those events lead to?

   2. **Measures**
      a)   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?

3. **Goals**
   a) What is the goal of your action plan? How do you want the participants and the outside world to perceive your event? What are the anticipated benefits to students?

4. **Openness creates trust**
   a) When situations occur that you as an organizer have to deal with, it may be tempting to make 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.

However, 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.

V.   Working toward 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.

VI.   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 will feel safe.

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. 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.

VII.   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 toward aspects that can make a real difference.

VIII.   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 underrepresented 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.

IX.   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.

X.   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.

XI.   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, etc.) Inform participants about how you expect them to behave. Also, ensure that your team communicates the same message and does 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 they are important. By being clear and consistent, you will create a 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.

XII.   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.

XIII.   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, a new keyboard or a hard drive, for example.

XIV.   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 organization.

XV.   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.

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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.

XVI.   Consequences

Refer to Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for a list of recommended consequences when a participant fails to abide by the standards your team has decided upon. 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.

C. TIPS FOR PARENTS

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 $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 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:

I.   Ask questions

As a parent, it can sometimes be difficult to come across as vulnerable or lacking in knowledge. 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!

II.   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.

III.   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 mealtimes. 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.

IV.   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 into 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.

V.   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.

VI.   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!

VII.   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.