

A Field Guide For Competitive Team Fortress 2

First and foremost, hi, happy to see you are interested in playing Team Fortress 2 competitively. Maybe you saw some clips on youtube, heard someone talk about it or noticed someone wearing a medal while playing casual and now want to know what this magical “competitive” is.

This guide is an introduction to competitive Team Fortress 2, mostly from a European standpoint. It aims to introduce you to where you can play and a primer on the community. Furthermore it provides an explanation of common terms that you can come back to.

Please note, that this guide does not teach you how to play the actual game. Only where to get resources, how to find your way into the competitive Team Fortress 2 community and put you on the right path going forward.

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Introduction

Competitive Team Fortress 2 in Europe is run by [ETF2L](#), the European Team Fortress 2 league, a community organization running different competitive [formats](#) voluntarily.

What Format To Pick

There are a few different formats you can pick from when playing in ETF2L. The most common and popular are [6s](#) and [Highlander](#).

6s is a 6 versus 6 format, played on [5cp](#) or [koth](#) maps. Individual skill and understanding of the format is very important and the key to improving. Coming from a casual background, this will be very new to you. There are specific maps made only for competitive, and their own custom ruleset as well.

Highlander is a 9 versus 9 format, played on [payload](#) or [koth](#) maps. Each class is represented once on a team, and some familiar maps from the casual pool are played here as well. Coming from casual, this might be more familiar to you. Team coordination is more important than individual skill.

6s experience and Highlander experience can be very different, but you are not stuck with playing only one of these two. Starting out though, it's recommended to stick to one format until you get a good grip.

Important to consider when picking a format is which class you want to play, because not every class is relevant across all formats.

What Class To Pick

Before you pick a class, you need to have picked a format first. Some classes may be restricted or aren't commonly played.

For 6s, the lineup is as follows:

- 2 scouts
- 2 soldiers
- 1 demoman
- 1 medic

Other classes, like sniper or spy, can be seen occasionally, but are outside of specific short term strategies considered too slow or not viable.

For Highlander, you are allowed/required to play one of every class. If you already found a class in casual that you enjoy, you might want give that one a try. Be aware though, that some classes play differently than in a pub environment, but these differences can be learned along the way.

How To Find A Team

There are multiple ways to find a [team](#), the most straightforward one is going on the [ETF2L recruitment board](#) and message some of the team leaders (under the "Teams" tab) on steam/discord or create one post yourself under the "players" tab.

An example post of a new player could look like this:
"Looking to get into competitive TF2! I have XXX hours and I'm free from YYY to ZZZ, preferably playing AAA (class) but might do BBB (another class potentially)"

Before doing so, you might want to understand the different [divisions](#) and their corresponding skilllevel first. If

you are starting out, you should look for "[open](#)", the entry division for new players.

To note is, that even if you feel like you are mechanically a very good player already, giving the lowest division a try first will give you a good introduction to how competitive Team Fortress 2 is being played, as many more skills than mechanics are required.

Other ways to find teams include dedicated "looking for player/team" discord channels, which can be found on [pickup](#) servers.

Where And How To Improve

With best practices, map strategies, and the meta game changing ever so often, this won't be covered in this guide.

There are various ways to learn how to play competitive Team Fortress 2. For example, on youtube you can find multiple videos explaining the gameplay loop and what to do. In addition, a [mentor](#) can help with understanding the basics and improving on them later on.

The rule of thumb is, when you play, you will get better no matter what. Joining [mixing servers](#) and playing [tf2center](#) is good practice while you are not on a team, [scrims](#) will provide greater value than these options though. But most importantly, have fun!

How To Find A Mentor

Getting a [mentor](#) can help you and your team improve and learn from the experience of others.

There are dedicated channels on the [ETF2L discord](#) server where you can look at people or post a request yourself.

If you can't find anything, don't worry. Simply look at high

[division](#) teams and begin messaging people that play the class you are looking for.

Keep in mind though that mentoring is done entirely voluntarily, so keep a polite tone and don't demand mentoring.

How To Play Right Now

If you are not on a [team](#), the best way to start out is to grab a friend to play [tf2center](#). Preferably that friend should have some experience playing competitive Team Fortress 2 (lower skill level might be of benefit here). If you cannot find someone, you can always ask on the [ETF2L discord](#) server.

How To Find A Scrim

Finding a [scrim](#) for your team is done via the dedicated channel on the [ETF2L discord](#) server. The common format used is "<[division](#)> <time in CET>".

Examples: open 20 - low 19/20 -

Once you find someone looking for the same, you can message them and you both decide what maps you want to play. You might also get asked to host a game, you can do so by using [serveme.tf](#) to get a free server.

