

2014 FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®)

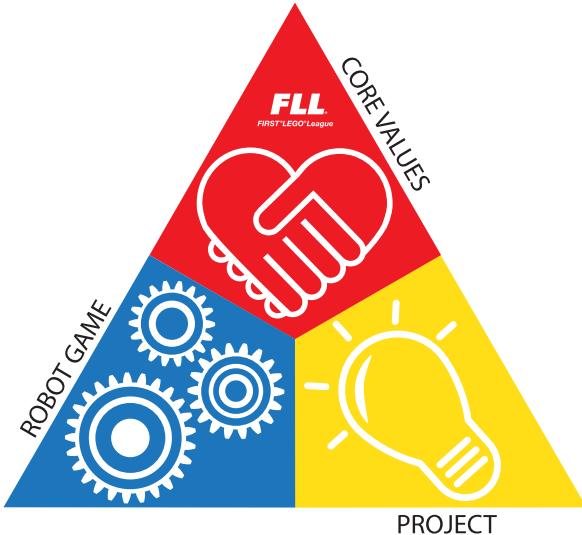
Coaches' Handbook



The **FIRST® LEGO® League Core Values** are the cornerstones of the FLL program. They are among the fundamental elements that distinguish FLL from other programs of its kind. By embracing the Core Values, participants learn that friendly competition and mutual gain are not separate goals, and that helping one another is the foundation of teamwork.

FIRST® LEGO® League Core Values:

- ▲ We are a team.
- ▲ We do the work to find solutions with guidance from our coaches and mentors.
- ▲ We know our coaches and mentors don't have all the answers; we learn together.
- ▲ We honor the spirit of friendly competition.
- ▲ What we discover is more important than what we win.
- ▲ We share our experiences with others.
- ▲ We display Gracious Professionalism® and Coopertition® in everything we do.
- ▲ We have FUN!



The Project and the Robot Game are what the students do. Core Values are how they do it.

FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®)

Coaches' Handbook



2014 FLL WORLD CLASS™ Challenge

10th Edition, 2014 printing

200 Bedford Street
Manchester, NH 03101, USA
<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

FLL is the result of an exciting alliance
between *FIRST*® and the LEGO Group.



2014 FIRST® LEGO® League Coaches' Handbook

10TH EDITION, 2014 PRINTING

FLL® is the result of an exciting alliance between FIRST® and the LEGO Group.

FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®)

200 Bedford Street
Manchester, NH 03101

<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

<http://www.usfirst.org/fll>

©2014 United States Foundation for Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) and the LEGO Group. All rights reserved.

Official FIRST LEGO League (FLL) teams and FLL Partners are permitted to make reproductions of this handbook for team and Partner use only. Any use, reproduction, or duplication of this manual for purposes other than directly by the FLL team or Partner as part of FLL participation is strictly prohibited without specific written permission from FIRST and the LEGO Group.

LEGO®, the LEGO® logo, MINDSTORMS® EV3, NXT, RCX, and ROBOLAB™ are registered trademarks and trademarks of the LEGO Group, used here with special permission.

FIRST®, the FIRST® logo, FIRST® Robotics Competition, FRC®, FIRST® Tech Challenge, FTC®, Gracious Professionalism®, and Coopertition® are registered trademarks of FIRST.

FIRST® LEGO® League, Junior FIRST® LEGO® League, FLL®, Jr.FLL®, FLL WORLD CLASS™, and the FLL WORLD CLASS™ logo are jointly held trademarks of FIRST and the LEGO Group.

LOGO USAGE

For team branding use, teams may design their T-shirts, hats, banners, and fliers around the FIRST or FLL logos. All teams and sponsors should consult the FIRST Branding & Design Standards and the Policy on the Use of FIRST Trademarks and Copyrighted Materials (including FIRST and the LEGO Group Intellectual Property) available on the FIRST website at <http://www.usfirst.org/brand>. The logos must remain unmodified and their use should promote FIRST LEGO League in a positive manner.

No teams or sponsors may use the FIRST or LEGO logos in any advertising (due to IRS rules). This means that the logos cannot be used to promote commercial goods or services for sale. The logos may, however, be used by teams to identify themselves as part of the FIRST non-profit mission.

Teams may receive and sponsors may contribute sponsorships (funding for which they are acknowledged but for which their products are not promoted). Under IRS 501(c)(3) rules, FIRST can acknowledge (thank) supporters, and with permission from FIRST, sponsors can use the FIRST name(s) to indicate that they support FIRST. No sponsor is allowed to use the FIRST name or logo without written permission from FIRST except as outlined in the Policy on the Use of FIRST Trademarks and Copyrighted Materials.

Table of Contents

Our Core Values	B
Coaches' Promise	i
Contacts	ii
1. What is This All About?	1
<i>New to FLL?</i>	2
<i>Coached before?</i>	3
<i>Cornerstones</i>	4
<i>Quick Start Guide</i>	7
2. Building a Team	10
<i>The Team's Foundation</i>	11
<i>Roles & Responsibilities</i>	16
<i>Top 10 Tips for Rookie Teams</i>	18
3. Start Your Season	20
<i>Groundwork</i>	21
<i>Early Season Meetings</i>	24
4. FLL® Core Values	26
<i>Prepare for a Tournament</i>	29
5. The Robot Game	31
<i>Robot Game Preparation</i>	33
<i>Robot Game Execution</i>	35
<i>Prepare for a Tournament</i>	35
<i>10 Robot Game Tips</i>	38

6. The Project	40
<i>Project Preparation</i>	42
<i>Project Steps</i>	43
<i>Prepare a Tournament Presentation</i>	46
<i>After Tournament Season</i>	48
7. FLL® Tournaments	49
<i>Event Types</i>	50
<i>Tournament Applications</i>	52
<i>Tournament Logistics</i>	53
<i>How the Day Works</i>	55
<i>Sample Tournament Schedule</i>	57
<i>Top 10 Tips for Tournaments</i>	60
<i>Sample Questions to Ask Your Tournament Organizer</i>	61
8. Judging and Awards	62
<i>Judging Roles</i>	63
<i>Judging Sessions</i>	64
<i>Judging Subjectivity</i>	68
<i>FLL Deliberations</i>	68
<i>FLL Awards Structure</i>	69
<i>Awards Eligibility</i>	70
9. Celebrate Your Season	73
<i>Celebrations</i>	74
<i>Extend Your Season</i>	76
<i>Pat Yourself on the Back</i>	76
A. Money Management	77
<i>Sample Budget</i>	80
B. Sample Schedule	82
C. New This Edition	88

FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®) Coaches' Promise

1. The children come first. My role as a Coach is to inspire my team and help them get excited about science, technology, and engineering. This means that I will step in to guide and support them when they need it, but I will make sure my team's robot, Project, and Core Values materials are the work of team members.
2. The children do the work. Adults may teach my team new skills, handle logistics for the team, ask questions to get team members thinking, and remind them of the FLL rules. Team members are the only ones who decide on strategy, build, program, research, choose a problem and innovative solution, and present at a tournament.
3. My team is:
 - ▲ comprised of 10 or fewer members and all team members participate on only 1 FLL team per season.
 - ▲ comprised of team members no older than the age limit in my region on January 1 of the Challenge year.
 - ▲ registered as an official FLL team.
4. FLL will communicate with my team via the primary email address I provided when I registered my team. I am responsible for reading and relaying all aspects of FLL guidelines and rules to my team, other Coaches, Volunteers, and parents.
5. I will encourage my team members, other Coaches, Volunteers, parents, and team supporters to develop and practice a set of FLL Core Values that reflects the *FIRST* goal to change culture in a positive way by inspiring others through our team's actions and words.



Team Registration Payments

FIRST FINANCE

Phone: 1-800-871-8326

Fax: (603) 206-2079

Email: ar@usfirst.org

Mail Checks & Purchase Orders to:

FIRST
Attn: Finance
200 Bedford Street
Manchester, NH 03101

LEGO Education Product

LEGO EDUCATION (U.S. TEAMS ONLY)

Phone: 1-800-362-4308

Fax: 1-888-534-6784

Email: support.education.us@lego.com

Mail Checks & Purchase Orders to:

LEGO Education
PO Box 1707
Pittsburg, KS 66762-1707 USA

SPECTRUM EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES LTD (CANADIAN TEAMS OUTSIDE QUEBEC)

Phone: 1-800-668-0600

Fax: 1-800-668-0602

Email: fllinfo@spectrumed.com

Address: SPECTRUM Educational Supplies Ltd.
150 Pony Drive
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 7B6 Canada

BRAULT & BOUTHILLIER (CANADIAN TEAMS IN QUEBEC)

Phone: 1-800-361-0378

Fax: 1-514-273-8627

or 1-514-273-9186

Address: Attn: Eric Patenaude
700 Avenue Beaumont
Montreal, Quebec H3N 1V5 Canada

Replacement LEGO Parts

Go to LEGO.com and click on Customer Service at the bottom of the screen.
Enter set number from the side of your robot set box or use set **45800** for the FLL Mission Model Set. Then select the pieces you need from the list on-screen.

