

Playing computer games is fun. It's also a serious business with competitions, champions, fans and big money prizes. Read all about esports!

Last summer over 12,000 fans were at Wembley Arena in London, shouting and cheering. Thousands more were watching online. But this wasn't a football, basketball or tennis match. It was esports, or competitive computer gaming. The prize money for the winners: £3 million.

Millions of people in the UK play games for fun. Some of them have become professional gamers, playing games as their full-time job. Did you know that football teams such as West Ham and Manchester City employ esports players? They send them around the world to compete in football video game competitions. It's not easy being a professional gamer, though. They practise for ten or more hours a day, five or six days a week. They do exercises like typing something and trying to type it faster and faster. They also study videos of other players and plan ways to beat them.

As well as playing games, many people like watching them too. You can watch games on video sites like Twitch and YouTube and in the UK there's a TV channel showing esports 24 hours a day. They can be exciting to watch: just like other sports, there are close games, last-minute victories and amazing performances. Sometimes online viewers can interact with the game. For example, some games rename characters in the game with the names of online viewers!

But are esports really sports? Are players athletes? Some say no. Esports players don't need to run, jump, throw or do big physical actions. At the moment, the UK government classifies esports as kinds of games, not as sports.

But others say yes: esports are sports. Players do need some physical skills, especially hand–eye coordination, reflexes, accuracy and timing. If darts, snooker and shooting are classified as sports, then perhaps esports should be too. In fact, the governments of China and South Korea do classify esports as sports, and they will be an official medal sport in the Asian Games starting from 2022. Next step: the Olympics?

For many esports fans and players, though, the most important thing is that esports are growing in popularity and importance. If esports are not as important as sports at the moment, they definitely will be in the near future.