Once you got the server, exchange the [connect](#) information and done.

It's worthwhile to have one person on your team who is aware how to host servers and load the correct map/[config](#).

How To Be A Mercenary

Once you feel comfortable enough with the basics, you might want to be a mercenary too, when you don't have a scrim. You can let people know you are available in the dedicated channel on the ETF2L discord server. The

format usually looks like this: "can <class> <[division](#)>
<[time](#)>"

Examples: can scout open 19/20 - can demo low 21 -

Common Questions

Is this like Valve Competitive?

No, not at all. There are very different rules enforced and different maps played altogether.

Do I need a microphone?

Yes, giving information to your teammates is essential when playing competitive Team Fortress 2. If you feel uncomfortable with doing so, don't worry, there are very nice people in this community.

Do I need a good PC?

No, using tools like [masterconfig](#), even very low end PCs are able to play competitive.

Is there an hours requirement?

Technically, no there isn't. Practically, if you haven't played many FPS games, it will be hard to ...

Will I need to pay money to play?

No, playing in ETF2L is completely free, as opposed to other leagues like RGL, where in higher divisions, you will need to pay money.

Do I need specific TF2 items?

That can depend on what class you play. But if you run into some unlockable weapons you need, they can be bought for a few cents, or someone ask someone on your team if they can gift you some missing ones.

How do I get help from an ETF2L Admin?

By going onto the [ETF2L discord](#) and messaging the bot on there with whatever questions you got, Please don't message admins directly. Be aware that admins work voluntarily and might take some time to respond, so be patient.

I have technical difficulties, what can I do?

Either you message the [ETF2L admins](#), they can help you with issues regarding the league, or you go to the [masterconfig](#) discord server, there you can find many people that can assist you with issues regarding Team Fortress 2.

I have a question that's not covered in this guide, what do I do?

A good first start is the [ETF2L FAQ](#), if this still doesn't answer your question, feel free to ask in the general [ETF2L discord](#) chat or open an [admin ticket](#).

Where can I see when the next season starts?

The [ETF2L news page](#) announces each [season](#) and their dates. There will also be announcements regarding anything concerning [ETF2L](#) as a whole, it's worth it to check in once in a while to see if anything happened.

What maps are being played?

A list of competitive maps can be found at [comp.tf](#). (Note, some maps might be missing, to be really sure what maps are being played, check out the [ETF2L announcement page](#))

Maps frequently get updated and thereby change the versioning in their name. Be sure to always use the newest maps, as they will be played in the [season](#).

Not all maps are in each season, this is called [rotation](#).

For example, in one season they rotated out cp_process, in the next one, they rotated out cp_snakewater.

How can I create my own ETF2L team?

Using the “team admin” tab on the [ETF2L website](#), you can create new teams, set a name, picture and description.

How can I add someone to my ETF2L team?

Using the “team admin” tab on the [ETF2L website](#), you can send invites to [team](#) members. Once they accept, they will be listed on the team page.

After 24h, they will also be verified and allowed to play [official](#) games as usual. Be aware that you are only allowed to be [rostered](#) on one team per [format](#).

Are there rewards for playing a season?

Yes, for playing a [season](#), you will be awarded a [medal](#), an in-game item you can equip. Medals are distributed by [admins](#) in bulk and might take quite a bit of time (usually around 6-12 months) until they are handed out.

Manners

Timezones

In ETF2L, CET (or UTC+1) is the norm when talking about time.

This makes it easier for everyone to organize [scrims](#), when to be in the voice chat, etc.

Be aware of CEST as well. During summertime, 1 hour is added, this is the daylight saving time for some countries and is also used for ETF2L.

Scrim Times

It's collectively agreed that scrims are being played at 19, 20 and 21.

Many people playing competitive work or go to school and get home late. Of course you can play games at other times, but these usually will only be [mixes](#).

Bans

In [ETF2L](#), [admins](#) will issue bans for racism, homophobia, harassment, cheating and so on even outside of official games. Specific rules can be found under the [ETF2L rules](#) page.

Behaviour towards admins and mentors

Be aware that both [league admins](#) and [mentors](#) are doing their respective work voluntarily and don't owe you anything. Give them the time they might need and be patient and respectful.