Phone: 1-800-422-5346

Questions on the Challenge or Judging

FLL Robot Game Questions: fllrobotgame@usfirst.org

FLL Project Questions: fllprojects@usfirst.org

FLL Judging Questions: flljudge@usfirst.org

LEGO MINDSTORMS Help

Email: support@legoeducation.com

Phone: 1-866-349-LEGO or 1-866-349-5346

FLL Team Support

(General Questions, Registration and Tournaments)

FLL Team Support & General Information: 1-800-871-8326

Email: fllteams@usfirst.org

Websites: <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

<http://www.usfirst.org/fll>

Find your Local Contact by Country and Region

Website: <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

1

What is This All About?



1

What is This All About?

Coaches are a huge part of what makes FIRST® LEGO® League possible. Whether you are a teacher, parent, or Volunteer, you help us bring FLL® to your team. FLL would not exist without you. We just cannot say it enough – we think you are awesome!

We created this Coaches' Handbook as a guide to help you navigate the complete FLL season. From recruiting your team members all the way through celebrating at the end of your season, this book contains suggestions to help you along the way. We have collected tips from experienced Coaches, responded to common questions, and included insider advice from the people at FLL headquarters who write and produce the annual FLL Challenge materials.



New to FLL?

As a new Coach, we recommend that you at least scan all chapters of the Coaches' Handbook. Chapter 1 will give you an overview of the adventure you are about to begin, and the chapters that follow will give you more detail about what to expect at each step.

Coached before?

As an experienced Coach, you may not need to read the first few chapters in detail. However, we highly recommend that you take another look at [Chapters 4-8](#). Even after you have gone through 1 (or more) seasons, you may find some helpful new tips and ideas to incorporate this year.

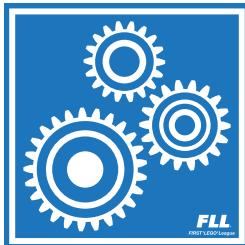
Remember though, this handbook is only a guide. One of our Core Values is “We know our Coaches and Mentors don’t have all the answers; we learn together.” Use the Coaches’ Handbook to help you guide your team, but also enjoy the experience of learning alongside the kids. Don’t forget, this is going to be fun!

With High 5’s and Admiration,

**FLL Headquarters Staff
Manchester, NH, USA**



CORE VALUES



ROBOT GAME



PROJECT

Cornerstones

At its basic level, *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) is a program of exploration for children age 9 to 16 (9 to 14 in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico), which is designed to get children excited about science and technology – and teach them valuable employment and life skills. FLL can be used in a classroom setting but is not solely designed for this purpose. Teams can also be associated with a pre-existing club or organization, or just be a group of friends who wish to do something awesome.

FLL Partners Make it Possible

FLL relies on great people to run the program at many levels, from managing a region to coaching an individual team. We call the leaders in each region the FLL Partners. They are a tremendous resource for you as a Coach, and FLL would not exist without them.

Our FLL Partners agree to maintain FLL standards for tournaments, the Challenge, and overall program administration. At the same time, the resources of each FLL Partner vary from region to region. Some FLL Partners are affiliated with major corporations or universities that support *FIRST* and FLL. Others are based in a non-profit that has a complementary mission to FLL, and some are individuals with a passion for our cause operating out of their homes. All Partners do their best to make sure FLL is a great experience for everyone involved.

FIND ONLINE

To locate your FLL Partner, please visit the FLL website at
<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

Your FLL Partner is an important resource for information about tournaments, potential training options, and other resources that may be available in your area. We highly recommend contacting them if you have any questions about your local FLL opportunities.

FLL Core Values

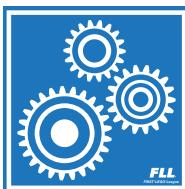


The **FLL Core Values**, found inside the cover of this book, are the cornerstones of the FLL program. They are among the fundamental elements that distinguish FLL from other programs. By embracing the Core Values, participants learn that friendly competition and mutual gain are not separate goals, and that helping each other is the foundation of teamwork. All FLL

participants, including Coaches, Mentors, Volunteers, team parents, and team members, are expected to uphold and display Core Values in all they do. Learn more in [Chapter 4](#).

The FLL Challenge

Each fall, we provide FLL teams around the world with an annual Challenge on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>. The Challenge is based on a set of real-world problems facing scientists and engineers today. Coaches and team members should read the Challenge together. The Challenge description is not a lesson plan; it is meant to be shared so that all team members and Coaches can learn together. The Challenge has 2 parts: the Robot Game and the Project.



ROBOT GAME
In the **Robot Game**, teams design, build, program, and test autonomous robots using LEGO® MINDSTORMS® technology. The robots are designed and programmed by team members to perform a series of tasks, or missions, during 2½ minute matches on a playing field which reflects the real-world theme for this season.

Learn more in [Chapter 5](#).

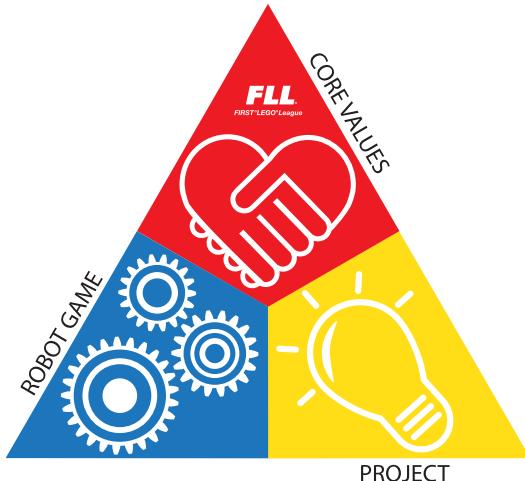


Autonomous means the robot moves and operates by itself. Your team will program the robot using a computer and then run the programs at the tournament.



PROJECT

In the **Project**, teams research a real-world problem in the field of this season's Challenge theme. Then they create an innovative solution to that problem (either by creating something that doesn't exist or building upon something that does). And finally, teams share their findings with others. Learn more in [Chapter 6](#).





The FLL Season

For roughly 8 to 10 fast-paced weeks, teams work as a group to overcome obstacles and meet challenges. Teams work to find creative solutions to the problems presented to them in the FLL Challenge. They then compete in optional local and regional tournaments where they celebrate their accomplishments with other FLL teams, family, and friends. Learn more about scheduling meetings in [Chapter 3](#).

The 2014 FLL Challenge

What is the future of learning? FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®) teams will find the answers. In the **2014 FLL WORLD CLASSSM Challenge**, over 230,000 children ages 9 to 16* from over 70 countries will redesign how we gather knowledge and skills in the 21st century.

Teams will teach adults about the ways that kids need and want to learn. Get ready for a whole new class—**FLL WORLD CLASSSM**.

The **2014 FLL WORLD CLASSSM Challenge** will be released **August 26, 2014**.

*9-14 IN THE US, CANADA, AND MEXICO

Quick Start Guide

Running an FLL team takes organization and planning, but it is also a lot of fun! Below we have provided checklists of essential tasks to help you prepare for the season. If you are new to FLL, you may want to focus only on these tasks. You can add more activities as you and your team gain experience.

Please keep in mind that these checklists are only intended as a starting point. Some processes may be slightly different in your region and there may be additional opportunities for your team. Check with your Partner if you have any questions.



