

Chairmans Advice from Emma Christensen

The Objective:

Chairmans, as you should know, is an award given to teams for being emblematic of FIRST principles. These teams work hard to bring good to their communities and fellow teams, exemplifying the essence of gracious professionalism and coopertition. Your job is to present your team realistically and enthusiastically to the judges in a way which makes you stand out from the other teams.

Tips for the Writing Portion:

The writing portion is a large part of the application made up of short responses and longer essays. Here are tips for how to make these strong:

1. **Start early and edit a lot.** Have many people on the team look them over and provide ideas and insight.
2. **Understand your spin.** Spin is important. If you aren't strong in certain areas, you can always spin it to sound better.
3. **Stay realistic.** Although spin is valuable it is dangerous if overused. Be honest about your strengths and don't blow them out of proportion.
4. **NEVER directly imply that you are better than other teams.** This is neither graciously professional nor in the spirit of coopertition. FIRST would not be as big as it is today without every single FIRST team out there chipping in. Even your biggest rivals do important work.

Tips for the Presentation:

The presentation is the other major portion of chairmans, and you will be judged on it at all levels you compete at. Here are tips for having a unique and engaging presentation:

1. **Think engaging.** The judges will be seeing multiple presentations back to back on the day you present. You want to stand out. Whether you use a powerpoint or some other form of presenting, always make sure it is memorable in a good way.
2. **Not too slow, not too fast.** You want to provide the judges with the impression that you've done a lot, but if you try to shove too much into your time, nobody will remember anything. You can always bring up extra point in the Q&A session.
3. **Be confident.** You're proud of your team and what they've accomplished, let that show with good posture.
4. **Smiles and eye contact.** Both of these are very important and let you connect with your judges.
5. **Share the load.** In the Q&A session and while preparing for it, make sure you know your fellow presenters and the areas which they are strong talking about. If a question is asked, make sure you have a good idea about who should answer based on their expertise.
6. **Script, but not scripted.** I recommend writing a script to allow you to organize who shares what ideas and where each of those ideas fit in your presentation, but when it comes to actually presenting, what you share will be more powerful if it sounds as if you are speaking from the heart. Don't get too caught up in the exact words of the script.
7. **Practice.** This is a smart idea for anything, but it can be nerve-racking to be presenting to a panel of three judges. Make sure you could do the presentation in your sleep before you go in.

Tips for the Day:

The actual day of presentation can be difficult. You are swept up in the competition. You're being distracted and everyone seems confused about everything. Here are tips for managing it all:

1. **Sign up early.** Get to the pit admin early, and wait patiently for them to release the form for you to present.
2. **ALWAYS be kind to pit admin.** There may be confusion, but they're nice people and it isn't their fault. Be gracious. Word travels about rude teams.
3. **The first or the last.** You either want the first of the last presentation slot. Both of those are memorable. The middle tends to get lost.
4. **Practice first thing.** Always do a final practice 30min to an hour before you present to the judges. This allows it to be fresh in your mind.
5. **Meet your team well in advance.** Be ready to go with your team 10-15 minutes before the interview. Make sure all systems are running well. This gives you time for last-minute technical difficulties or nervous bathroom breaks.
6. **Go in optimistic.** You are going to do well no matter what. It doesn't matter if you win the award. Just applying is a huge deal.

Tips for the Non-Chairmans Team:

Your team members in charge of Chairmans are putting an incredible amount of time and effort into getting your team recognized as one of the best. Make sure they know you are thankful. Here are some tips for this:

1. **Always be willing to help.** Whether this is editing an essay here and there, providing anecdotes about your time on robotics, or staring in videos and pictures, always be willing to take a minute and help.
2. **If you have ideas, please share!** The power of teams is that there are many diverse ideas. If you have ideas early on make sure they are voiced.
3. **Constructive criticism.** If asked to give feedback on writing or presentations, make sure you give useful feedback. Never say something sucks, never decrease their confidence in the work as it will do nobody any good.
4. **Meet them after the presentation.** Nothing shows gratitude like meeting your chairmans team after they present. This is a clear indication that you are grateful for their work no matter whether you win the award or not. They deserve congratulations before the results are in.
5. **Thank them.** Thank them after the awards ceremony no matter what. Again, it doesn't matter whether you won the award as a team, they have still put hours of work into this project.