Useful Links

- callout.tf
... for a list of [callouts](#).
- trends.tf
... shows a players total stats.
- demos.tf
... for downloading [demo files](#).
- logs.tf
... for [logs](#) of specific games.
- more.tf
... for a more modern trends.tf experience.
- [ETF2L discord server](#)
... for getting [scrims](#), [mercenaries](#), [mentors](#) and [admin](#) help.
- teamfortress.tv
... for all sorts of threads concerning competitive Team Fortress 2.
- [ETF2L rules](#)
... important to read to understand how to play
- [ETF2L website](#).
... for [recruitment posts](#), [team](#) management and signing up for a [season](#).
- [ETF2L FAQ](#).
... for any further questions not covered by this guide.
- passtime.tf
... for information about the [pastime](#) format.

- [tempus network](#)
... for improving your jumping skills on soldier or demoman on specialized maps.
- [jumpacademy.tf](#)
... an alternative to the tempus network
- [mastercomfig](#)
... for optimizing your game
- [comp.tf](#)
... for general competitive information and guides.
- [tf2center](#)
... for quickly playing competitive without voice channels.

Terminology

To understand the competitive scene, we need to understand the language used. Here is a list of common phrases and words with their explanation, you can use this like a dictionary. You don't need to remember all of these straight away, over time you will get used to them. For now, if you are unsure, you can look them up here. These are in no particular order, if you read the guide so far, you should have seen the most important ones already.

ETF2L

The "European Team Fortress 2 League". A community run organization to provide a place to play competitive Team Fortress 2 in europe.

ETF2L Admin

Someone helping to run and moderate [ETF2L](#).

Roster

The main and [substitute](#) players of a team. You will find them on the team page listed.

Roster Rider

Someone on the team page who is neither a main nor [substitute](#) player. Usually to also get the participation [medals](#) at the end of the [season](#).

Medal

In-game item reward for participating in an [ETF2L](#) competition.

Special medals are handed out for first-, second-, third place and [playoffs](#).

Clan

Old term for [team](#).

Scrim

Practice game between two [teams](#).

Team

Either a registered team on [ETF2L](#) or simply enough players to fill RED/BLU team.

A player is only able to join one ETF2L team at a time, and only switch twice during a season.

Mainclass

The primary class of a player, usually what they are most comfortable/skilled with.

Offclass

Either the class of a player that's not their [mainclass](#), or classes that are usually not in the current [game format](#) meta.

Game Format

A certain ruleset you play with. This can restrict classes, unlocks and provide specific maps.

Mainly [6s](#) or [Highlander](#). Some other, less popular/regular formats include [Ultiduo](#), [Ultitrio](#), [BBall](#), [Prolander](#), [4s](#), [MGE](#), [Passtime](#).

Mercenary

In case one of your main players cannot attend a game, and a [substitute](#) can't either, you can get a mercenary from the [ETF2L](#) discord as a replacement.

Being a mercenary in an [official](#) game might require the enemy [team](#) to approve you first.

Only "[Default Mercs](#)" don't have to be approved.

Ringer

Same as a [mercenary](#) but in [RGL](#).

Comms

The Discord/[Mumble](#)/... call you are in with the rest of your [team](#).

Callout

Information about opponents, über, damage and positioning in your [comms](#). A list of map callouts can be found at [callouts.tf](#).

Season

The time in which [official](#) games happen. During a season, [teams](#) get points in [matches](#). For each map won, they gain 3 points. [Golden caps](#) and [golden mids](#) give the losing team one and the winners two points. The top teams with the most points in their [division](#) get into the [playoffs](#) matches.

Offseason

The time between [seasons](#).

Playoffs

The top [teams](#) in a [season](#) get into the finals of their [division](#).

Match

A game of 2 maps. During [playoffs](#), there will be 3 maps.

Official

An official game in [ETF2L](#). This will show up on your profile. This is what you and your [team](#) are training for with [scrims](#), [demo reviews](#) and [maptalks](#).

Rollout

The process of meeting the enemy team on a map as fast as possible. On [5cp](#) that's the middle control point, on [koth](#) the only control point.

Coordinate with your [team](#) to be as fast as possible to get good positioning.

5CP

One of the 2 game modes of [6s](#). There are 5 control points., cap all of them to win.

This mode also gets played in [4s](#) or [Prolander](#) sometimes, in some variation (2cp, 3cp).

KOTH

Short for king of the hill. There is one central control point that you need to have capped for a certain amount of time. This mode gets played both in [6s](#) and [Highlander](#), but is also mainly used in [Ultiduo](#), [Ultitrio](#) and [4s](#).

Payload

In payload you need to push a cart as far as possible while the other [team](#) tries to stop you from doing so. After some time passes, the sides switch, and the now pushing team needs to push further than the previous one to win. This mode gets played mainly in [Highlander](#).