FIND ONLINE

Learn more in the following chapters and at
<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

Pre-Season Preparation for the Coach

- Register your team with FIRST LEGO League (<https://my.usfirst.org/fll/tims/site.lasso> in U.S. and Canada).
- Pay your registration fee and order the materials you need. ([Chapter 3](#))
- FLL will usually contact you by email with important updates. Make sure you provide a valid email address when you register, and check that inbox often throughout the season.
- Read this Coaches' Handbook.
- Review the Coaches' Promise and Core Values. (Inside the front cover of this handbook)
- Plan adult supervision for all team meetings. ([Chapter 2](#))
- Decide how team members will be identified or selected. ([Chapter 2](#))
- Decide how you will distribute information to your team's members, parents, and Mentors. ([Chapter 2](#))
- Decide where and when your team will meet. ([Chapter 3](#))
- Identify at least 1 computer your team may use (must have internet access). ([Chapter 3](#))
- Find out about your region's tournament structure and event registration process. ([Chapter 7](#))

Before the Challenge is Released

- Create a meeting schedule and begin meeting with your team. ([Chapter 3](#) and [Appendix B](#))
- Calculate what expenses your team will have and consider how the team will pay those costs. ([Chapter 3](#) and [Appendix A](#))
- Review the Core Values, Gracious Professionalism®, and the Coaches' Promise with parents and team members. ([Chapter 2](#))
- Set up a practice competition area and storage for equipment between meetings. ([Chapter 3](#))
- Build an FLL table or just the borders. ([Chapter 5](#))
- Use the mission model building instructions on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to build the mission models. ([Chapter 5](#))
- Install robot programming software on the computer(s) your team will use. ([Chapter 5](#))

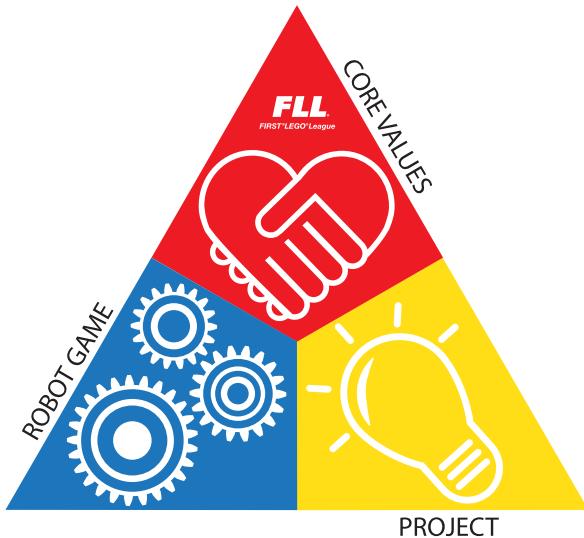
Completing the Challenge

- Discuss the FLL Core Values as a team (and keep discussing them at each meeting!). ([Chapter 4](#))
- Download the FLL Challenge from <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> and review it as a team.
- Have team members begin designing, building, and programming your team's robot. ([Chapter 5](#))
- Have team members begin researching for the Project and brainstorming ideas for innovative solutions. ([Chapter 6](#))
- Register for a tournament. Contact your FLL Partner if you are not sure how to apply for a tournament in your area. ([Chapter 7](#))
- Review the rubrics that will be used to judge your team at tournaments. Discuss them with your team. (<http://www.firstlegoleague.org> and [Chapter 8](#))
- Check your email regularly for communication from FLL.
- Assign a team member to check the Robot Game Updates, Project Updates and Judging FAQ frequently for any new information. (<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>)
- Practice, practice, practice!
- Prepare any documents required by your tournament organizers. ([Chapter 7](#))
- Make a plan to celebrate at the end of your season. ([Chapter 9](#))

Optional Tasks

If you have time, you may want to add these optional items to your checklist.

- Attend an event or Coach training before the season starts. Contact your FLL Partner to see what is available in your area.
- Complete several team building activities with your team. ([Chapter 3](#))
- Participate in instructional Coach Calls hosted by FIRST Senior Mentors. (<http://www.firstlegoleague.org> under Team Resources)
- View “A Team Guide to the FLL Project” on our YouTube channel for team-to-team tips on the Project. (youtube.com/fllglobal)
- Have your team build a practice robot and try some of the programming tutorials that come with your LEGO MINDSTORMS robot set or online. (<http://www.firstlegoleague.org> under Team Resources)
- Attend an unofficial event or practice scrimmage if available in your area. ([Chapter 7](#))



2

Building a Team





Building a Team

Coaching can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Our goal is for you to help your team members see the fun in science, technology, and engineering. Whether or not your team scores high marks at a competition, team members win just by participating.

If it is your rookie year, enjoy it for what it is: a learning experience. Your goal should be to simply experience *FIRST® LEGO® League* (FLL®) for the first time. With a fun experience and meeting realistic goals under your belt, you and the children will be brimming with ideas about what to do next year.

The Team's Foundation



2 to 10 Kids + 2 Adult Coaches = 1 FLL Team

At its most basic level, an FLL team consists of 2 to 10 team members and 2 adult coaches. That's it! We encourage you to recruit more help, but remember that you can always keep it simple if you need to.

The Team Members

Your FLL team may include up to 10 children, and all children must meet the age requirements in your region. In the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, team members may be ages 9 to 14. In other parts of the world, team members may



Do not worry if you are not an expert on some skill or aspect of the Challenge. You can work through it with your team. In fact, children love to solve problems that befuddle adults. Encourage them to find their own answers.

be ages 9 to 16. Check with your FLL Partner if you have any questions about the age requirements in your region.

To be eligible, a child must not exceed the maximum age on January 1 of the year the Challenge is released. For example, in the U.S. a student who turns 15 in May of 2014 would be eligible to compete in the Challenge release in the fall of 2014, whereas a child who turned 15 in December 2013 would not. Children can be members of only 1 FLL team per season.

COACH-TO-COACH

We had 22 children show up for the first FLL meeting. They all decided to register, and now we have 3 teams. As far as picking the best combination of children, sometimes your choice as a grownup will lead to a very flat team. Be sure to choose a team with a diverse range of skills, keeping in mind that children who are more challenging in the classroom will often shine on an FLL team because of the hands-on and self-directed nature of the activities.

Limiting your team to 10 members may be difficult, but it is important to be fair to everyone by limiting the number of children on your team. This kind of decision is often faced by coaches of other team sports. If you have more than 10 children interested in joining your FLL team, please consider registering a second team or use a selection process to decide who may participate on your team.

The Coach

As the Coach, your team needs you to give them guidance and provide structure, encouragement, and most of all, a fun experience. Lots of people make great Coaches: parents, teachers, engineers, college students, scout leaders, and more. You must be willing to meet with your team 1 to 3 times per week for about 8 to 10 weeks. You will need to acquire basic knowledge about the FLL Challenge, LEGO robots, programming, and research skills—or recruit others to help you with these tasks.

You are also responsible for guiding the team in developing its goals and timeline, as well as the planning and scheduling of meetings, visits, and trips. You are the liaison between team members, Mentors, parents, and Volunteers. It is important that you inform children and parents about what is expected of them in terms of their commitment to the team each step of the way.

TIP

Make sure you provide a valid email address when you register your team, because FLL will communicate important updates with you through email.

Coaches differ in how much instruction they give their teams. A successful FLL Coach controls the process, not the content. A rookie team might need help learning how to use the programming software, understanding engineering concepts, or learning how to do online research. You and other adults can help your team learn these skills or concepts as long as you do not tell the children how to solve the Challenge. You are a facilitator to help your team complete its work and improve the way it works together.

COACH-TO-COACH

Rookie Coach: *Our rookie team of 4th and 5th graders wants to cut some large wooden boards in order to build a model for the Project. I do not feel comfortable with the kids using power tools. If an adult cuts the boards but the kids assemble the model, is this a violation of the kids do all the work philosophy?*

Veteran Coach: *The kids keep all their fingers rule supersedes the kids do all the work rule. As a Coach, you are going to do some things for your team that they cannot or should not do for themselves (like writing checks for team expenses or driving to tournaments). Use your best judgment and weigh the value of your contribution to their effort. Cutting a few boards under the instructions of the team should be ok. It does not involve any important decisions. Building the prop yourself, probably not ok. Base your decisions on what provides the best learning experience for the team and you are unlikely to go wrong.*

Team members must make all decisions and do all the work on the Robot Game and Project.

Game and Project. This includes deciding on strategy, building, programming, researching, choosing a problem and innovative solution, and presenting at a tournament.

Does this mean you should stand idly by while your team struggles? Absolutely not! Instead of telling the team how to solve a problem, try asking questions like:

- ▲ “What would happen if...?”
- ▲ “And then...?”
- ▲ “How will that affect...?”

Children become problem solvers by finding solutions themselves! We understand that adults can be just as passionate about FLL as children, but adults must always remember that *the children come first*.



The Mentors

A Mentor is any person who works with the team in his or her area of expertise for at least one team meeting. Mentors help expose your team members to potential careers in addition to helping them learn the skills necessary to complete the FLL season. The most important quality for a Mentor is someone who enjoys working with young people and wants them to learn.



