

Apex students

Previous compulsory steps / Prior students' knowledge	None
Learning objectives	Teamwork and communication under pressure. Fast decision making.
Subjects	None in particular, this sequence is focused on skills.
Recommended Age	All
Material needed	Light gaming PCs and/or consoles, smartphones
Sequence duration	2 - 3 hours
Individual or group activity	Group activity
Skills developed	Collaboration & teamwork, communication, problem-solving, planning
Price range of the game	0€, beware of in-game purchases
Similar games to use with the approach of the sequence	PUBG, Fortnite
Tips for shorter duration	To make this sequence shorter, there is not a lot to do except cut some play time and have a shorter discussion/debrief. You can ask your students to do the tutorial of the game at home if possible before coming to class. You can then have a 35 minutes gaming session in the classroom followed by 20 minutes of debriefing. You will encounter fewer in-game situations but will have hopefully enough to discuss during debrief.

Tips to make the sequences more accessible or inclusive

If your students struggle with computer and first-person shooter controls, have them use the mobile version if possible. The game is not available in Greek. There is not much scenario and text to read, but you should explain the basics to your students (controls, game elements, goal) if they can't understand by themselves using the game text and audio.

The game provides a lot of accessibility features, like a colourblind mode or controls remapping. You can find them [here](#).



Step by step: how to implement the sequence



Figure 1: Communication shortcuts in Apex Legends (source: <https://levelskip.com/first-person-shooters/Apex-Legends-Ping-Guide>)

In this sequence, your students will play the game Apex: Legends. It is a battle-royale game: players are thrown onto a map of reducing size. They must find equipment and weapons on the spot and battle until they are the last survivor. The slightly different approach of Apex: Legend is that it is **a team of players** that must survive, instead of a single winner. Teamwork and communication are at the core of the gameplay since your entire team needs to be efficient, not only you.

Requirements

The game is well optimized, but a decent graphics card and RAM are required. You can check if the hardware at your disposal is able to run the game using this [website](#). Know that the game lets players play together independently of the platforms, whether it is PC, PS4/5, XBOX or switch. So, if your students have gaming consoles at home, you can use the hardware they already have instead of using the computers of your institution. But you can mix both! [Here](#) is the official documentation on how to play with other platforms.

At the time we are writing this sequence, the mobile version of the game is in closed beta. When the mobile version is out, it will make this sequence easier to use by lowering even more the hardware requirements.

Free-to-play

The game's business model is free-to-play. It is possible to play with a limited number of characters freely. However, these types of games put in place strategies to make players pay, usually for social assets (skins, poses, etc). If you are afraid of this aspect we invite you to warn your students of these strategies by using our pedagogical sequence: **“Analysis of the games-as-a-service business model through the lens of behavioural economics”**.

- **Step 1: Get acquainted with the game (30- 45 minutes)**

The game publisher has released [an official guide](#). Use it to acquaint your students with the game's concepts.

If there are experienced players among your students, let them explain the game in more detail.

Then, have your students go through the tutorial of the game. They will have to create an account and play the game's tutorial missions on the first launch. Only when these are completed, can the real game begin.

Private tournaments

You might want to have your students play only between themselves, instead of letting strangers join the game. This way you'll have more capacity to track what happened. The winners of the game will always be within your class. Plus, whenever something goes wrong for a team (bad strategy, mistake, etc), you'll have access to the point of view of the opponents that benefited from this mistake. It will make debriefs and discussions easier by using events shared between your students.

If you do so, ask your students if there are any skilled players of the game and try to balance teams' levels as best as possible.

Use [this video](#) to help you find this functionality.

There is also [the official documentation](#).

- **Step 2: Students play the game (1-2h)**

The game is the support for a discussion on team communication and emotion management.

After playing, the students will have to discuss what happened in the game in terms of teamwork, how they felt while playing and other things that require introspection or analysis. It can be very hard to do while playing a high stakes game.

You can have all the students play at once or have some of them observe the others. You can also ask players that were eliminated to observe and analyse the remaining teams and game events. Once defeated, a player can spectate the remaining players. Have students watch the game and the social interactions occurring in the classroom. The point is to be mindful of the way team members communicate and deal with frustration and strong emotions. It can also be interesting to note social interactions; is there taunting between teams? Anger or guilt between team members after a failed opportunity or a loss?

If playing remotely, you won't be able to observe this and will have to rely on personal observations from your students.

- **Step 3: Debrief and discussion (30 minutes)**

E-sport

Explain to your students that they performed a sports activity.

By definition, a sport is “all forms of competitive physical activity or games which, through casual or organized participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical ability and skills while providing enjoyment to participants”, according to the SportAccord International Convention.

Traditional and electronic sports share common values: team spirit and competition, respect and the idea of surpassing oneself.

Chess and bridge are officially recognised as sports, even though they do not require any physical effort. From this point of view, e-sport would therefore also deserve its place in the very closed circle of sporting activities.

E-sport champions are cognitive athletes. They need incredible APM (actions per minute), reflexes and decision-making capacities. A study published in Nature Scientific Reports (Gong et al., 2000) used brain scans to investigate expert gamers' minds. They found that expert gamers had enhanced connectivity and increased grey matter volume in attentional and sensorimotor regions of the brain and that greater gaming experience correlated with much stronger connections along key neural pathways. [Other research from the University of Utah](#) suggests that this kind of hyperconnectivity could help gamers think more efficiently.

What did your students practice?

- **Stress handling:** an Apex match can last 20 min to half an hour. Spending this amount of time while being focused and playing under pressure is draining. Each mistake can be fatal and everything the team has worked for is lost.
- **Fast-paced decision making:** situations where players spot an enemy or get caught under fire, require them to take rapid-fire strategic decisions: should we retreat? If so, where? Should we take the shot and be detected? They must read the environment and adapt to the situation quickly. It can be difficult on its own, but there, it must be done as a team!
- **Teamwork:** A team's success relies in part in how it manages different profiles. High-risk profiles will get opportunities but put the team in danger. Low-risk profiles will temporize, stabilize a situation, dodge ambushes. If you want to dive more in-depth into the psychological profiles of team members, talk about the [Belbin team roles](#) with your students
- **Efficient communication:** in a fast, action-packed situation: every word costs precious time. Each unnecessary word is noise to the decision-making. Team members must explain their actions/plans fast because taking too much time can be fatal. They also must be clear and concise. Bad explanations can lead to a bad move from a teammate. To dive deeper into the subject, you can use [this article on effective communication](#).
- **Dealing with frustration and strong emotions:** failing an opportunity, providing or receiving misleading information, and dealing with one's failure can lead to anger or frustration. [Here](#) are some resources to help you help your students deal with it.

Getting the game:

https://store.steampowered.com/app/1172470/Apex_Legends/

The online stores of each console (PlayStation store etc...)

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