Mentor

A more skilled/experienced player who teaches you or your [team](#) strategies, how to fix mistakes and how to improve using [maptalks](#) and [demo reviews](#).

Maptalk

You with your [team](#) or a [mentor](#) going over the details of a map. Discussing strategies, counter measures, positioning, [rollouts](#) and [callouts](#).

Demo Review

You with your [team](#) looking at one of your own, or a higher skilled players demo to gather information, insight and strategies to incorporate into your own gameplay. Sometimes teams also review their upcoming opponents to find weaknesses. Demo files can be found on your local machine or at [demos.tf](#).

Demo

A demo file is a replay of a game someone played. You can later on look at the demo afterwards using the demoui command in your console.

There are server demos, showing every player, these can be found on [demos.tf](#). There are also POV (Point of View) demos, which only show one player, these can be found on your local machine.

demos.tf

On this website, [serveme.tf](#) servers will upload the corresponding [demo](#) files after you finish a game. There you can look at the stats and download them.

Logs

A log is the collection of stats of all players after a game. Like kills, deaths, assists, healing, and so on. These can be a good way to see your improvement and what you might be lacking, but be aware that there is more to Team Fortress 2 than pure stats. These will be uploaded onto [logs.tf](#) automatically when using [serveme.tf](#). You can look at them after a map in-game when typing !logs in chat.

logs.tf

After finishing a map, [serveme.tf](#) servers will automatically upload the [logs](#) onto here.

trends.tf

On here you can look at a lot of general stats of players. Like total playtime, average accuracy and so on.

Substitute

A player that is on a [team](#), but not on a main spot. This player will jump in in case one of the main players is unable to attend a game.

Division

[Teams](#) during [seasons](#) get divided into divisions, based on their skill level.

The [ETF2L](#) divisions are:

- [Open](#)
- [Low](#)
- Mid ([division 4](#)/[division 3](#))
- [Division 2](#)
- [Division 1](#)
- [Premiership](#)

Even with lots of experience in casual or Valve Competitive, it's advised to start in open due to community competitive being very different to what valve gave you.

Freshmeat

Freshmeat is a special event for players that have absolutely no experience in competitive Team Fortress 2 whatsoever, to give them an easy entry. [ETF2L](#) sometimes hosts special cups where freshmeat players can play. The medic class might be filled with an experienced player though, to give advice and coaching to a team. That's called a [buddy](#).

Buddy

A buddy is a experienced player filling the medic role in a [freshmeat](#) cup for a team to help them get into competitive Team Fortress 2.

Division Open

The 6th [division](#) of [ETF2L](#). The starting point for most players that didn't play a [freshmeat](#) cup.

Division Low

The 5th [division](#) of [ETF2L](#). For people that already have a good grip on how competitive Team Fortress 2 works.

Division Mid

This [division](#) is split into [division 4](#) and [division 3](#) at times.

Division 4

The 4th [division](#) of [ETF2L](#). Together with [division 3](#) this forms [mid](#).

Division 3

The 3rd [division](#) of [ETF2L](#). Together with [division 4](#) this forms [mid](#).

Division high

This [division](#) is split into [division 2](#) and [division 1](#) usually.

Division 2

The 2nd [division](#) of [ETF2L](#). Together with [division 1](#) this forms [high](#).

Division 1

The 2nd [division](#) of [ETF2L](#). Together with [division 2](#) this forms [high](#).

Division Premiership

The highest [division](#) of [ETF2L](#). Here only the best players compete.

Mumble

A popular alternative to discord. Mainly used in [pickups](#) or other websites.

Serveme

[serveme.tf](#) is the most common way to get a Team Fortress 2 server and get a [connect](#). Be sure to select the right [config](#) when hosting.

Connect

This refers to the connect command in Team Fortress 2. When hosting a server, all players will need the connect info to join, that being the address and port. [serveme.tf](#) lets you easily copy that from their website once you host a server.

Whitelist

[ETF2L](#) has it's own item and cosmetic banlist which needs to be considered when playing [officials](#) and [scrims](#). You can find the most up to date version on [whitelist.tf](#).

Highlander

One of the two major [game formats](#) of [ETF2L](#). The format is 9v9, with each class limited to 1.

The game modes played are either [payload](#) or [koth](#).

Usually it's regarded to be a more chilled and laid back format, due to having more players and individual errors not being too impactful.

6s

One of the two major [game formats](#) of [ETF2L](#). The format is 6v6 players.

The game modes played are either [5cp](#) or [koth](#).

Often 6s is regarded to be the more “tryhard” format, due to individual error being very impactful.

Ultiduo

Ultiduo is a medic and a soldier pair fighting another one. The game mode played is [koth](#).