When recruiting Mentors, consider their ability to work with the FLL age group. They need to be role models and commit to the [FLL Core Values](#) and [Gracious Professionalism](#)[®]. Talk to them about:

- ▲ Adapting their knowledge to an appropriate level for the team members.
- ▲ The team's goals, the timeline, and structure of the meetings.
- ▲ Guiding the team to find the answers to their own questions.
- ▲ The importance of acknowledging all team members, getting everyone to contribute and participate, providing positive feedback, and encouraging responses.

You may want to consider recruiting someone like:

- ▲ **Engineer** – teaches skills the team can use to design their robot or complete the Project.
- ▲ **FIRST[®] Robotics Competition (FRC[®]) or FIRST[®] Tech Challenge (FTC[®]) team member** – helps the team work through a practice programming challenge, shares strategizing methods, serves as a possible youth role model.
- ▲ **Science Professional** – an expert in this year's Challenge theme, presents real examples of science in practice, advises the team on the Project, describes existing solutions, and recommends new sources of information for the team to explore.
- ▲ **Graphic Artist** – Provides advice on the team logo, T-shirts, and presentation material.
- ▲ **Programmer** – teaches the team about programming principles and helps the team troubleshoot programs.



REMINDER

Adults may teach your team members new skills and information or ask questions to get them thinking. However, the team's robot and project should be the work of team members. Inappropriate adult intervention could result in your team losing the opportunity to compete for awards at a tournament.

Potential sources for mentors might include:

- ▲ **Companies in your community.** Many companies encourage their employees to volunteer, and some even have formal programs to match volunteers with groups in the community.
- ▲ **Service-oriented organizations.** There are many social organizations with a focus on community service. You probably have some in your town (for example: Rotary Clubs or Senior Corps).
- ▲ **Parents and relatives** of your team members!

Parents and Guardians

Do not forget about parents and guardians of your team members. Their cooperation and support are invaluable. As a Coach, you can perform all of the planning tasks for your team, but sharing the workload will make your team more efficient, reduce stress, and increase team spirit among all adults involved.

Parents and Guardians may be able to assist your team by:

- ▲ Serving as a Mentor if they have relevant skills or experience.
- ▲ Planning and holding fundraisers.
- ▲ Leading team building activities.
- ▲ Planning field trips.
- ▲ Providing a place for your team to meet.
- ▲ Making travel arrangements.
- ▲ Or one of the most important tasks – planning snacks so your team never runs out of fuel!



You may want to hold a meeting for team parents at the start of the season to set expectations and recruit their help. Parents may provide valuable help, but remind them they need to let the kids make decisions and do the work themselves.

Time Commitment

Most FLL teams meet for about 8 to 10 weeks after the Challenge is announced. They may meet for as little as 1 hour or hold multiple meetings up to 10 hours a week. It is up to you and the team to decide what your meeting schedule should be. A rookie team has more to learn and typically needs to meet more often than a veteran team. Some meetings will run like clockwork and others will be more challenging. You should plan to have some of each.



If you are planning to attend an event or tournament, check the dates. Some occur as early as November and some are as late as March. The event date is your team's deadline, so work backwards to figure out when each task must be completed.

Create a reasonable schedule to start the season. We suggest starting with 2 meetings per week that are 2 hours long. You can add or subtract meetings if you need to. Research when your first tournament will take place, and plan backwards from that date. Don't forget to consider holidays and school events. You can refer to the sample schedule in [Appendix B](#) for an example of how a Coach could plan a team's 8 week season.

As the Coach, you may need additional time each week to prepare for team meetings. Spend this time coordinating help, maintaining equipment, communicating with your Mentors, sponsoring organization(s) and parents, purchasing supplies, and registering for competition.

Roles & Responsibilities

Child Safety

As the Coach, you are responsible for the safety of the children while they are in your care. Due to the age of FLL team members, Coaches, parents, and guardians are essential to team and child safety. Adults need to educate team members and each other on how to recognize situations that may put a child at risk, and take measures to ensure that adults who work with your team are reliable.



FLL is committed to creating a safe environment for everyone. You may be required to meet specific child safety requirements in your region. Pay attention to instructions provided on the website and by email.

The Team

Discuss team member responsibilities with the whole team. It is important for you to be specific when talking about each individual's role and responsibilities. Team members will usually have ideas about what they want to do, such as: programming, building, research, marketing, etc.



If your team chooses to attend a tournament, all team members are expected to participate in the judging sessions (Core Values, Robot Design, and Project) and be present for the Robot Game matches. They should know at least a little about all parts of your team's work.

Encourage team members to push the limits of their own comfort zones. Rotate roles so everyone has an opportunity to try different things. Children often discover that they enjoy a task they wouldn't have volunteered for on their own. This can also prevent boys and girls from falling into stereotypical gender roles.

Work together with your team to carefully consider how you want to divide responsibilities. What would happen if someone had to leave the team or was sick on the day of the tournament? Would someone else be able to step in? Be sure to think through how this decision will affect the team as the season develops.

Here are examples of the roles or sub-teams you may want to establish within your team:

- ▲ **Researching** – gather information about the Challenge theme, related real-world problems, and existing solutions. Invite professionals to share their knowledge with the team.
- ▲ **Community Sharing** – consider who in the community might be impacted by or interested in your team's problem and arrange to share your findings with them.
- ▲ **Presenting** – design a creative presentation to show the judges your team's work on the Project.
- ▲ **Strategy Analysis** – analyze the robot playing field and formulate various methods for accomplishing the missions. Lead the effort to establish a consensus on the final strategic plan and think about risks and rewards of different strategies.
- ▲ **Building** – make decisions about building and work to form consensus on the mechanical design of the robot among team members.
- ▲ **Programming** – make decisions about programming and form consensus on programming for the robot.
- ▲ **Project Management** – get everyone focused, make sure everyone's ideas are heard, find compromises, and keep everyone on schedule with a timeline.
- ▲ **Marketing** – design and create a team logo, T-shirt, or banner. Write a press release and contact the local media to increase public awareness of the team and how the team benefits from the FLL experience.

 **TIP**

Like other team activities, FLL has rules. As the coach, you can (and should!) remind your team about the rules when appropriate.

As long as you are not making decisions for the team or doing the work, keeping the team on track would not be considered adult interference. Find the basic Participation Rules on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

Top 10 Tips for Rookie Teams

From FLL Team The Inventioneers, NH, U.S.

1. Remember, you don't have to be an engineer to be a great FLL Coach.
2. Work with team members to come up with rules for your team at the first meeting.
A few examples:
 - ▲ Respect others' ideas.
 - ▲ Help others. If a team member is an expert in robot-building, she should be willing to help teach others this skill.
 - ▲ Identify ways to encourage each other.
 - ▲ It's everybody's job to make sure the whole team participates.
3. Let the kids and parents know that the kids do the work.
4. Practice asking questions to guide the kids to their own answers instead of telling them your ideas. Ask probing questions such as:
 - ▲ What's another way to do that?
 - ▲ Everyone watch the robot this time – what do you see?
 - ▲ How can you use sensors here?
 - ▲ Where can you find more feedback to increase reliability?
5. Don't try to do everything alone:
 - ▲ Contact veteran teams and Coaches for support and ideas. The Inventioneers are committed to providing training, Project feedback, and guidance to new teams.
 - ▲ Enlist parents as assistant Coaches.
 - ▲ Use websites like <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> and other Internet resources.
6. Figure out your funding:
 - ▲ Will you need to charge dues to cover startup costs?
 - ▲ Can the parents' employers provide funding for startup costs?
7. Get the team committed to a meeting schedule before the season starts.
Members who can't attend meetings make it hard for the whole team.

8. Make sure all parents have roles – even rotating ones (Assistant Coach, snack provider, fundraising lead, photographer) so that they become invested in the progress of your team.
9. Use good time management. Put tournaments on the calendar as soon as the dates are released. Keep the kids focused on how much time they have to accomplish tasks. This way, everything doesn't pile up just before the tournament.
10. **Keep it FUN!!!** This is the most important tip for all teams, rookie and veteran. The kids will learn to handle frustrations and deadlines better if the element of fun is in the mix. Coaches and parents will be less tempted to "help" too much if there is an atmosphere that emphasizes the joy of learning and exploring new ideas.



3

Start Your Season



3

Start Your Season

The FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®) Challenge is released to the public on the FLL® website (<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>) in early fall each year. Before the Challenge is released, there are a number of things we recommend both new and returning Coaches do to prepare for a successful season. You will need to judge how much you can accomplish in the time you have available though. Remember to set reasonable goals for your team and yourself.



