

Encouraging Team Unity in the New Season

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I have coached FIRST LEGO League for four years and also been a judge at local tournaments. I am a second year head coach and sponsor for my son's FTC team, #6041 Robot X Games. Here are some ideas we used in FLL as well as FTC.

Learning who is who. At the start of a new robotics season, your team might have new members. To encourage team members to build team bonds and unity, short ice-breaker games can help start your team off on the right foot. We always begin the season with everyone taking turns simply introducing themselves stating their name, age, and grade in our roundtable meeting. The next few meetings, we go around the table, but this time, say your neighbor's name, age, and grade. (If the

neighbor doesn't know, we encourage everyone to help them out, no awkward silences!)

Building trust. We also include fun, short games that have either a communication or STEM aspect to them, or both. For example, we play a "blindfold remote-control robot" game. We use an extra robot that is remote-controlled to throw a toy ball at a target, but the person with the remote-control is blindfolded (with welding goggles), and the team has to help guide their team mate verbally. Keep it fun and positive, no heckling!

Building team communication. Another game we use as an ice-breaker is the board game "HedBanz Act Up". It comes with headbands that use cards. The person with the card on their head does not know what their cards say, but everyone else can read the card. The team members have to help that person figure out what is on their card without using the words printed. This teaches the team to help each other out and communicate positively.

Building confidence. One other way to build confidence among members is take turns at these roundtable meetings to all read through the Rules Manuals together. Letting all team members have a turn reading aloud will build public speaking and presentation skills, and help everyone feel involved and learn together. (Coaches can highlight the important parts beforehand, but dedicate a good few meetings to really go through the rules together, maybe Robot one day, Project the next.)

Team building. Team building ideas are available online (including on EV3Lessons.com). You can use these to help the team get to know each other better while practicing Core Values.



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