Ultitrio

Ultitrio is a medic, scout and soldier fighting another trio. The game mode played is [koth](#).

BBall

BBall is a pair of soldiers fighting in a basketball kind of gamemode against another pair, where the intelligence has to be put into the enemies basketball hoop.

4s

A 4v4 format, where either a variant of [5cp](#) or [koth](#) is beingplayed.

Passtime

Simillar to the in-game mode, but it's played 4v4 on special dedicated servers and maps.

Prolander

A 7v7 format, where either a variant of [5cp](#) or [koth](#) is beingplayed.

Uberfest

One major Team Fortress 2 competitive LAN event, located in germany.

poLANd.tf

One major Team Fortress 2 competitive LAN event, located in poland. More information can be found at poland.tf.

Mix

A mix is players getting together to play competitive, even though they are not on an official [ETF2L](#) team. They play to improve and have fun.

DMix

A dmix (double mix) is a [mix](#) where enough players get together, to fill a whole server. Now either by randomness or by elected captains, teams get built to fight each other.

SMix

A smix (single mix) is a [mix](#) where enough players to fill one team get together, and then fight an actual [ETF2L team](#).

Pug

The same as a [mix](#), usually more organized.

Mix Server

A mix server is a discord server that hosts [dmixes](#) or [smixes](#). These servers are sometimes hard to find, but asking around in the [ETF2L](#) discord if anyone is aware of any and has an invite will get you soon into one.

Recruitment Post

A post on the [ETF2L's recruitment post board](#). Here players and [teams](#) can look for candidates and message them for potential trials.

Trial

A player playing [scrims](#) with a [team](#), without being that team's [roster](#). The goal is for the team to find a missing player to fill their roster. Trials are good to see if you are a good fit and whether you want to play there.

tf2center

A [website](#) where you can play quick games of competitive, without [comms](#) or having to join a discord. If you want to get better though, it's advised to play with a [team](#).

Soap DM (Deathmatch)

A plugin loaded in pregame and on some dedicated servers. Here you can practice your deathmatch skills against other players without long respawn timers and automatic balancing.

A list of EU DM servers can be found [here](#).

MGE

Here you can play 1v1 on specific maps, to get your mechanical skill up. Sometimes [ETF2L](#) even hosts MGE cups, where you need to fight your way to the top. Be aware though, that there is more to Team Fortress 2 than just pure mechanical skill.

To find MGE servers, simply open your server browser and type "mge" on the search bar.

Some [pickups](#) also host their own MGE servers.

essentials.tf

[Essentials.tf](#) streams many competitive [official](#) games on twitch.

Source TV

Source TV is a plugin that allows others to watch a game without having to join. This gets used when watching [official](#) games or for streamers.

RGL

The North American Team Fortress 2 league.

ozfortress

The Oceania's Premier Competitive Team Fortress 2 league.

Asia Fortress

The asian competitive Team Fortress 2 league.

Map Picks

In [official ETF2L matches](#), [teams](#) will need to pick/ban maps before they play. The process is explained [here](#).

Sandbagging

This refers to an experienced player not moving up the [divisions](#). This usually gets resolved by [ETF2L admins](#).

Insomnia LAN

In the past, big and impactful competitive LAN events.

Golden Cap

When the game timer runs out, and there is no specific winner yet, a new [config](#) gets loaded, and whoever captures the enemies last point first, wins. This only happens in [5cp](#).

Golden Mid

If even a [golden cap](#) ran out of time, yet another [config](#) is loaded, and whoever captures the middle point first, wins. This only happens in [5cp](#).

Server Config

Each format has it's own server config that must be loaded before you begin playing.

You either select the correct one on [serveme.tf](#) or manually type "!rcon exec <config>".

The important [ETF2L](#) official configs are:

- etf2l_6v6_5cp
... for [6s 5cp](#)
- etf2l_6v6_koth
... for [6s koth](#)
- etf2l_9v9_stopwatch
... for [Highlander payload](#)
- etf2l_9v9_koth
... for [Highlander koth](#)

Pickups

Many countries have their own website where you can play competitive Team Fortress 2 with random people. These use [mumble](#) and the european one can be found at [tf2pickup.eu](#). Usually these are slightly higher level, so starting out with pickups will lead to poor experiences.

Baiting

A player or [team](#) not showing up to a [scrim](#).

Map Rotation

Sometimes a map isn't played in a season, or even a new one gets added. This is done to spice things up such that they don't get boring.

Credits

This guide was written by [labricecat](#), with help from:
roooc - spelling/phrasing

For feedback message *labricecat* on discord.
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