ROOKIE TIP

Before the season starts, check out past Challenges on the FLL website to get an idea of what to expect:

<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

Groundwork

Choosing a Facility

When choosing a place for your team to meet, try to choose a facility that will provide the following:

- ▲ **Computer, either a Macintosh or PC.** You will use the computer for research, programming, and communication.
- ▲ **Internet access.** Your team will need to download the Challenge, access the FLL website, receive emails, research, and keep up to date on the Robot Game and Project Updates. However, many public buildings, such as schools and libraries, block internet sites like YouTube. FLL posts many videos and other resources online, so try to find a facility where you can access all FLL materials.



▲ **Enough room for your team to set up.**

Part of the Robot Game is a 4 x 8 foot mission mat which you will need to lay out on a level floor or table. Without the optional legs, the table is simply a 4 x 8 foot sheet of plywood with a 2 x 4 inch border around the perimeter of the plywood.



FIND ONLINE

For instructions on how to build a Robot Game table, visit the FLL website under Team Resources.

<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

▲ **A secure place to store team supplies and work** in progress between meetings.

If your team is school-based, the school itself is often an ideal meeting place. Schools can usually provide computers and space to set up your playing field. For teams not based in schools, you may meet in a private home, a meeting hall, or a company conference room. You may need special authorization to use some of these buildings after hours or on the weekend. Make sure you check on any restrictions before agreeing to meet there.



COACH-TO-COACH

We are lucky to have the school's science teacher as the club advisor. He allows us to store our supplies in his classroom. When we don't want to leave something in the classroom, we store materials in my car. We store everything except the Robot Game table in a large plastic bin for easy hauling.

Purchasing Your Materials

Your team will need certain required materials to participate in FLL. The process to obtain these materials may be different in some regions, so check with your Partner if you have any questions. In the U.S. and Canada, you can visit <https://my.usfirst.org/fll/tims/site.lasso> to register your team and purchase materials.

▲ **Team Registration** – Register your team first. This gives your team access to purchase the FLL exclusive materials you will need as well as team support services and resources like this handbook.

▲ **FLL Robot Set** – The FLL Robot Set is designed to provide your team with everything you need to build and program a working robot (plus a few extra features). It includes a LEGO® MINDSTORMS® set, programming software, a selection of LEGO elements, and helpful storage containers. Each team must have a LEGO MINDSTORMS set to participate in the Robot Game (EV3, NXT, or RCX), but you are not required to purchase the official FLL Robot Set. You may use your own LEGO MINDSTORMS set if you have one.

- ▲ **Field Setup Kit (FSK)** – All teams must have access to an official FLL Field Setup Kit. The FSK is the practice field for your team's robot. The FSK contains an exclusive set of LEGO elements to build your mission models, a mat to put your mission models on, and a sheet of 3M Dual Lock fasteners to attach your models to the mat. You will need a new FSK for each Challenge year. Read more about what to do with the FSK in [Chapter 5](#).
- ▲ **Robot Programming Software** – Your robot may only be programmed using LEGO MINDSTORMS EV3, NXT, or RoboLab software (any release). No other software is allowed. Check whether your robot set includes programming software. Additional software purchases can be made directly from [LEGO Education](#).
- ▲ **Other Items** – See a sample budget in [Appendix A](#) for some examples of additional supplies you may want or need during the FLL season.



Teams may share a Field Setup Kit – you do not need to purchase 1 for each team. However, each team will need time to work on the Robot Game missions, so consider whether sharing will give each team fair access.

Funding a Team

There are many ways to fund your team. Many teams are sponsored by a school while other teams pay their own fees. You could write a check from your personal funds or split the bill between the team members. Splitting the bill may be a large expense for some families, and you run the risk of excluding some children if you use this method.

Many teams need to fundraise to pay for team registration, materials, or tournament fees. Fundraising as a team gives children and parents a sense of ownership in the team. Brainstorm ways to raise money with your team members. They may surprise you with some fresh ideas. You may also want to approach businesses in your community to support your efforts.

Read more about fundraising in [Appendix A](#).



Rookie Coach: *I have a team of 9 children who love to chatter, and after 2 minutes without instruction, they kind of get off track. I have some ideas for activities to keep them focused, but the team needs to start cracking down on the Challenge. Any suggestions?*

Veteran Coach: *Each meeting, have a practice tournament and have the children run the robot on the table and give their Project presentation. It is a powerful way to have them realize how much work is left to do. This year I started doing this from the second meeting. I gave them 5 minutes to prepare, 2½ minutes at the table, and 5 minutes for the Project. At first, the team objected, but quickly got to work to better their performance for the next meeting.*

Early Season Meetings

It's time to get started. Here are a few suggestions for what you could do in your first meetings with your team.

- ▲ Get a large sheet of paper and make a calendar of the FLL season. Be sure to add meetings and important dates. Bring the calendar to each meeting and update it to include any changes as the season progresses.
- ▲ Play a game to learn each other's names.
- ▲ Print and hand out the Mission Model building instructions. Have the children build the models, then place the models on the playing field in the appropriate positions.
- ▲ Brainstorm a variety of ways to learn about this year's Challenge theme. As a group, decide if you will invite a guest speaker or go on a team field trip. If this isn't possible, consider connecting with professionals via email or phone instead.



Challenge Release Meeting

The FLL Challenge is released in early fall on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>. Once it is released, you can download the Challenge document, which contains the Project description, Missions, Rules, and Field Setup. See [Chapters 5](#) and [6](#) for definitions of the different parts of the Challenge.

Many teams gather on the day the Challenge is released for a team party to celebrate the new Challenge. Download the materials together and start brainstorming. If your team begins meeting after the Challenge is released, don't despair! Simply download the Challenge materials as soon as you can.

FIND ONLINE

The FLL Challenge is released in early fall on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

TIP

Refer to the sample schedules in [Appendix B](#) for ideas on how to schedule your team meetings.

Team Goals

Work with your team to set goals for the season and put them on paper. Include expectations for the group's success, functioning as a team, and exhibiting FLL Core Values. Write down what concepts you expect to learn and what your team would like to accomplish on the Challenge by the end of the season.

FLL events provide excitement and recognition and celebrate each team's accomplishments. However, the true goals of FLL have nothing to do with winning medals or trophies. If your team members can look back at the end of the season and say even 1 of the following, you have achieved an important goal:

- ▲ We learned how useful and fun technology and science can be.
- ▲ We did something we didn't think we could do.
- ▲ We helped our community.
- ▲ We improved over last year.
- ▲ We figured out how to manage time, deal with setbacks, or communicate ideas.
- ▲ We had fun!

Team Building

Team building exercises allow members to communicate feelings in a positive and healthy manner and encourage [Gracious Professionalism](#)® as they work together toward a common goal. They're also fun. Team building can be difficult with a schedule that is very structured. Sometimes letting children have fun together allows them to develop communication and respect, leading to smoother progress when work resumes.

Team building activities might include:

- ▲ Have team members interview each other and share what they learn with the whole group. Provide some questions to get them started.
- ▲ Have each team member write down the steps required to move around an obstacle in the room. Create pairs, and have one child read his or her instructions while the other child acts as the robot. The "robot" must follow the instructions exactly, even if they don't work. This demonstrates what it is like to program a real robot.
- ▲ Work together to come up with a team name and logo.
- ▲ Create unique team hats, a handshake, or a cheer.

COACH-TO-COACH

I coached for 7 years (and the teams did well) and we never had enough time. Never. And that's now life is. If we can teach our FLL kids how to make the most of the limited resources they have, then we have truly taught them a life lesson. I wish more people in my professional life had learned how to manage their time better. The FLL season timeline may seem overwhelming, but remember that even the time crunch teaches an important skill: time management!

4 FLL® Core Values



4

FLL® Core Values



CORE VALUES

You may have noticed that the *FIRST*® LEGO® League (FLL®) Core Values are the first thing you see when you open this handbook (on the inside of the front cover). This is because the Core Values are central to everything we do in FLL. They help to make FLL a fun and rewarding experience for everyone involved. Team members, parents, Coaches, Mentors, Volunteers, and staff are all expected to uphold the FLL Core Values whenever they participate in FLL activities.

The Core Values describe a way of working together and respecting each other that helps to define the FLL experience. This is part of what sets FLL apart from other programs for this age group. We hear stories every year about a team that drops their robot at a tournament and watches the pieces scatter in every direction. Team members from other teams rush in to help them put their robot back together before their next match. This is because FLL teams want to compete fairly and have fun together.

Keep in mind that the Core Values apply to everyone in FLL. Please talk to parents, Mentors, and other Volunteers with your team about what the Core Values are and why they are so important. By embracing the FLL Core Values, anyone involved in FLL may find that they begin to treat people more fairly and respectfully in other areas of their lives.



THE FLL CORE VALUES

- ▲ We are a team.
- ▲ We do the work to find solutions with guidance from our Coaches and Mentors.
- ▲ We know our Coaches and Mentors don't have all the answers; we learn together.
- ▲ We honor the spirit of friendly competition.
- ▲ What we discover is more important than what we win.
- ▲ We share our experiences with others.
- ▲ We display Gracious Professionalism® and Coopertition® in everything we do.
- ▲ We have fun.



Gracious Professionalism®

Gracious Professionalism means teams compete like crazy against challenges but appreciate and treat each other with respect. Your enemy is the problem you're trying to solve — not an opposing team or person. Gracious professionals lend a helping hand to an opponent when needed because they want everyone to have a chance to compete.

With Gracious Professionalism, fierce competition and mutual gain are not separate ideas. Gracious professionals learn and compete intensely, but treat one another with kindness in the process. Even when a team wins the competition, they avoid treating anyone like losers.

In the long run, Gracious Professionalism is part of pursuing a meaningful life. You can enjoy personal success while also making a contribution to society. FLL team members will learn that they can succeed while still acting with integrity.

Coopertition®

Coopertition® combines the concepts of cooperation and competition. Coopertition is founded on the philosophy that teams can (and should!) cooperate with each other even as they compete.

Once you have mastered a skill, you teach it to someone else so that everyone can do better next time. It will make the competition more meaningful by pushing everyone to excel. Sometimes it even means sharing a spare part or battery charger with another team so they have a chance to compete. You still do your best to win, just not at the other team's expense.

Benefit of the Doubt

Just as we expect teams to display the Core Values throughout the season, FLL tournament organizers, judges, referees, and others are expected to uphold the Core Values too. Under this philosophy, teams should receive the benefit of the doubt whenever possible.

Teams will be given the opportunity to explain themselves if an issue arises during the FLL season. Judges or referees may ask your team questions about who worked on your robot or Project idea. Whenever possible, teams will be given the points or the higher judges' rating if there is no evidence that a team broke the rules.

Sometimes teams assume that another team could not have done the work they present without the direct involvement of adults. Remember that children are remarkably creative, and some are highly sophisticated at programming or software applications for presentations. Don't assume that you know what another team is capable of, and don't let your team members make assumptions either.

Prepare for a Tournament

Unlike other areas of FLL, teams usually do not have tangible results (like a robot or a Project idea) to show to the Core Values judges at a tournament. So how do teams prepare for Core Values judging? By incorporating the Core Values into all you do and talking about the Core Values throughout the season.

All teams operate differently, and teams can be successful with different styles. Some teams have a strong leader, some have a democratic approach, on some teams each child has a specialized role, and other teams share all responsibilities equally. The Core Values can be incorporated into all of these styles and teams can be successful using all of them. As long as team members understand and use the Core Values in their interactions, no particular working style is better than the others.



As we prepared for the tournament, we were working with the kids to remember examples that support the FLL Core Values. We realized that the Core Values describe powerful behavior that should be embraced on a daily basis and in our weekly sessions – not just for the tournaments.

We developed our own Core Values award for our team. This way each team member consciously works on demonstrating Core Values in each category with specific examples. When we get to the competition, talking about the Core Values happens naturally and each kid has examples of how they demonstrated Core Values on a weekly basis.

At 1 meeting per week, each team member gives a specific example of how he or she demonstrated 1 of the Core Values. Then team members either agree or they tell their own stories about how that team member demonstrated the Core Values in other ways.

Core Values Judging

When you attend a tournament, your team will meet with Core Values judges at some point during the day. There are multiple formats for Core Values judging, so check with your tournament organizer if you have any questions about how your team will be judged. Teams generally do not need to bring their robot or Project materials to Core Values judging sessions.

Regardless of what judging format your event will use, it is always a good idea for your team members to prepare some examples of how they demonstrated the Core Values throughout the season. These might be about each team member individually, a few team members together, or about the whole team. Have team members take turns telling about these examples in front of the group, and ask other children to give feedback. Remember to keep the feedback constructive. Team members should be especially careful about displaying the Core Values when providing Core Values feedback!

Learn more about how your team's demonstration of Core Values knowledge and skills will be judged in [Chapter 8](#) and by reviewing the awards and rubrics located at <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> in the Events section under Judging and Awards.

Notice that among other criteria the rubrics encourage teams to:

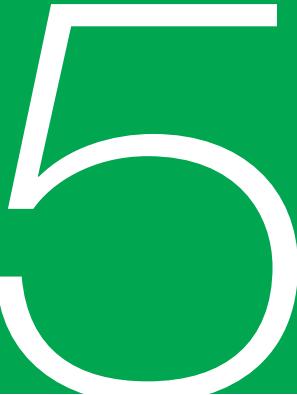
- ▲ Embrace discovery and all three aspects of FLL (Core Values, Project, and Robot Game) in a balanced way.
- ▲ Develop a clear team identity and find ways to engage others in your team's enthusiasm and fun.
- ▲ Find ways to apply FLL Core Values and skills in daily life.
- ▲ Define clear goals and develop processes to help them problem solve and make clear decisions as a team.
- ▲ Use team talents and time wisely.
- ▲ Take responsibility and operate as a team with minimal Coach guidance.
- ▲ Balance and appreciate contributions from all team members.
- ▲ Always act and speak with integrity so that others feel respected and valued.
- ▲ Actively cooperate with other teams and embrace the spirit of friendly competition.



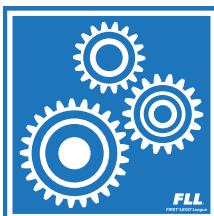
Some regions may ask your team to prepare something to share with the Core Values judges at your tournament. Pay attention to the guidelines given to you by the tournament organizer.

5 The Robot Game





The Robot Game



ROBOT GAME

As you learned in [Chapter 1](#), the FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®) Challenge has 2 parts: the Robot Game and the Project. In the Robot Game, the kids build and program an autonomous LEGO® MINDSTORMS® robot to score points by performing mission tasks. These missions will be inspired by the Challenge theme, so you will see many concepts that may get your team thinking about this year's topic.

The team and robot must follow a set of rules, which you will be able to download from the [FLL website](#). For example: if team members touch the robot while it's working, it must be stopped and carried to Base. At tournaments, a referee oversees the action to ensure that everyone is following the rules.

At tournaments, 2 tables are attached back to back, so your team will participate opposite a team on the other table. You are not competing against that team. Rather, both teams will try to earn their own highest score. The robots are isolated from each other by table border walls, but there is always at least 1 mission that causes interaction between robots on adjacent tables.



FIND ONLINE

Team and robot rules are available to download from <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.



ROOKIE TIP

If this is your team's first year, set achievable goals. Decide on a few missions you want to master, and then add additional missions if you have time available.

Robot Game Preparation

Before your team can start building and programming a robot, you will need to set up your materials and make sure you have all the Robot Game information. The information described below will be available in early fall when the Challenge is released.

As you learned in [Chapter 3](#), you will need a LEGO MINDSTORMS set (EV3, NXT, or RCX) and a Field Setup Kit to participate in the Robot Game. That is not all you need though! Before your team begins working on their robot, you should:

- ▲ **Download and print the Challenge document** from <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>. It contains the Project and 3 sections about the Robot Game: Field Setup, Missions, and Rules.
- ▲ **Build your FLL table.** The FLL table holds the robot's playing field. You have the option to build a complete table or only the top and borders. Simple but large, the table does require basic carpentry skills for construction. Instructions for building the table are in the Field Setup document as well as on the FLL website (<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>) under Team Resources.
- ▲ **Build your mission models.** The mission models are the official objects the robot interacts with as part of the game. The instructions for building the mission models can be found on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>. You are free to build these as soon as you receive your Field Setup Kit. Mission model construction takes a single person 3 to 6 hours, depending on experience. Many teams build the mission models together during their early season meetings.
- ▲ **Set up your field.** You now have the table, the mat to put on it, and the models to put on that. The last thing to find is the bag of tan sheets of Dual Lock fastening material that came in the Field Setup Kit box. This material is used to secure some of the models to the mat. You are now ready to follow the Field Setup instructions to complete the setup of the playing field. Follow these instructions closely to be sure the field you practice on is identical to those found at tournaments.



FIND ONLINE

Download and print the Challenge document from <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.



ROOKIE TIP

If your team is new to FLL, you (or a programming Mentor) may need to teach your team about MINDSTORMS programming. This is allowed as long as you do not tell them how to solve the FLL Challenge. Adults may help your team gain new skills or information that may help them be successful in FLL.



- ▲ **Read the Missions.** The Missions section (part of the Challenge document) describes what the mission models represent and how your team can earn points on the Field in Robot Performance. The Missions section describes the condition that will earn you points – it is up to your team to decide how to make those conditions happen. For example, if you can earn 4 points for a mission model touching the mat, your team might design a robot that can knock it over onto the mat, place it on the mat gently, roll it onto the mat, etc. If the Missions and Rules do not forbid an idea, then it is allowed. Like the Rules (below), the Missions need to be read carefully and repeatedly throughout the season. A small detail that doesn't mean anything to you in week 1 may turn out to be a big deal in week 4!
- ▲ **Read the Rules.** The Rules section gives exact definitions for terms related to the game and to tournament play. They keep things fair and fun, and keep matches running smoothly. They also tell specifically how a match must be conducted, and place constraints on the robot's parts, the team's action, the robot's action, and the scoring. You and any team member dealing with the robot are HIGHLY advised to read the Rules carefully and REPEATEDLY. Rules that may seem confusing or not applicable at the beginning of the season will mean more and more as you gain experience.

TIP

Need help learning to build and program the robot? Your NXT software CD includes 40 interactive tutorials to get you started. You can also visit the Team Resources page on firstlegoleague.org for LEGO building and programming resources.

Robot Game Execution

Once you have prepared by completing the steps above, your team is ready to begin working on a robot.

- ▲ **Strategize, build, and program your robot, and Have FUN!** Plan, build, and program; test, repair, and reassess; repeat! Good coaching requires restraint here. As tempting as it is, don't build the attachment or make the decision. Ask questions to get the team thinking so they can find the answers themselves.
- ▲ **Check the Robot Game Updates for critical new information.** The Robot Game Updates are a running list of official responses to missing, unclear, or incorrect information about the Robot Game. Updates posted here SUPERSEDE text from the Challenge document. There are also answers to frequently asked questions, and official calls on whether or not certain strategies are allowed. Refer to the Robot Game Updates often and carefully. Find the Robot Game Updates on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.
- ▲ **Repeat the steps above until your objectives are met.** Whether your goal is to complete 5 missions or to complete all of them, the process always involves many cycles of thinking, trying, failing, improving, and succeeding.



FIND ONLINE

Find the Robot Game Updates on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

Prepare for a Tournament

When your team attends a tournament, your robot will compete in 2 different areas: Robot Performance and Robot Design.

Robot Performance

Unlike other areas of FLL, teams receive a numerical score during Robot Performance matches. The Robot Performance Award recognizes a team that scores the most points in the Robot Game. Your team's score will be determined by the number of points the robot scores during scheduled matches.

Each match is separate and only the highest score will count. You do want to have a robot that can perform well consistently, but your team should not be discouraged if you have 1 bad match. Read more about Robot Performance matches in [Chapter 7](#).



TIP

Some tournaments may use direct lighting on their tables but others may not. Be prepared for either situation.

Robot Design

During the tournament day, Robot Design judges will interview and observe your team. Some events require formal Robot Design presentations, while at other events the judges may simply ask your team questions. Either way, it is a good idea for your team to prepare a basic introduction to the robot in case the judges ask.

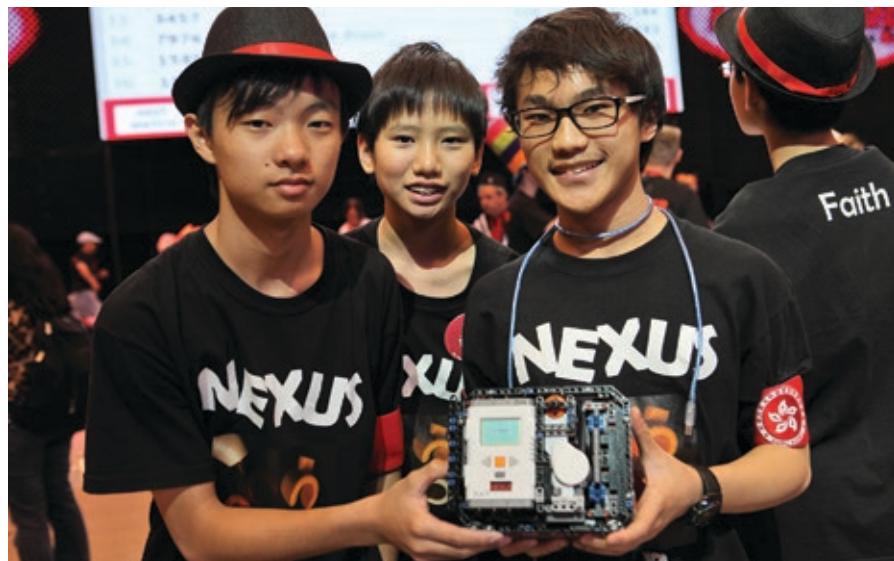
There may also be a competition table with mission models in the judging area. Your team should be prepared to demonstrate their solution to at least one of the missions and talk about their strategy. Review the information about your tournament carefully and contact the tournament organizer if you have any questions about what your team should expect.

Your team may also want to consider bringing a 1-page summary of their robot or printout of their best programming to leave with the judges. The summary could include a picture, list of sensors, original features, programming language, and other interesting details about your team's design and strategy.

If your team chooses to print a section of programming to leave with the judges, make sure they choose a section that is easy to follow but highlights some difficult problem they overcame. Print the programs in icon form (not text) to make them easier for the judges to review. When the judges choose teams to receive awards, this information will remind them about your team's robot.

TIP

Some regions may ask you to prepare something to share with the Robot Design judges. Pay attention to the guidelines given to you by the tournament organizer.





Learn more about how your team's Robot Design elements will be judged in [Chapter 8](#) and by reviewing the awards and rubrics found on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> in the Events section under Judging and Awards. Notice that among other criteria the rubrics encourage teams to:

- ▲ Consider the importance of structural integrity and efficiency.
- ▲ Find the right balance of robot speed, strength, and accuracy.
- ▲ Value consistency.
- ▲ Use code that is modular, streamlined, and understandable by others.
- ▲ Not rely on driver intervention to help the robot navigate.
- ▲ Focus on continuous improvement.
- ▲ Develop a well-defined game strategy.
- ▲ Be innovative.

ROBOT GAME QUESTIONS?

- ▲ Check the Robot Game Updates on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>
- ▲ Email questions about the Robot Game to fllrobotgame@usfirst.org
- ▲ Email questions about programming or LEGO materials to support@legoeducation.com



10 Robot Game Tips

From FLL Engineer Scott Evans, NH, U.S.

1. Read the Challenge document carefully and repeatedly!!!

Assign a “Documents Expert” or 2 on your team. True, lots of things these days are designed not to need directions, and many times even if something says “Read these directions before starting,” you can figure it out yourself, but... Be warned: The FLL Robot Game is *not* one of those things. Experience shows that teams who don’t read the documents repeatedly operate in a fog all season and learn things the hard way at tournaments. On the other hand, teams who know the details save lots of confusion and time, have fewer questions, higher success, and more fun.

2. Use the MINDSTORMS training features.

The programmer(s) on your team should dedicate some early team meetings to going all the way through the help and tutorials that come with your MINDSTORMS robot set or on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> under Team Resources. Doing so will make you immediately competitive with many veteran teams who never bothered.

3. Set manageable goals.

When you’re first confronted with the Missions and they seem overwhelming, agree as a team on the 3 (or 1?) you think are the easiest, and pretend they are the whole Robot Game. Master those missions so your robot gets them every time. Congratulate yourselves. Now... if you did 3, you could probably do 4, right? Is there maybe 1 more you figure you can do? Master that 1 without affecting the others, and continue this process until you really do have a feeling for what’s possible.

4. Make your robot’s navigation depend on features of the field whenever possible.

While it’s true that a robot can be programmed to do a lot using only odometry (counting how many times its motors have turned) and/or timing (counting how many seconds its motors have run), variability in friction and battery strength can throw these methods off track. Instead, learn to complement these methods with techniques and sensors that interact with the field (light, color, touch, and ultrasound). For example, a robot programmed to drive forward 3 rotations and then turn for 2 seconds might go to the right spot and make a 90° turn when you program it, but later, when started from a different place, maybe with low battery strength, it will definitely end up in a different spot on a different angle. But if you program it to drive until it sees a line, then you make it back up against the wall after the turn, it will always end up on the correct spot, at 90°.

5. Don't try to program more than 1 step at a time.

Every mission strategy will be a sequence of steps. The robot has to get to a place and do a task, then get to the next place and do the next task, etc. Make sure it can get to and do each task consistently before trying to program for the next. If you program several actions and test them all at once, you'll find yourself fighting confusion, backtracking, and repeating your work.

6. Build things strong enough that the robot can be knocked over in any direction and not break.

Make the robot as compact as you can, because large parts make the robot unstable, tough to drive in narrow areas, and act like levers in their own destruction. Make “redundant” (extra) reinforcements when possible. Use gray (loose) pins instead of black (friction) pins when possible – believe it or not, they are LESS likely to separate.

7. While building, keep access to essential features in mind.

It seems like a bother, but it's wise to keep all cables attached to your EV3 or NXT brick (the “brain” of your robot) while building. If you don't, you're likely to end up re-doing things when you discover cables don't reach or they interfere with attachments. Also, constantly confirm that you can see the display, access the buttons, and get the batteries out without too much hassle.

8. Build a shroud around your optical (color and light) sensors.

A change in ambient (surrounding) light can mess up your optical (color and light) sensor programs. While it is possible to calibrate them, it is even better to avoid the need. Try to build your optical sensors into the center of the robot's shadow, or make a light shield around them.

9. For consistency in turning, build sliders/casters as close to the drive wheels as you can without giving away stability.

The farther away their contact with the mat is from the drive wheels, the harder the robot will be to turn. To understand this concept, pick up a broom and sweep the floor next to your feet. Now try to sweep a spot far away from your feet.

10. Don't try to work for much more than 90 minutes at a time, and be sure to call it a day if you've spent more than 30 minutes frustrated and stuck.

Your brain will actually work on the problem overnight, and while you're doing other things. When you come back to the problem, very often you'll figure it out quickly.

6 The Project



The Project



PROJECT

FLL® teams explore the Challenge theme each year through the Project. FLL is not just about building and competing with robots. Any successful engineering project requires a wide variety of skills. For example, the NASA engineers who designed the Curiosity Mars rover learned about Mars before they started designing. They researched the atmosphere, gravity, and terrain on Mars in order to design a space craft that could deliver the rover safely. They learned from past Mars rovers and improved on those designs to create

something even better. The Project is your team's opportunity to see what it's like to be scientists, inventors, and engineers.

The Project description will give your team some information about the topic to get them thinking and describe the essential steps each team must take. Your team will choose a problem and research it, design their own innovative solution to the problem, and share their experience with others. At a tournament, your team will have 5 minutes to summarize all of their work in a presentation for the judges.

Many teams choose a problem that is very personal. It might be a problem that affects someone on the team or someone they know. It is important to let your team members guide the choice, because choosing something they really care about will help the children see how big scientific concepts connect to their own lives.



As a research activity, have your team members explore Challenge-related professions and brainstorm as many careers in that field as they can.



Project Preparation

The complete FLL Challenge (including the Project) will be released in the fall. At that time, your team should:

▲ **Download the Challenge from
<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>**

The Challenge document contains both the Project and the Robot Game. The Project description will explain the details of this year's Project and the steps your team will need to complete. Coaches and team members should read the Project together. It is not a lesson plan. Team members should have access to read and interpret the Project document with your help.



FIND ONLINE

Download and print the Challenge document from
<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

▲ **Check the Project Updates**

Here FLL staff will clarify common Project questions. Assign a student on your team to check the Project Updates regularly. You do not want to wait until the tournament to find out about any misunderstandings or corrections to the Project description.

▲ **Download the Topic Guide
from <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>**

The Topic Guide contains resources to help your team with this season's Project: web links and books, a glossary of theme-related words, and tips on contacting professionals. Your team is not required to use the Topic Guide, but many teams find it helpful when they start their research.



TIP

The details of the Project change each year, so read the Project description carefully. It's not about coming up with the right answer, but about unleashing the passion and creativity of your team members.

Project Steps

The Project instructions are purposely a little vague. This is to allow teams to choose a problem and solution that really interest them. However, all teams must follow these basic steps as well as any season-specific requirements described in the Challenge.

1. Identify a Real-World Problem

Identifying a problem is an important step in your team's process because it will shape your team's research and solution. FLL provides guidance in the Project description on how to begin this process, so refer to the Project to keep your team on the right track.

- ▲ Research the Challenge topic using a variety of sources (such as books, magazines, websites, reports, and other resources).
- ▲ Learn about or talk to at least 1 professional working in the field of this year's Challenge. The professional may be a scientist or engineer, or they might be someone working in a local business, university, or nonprofit who uses the Challenge topic in their work. For example, a grocery store manager could be a great resource for a season on food safety because he or she works to keep the food in the store safe every day. Your professional does not need to be an engineer.
- ▲ Discuss and analyze the problem(s) your team finds.
- ▲ Review existing solutions to the problem(s). This will help your team understand what is currently being done to solve the problem(s) they found so they can improve upon a solution that already exists or create their own brand new solution.
- ▲ Decide on 1 real-world problem that your team will try to solve.



2. Create an Innovative Solution

The next step is to design an innovative solution that will address the problem your team chose.

For the FLL Project, an innovative solution is an idea that adds value to society by improving something that already exists, using something that exists in a new way, or inventing something totally new.



There are probably many ways to solve the problem your team chose. There may be disagreements between team members about the best solution. It might be a good idea to agree on a decision-making process ahead of time so that the disagreements do not lead to arguments or hurt feelings.

Once your team members choose a solution, they should also consider what would be required to implement it. Is the idea feasible? What technology, materials, or manufacturing processes would be needed to make their idea a reality? This might be a good time to involve the professional your team identified in step 1. They should not tell your team how to solve the problem, but your team could ask for advice on how to implement the solution they design.

COACH-TO-COACH

Rookie Coach: *My team came up with some great solutions to the problem they chose. However, they always do an internet search and find that someone already had the same idea. They are getting frustrated. What can I do as the Coach?*

Veteran Coach: *I like to tell my team one of the universal truths about research and development (R & D) work: even when seasoned professionals start a new R&D project, they do not know where it will end up – and that is ok. You start working, and then you improve your ideas, and usually you end with something you are proud to share and sell.*

I would tell your team to pick the solution that excites them the most and keep asking questions about it. Tons of questions. Could they improve it in some way? Could they make it easier or more pleasant to use? Or find a material that makes it cheaper to manufacture? Or make the solution more effective for the people who really need it? Improving an existing solution is still innovative. That's how we got most of the products we use and love today.

3. Share Your Research and Solution

This step is critical to completing the Project and is not just about practicing your tournament presentation. It is a chance for your team's Project to make a difference. It is an opportunity to share the excitement of science and technology with others. It may even be an opportunity to motivate others to work on solving your team's real-world problem.

Sharing your team's solution could involve presenting at a town meeting; talking with a government official; speaking in a school assembly or in front of a class; or creating a storybook or video to send to the library or public access channel. There are many different ways the team can choose to share their research and solution.

We encourage teams to share their Project with an audience or multiple audiences who can benefit from the solution. Brainstorm with your team about who might benefit. It might be someone who is affected by the problem your team identified, scientists or engineers working in the field, or a member of the government who could help pass a law to solve the problem.

TIP

Remind your team members about using good presentation skills. They should speak clearly and slowly when presenting. They should also remember to look up at the audience while they speak. Staring at the floor or mumbling will make it harder for the audience to hear all the great work your team has done this season!



Prepare a Tournament Presentation

Decide How to Share With the Judges

If your team plans to attend an event or tournament, be sure team members prepare a presentation which shares their Project in a creative and thoughtful way. A great presentation requires a balance between creativity and covering all the required information. We have seen Projects presented as songs, skits, radio broadcasts, TV interviews, poems, stories, dances, and plays. Judges are always interested in unique presentations, but a presentation without substance will not receive high marks. Each team must find its own way to show creativity and demonstrate its knowledge.

- ▲ What talents can your team members contribute to the presentation? Does someone play an instrument? Draw? Sing? Dance?
- ▲ What format will allow your team to show you have met all of the Project requirements?



If possible, find 2 adults to act as judges for a dress rehearsal. Have them ask questions based on the rubrics like the judges will after the presentation at a tournament. Videotape the dress rehearsal for the team to watch later. When reviewing the tape, do not allow the team members to ridicule or mock each other. They can discuss team roles, how they covered important points, places to save time, and the team's appearance.

Many teams also prepare a brochure or other material to leave with the judges. These materials do not need to be fancy. Keep any handouts to 1 page or less. The judges will see many teams during a tournament, so they do not have time to read a whole binder full of materials. It is a great opportunity for your team to present its Project in a short, easily readable format (your team may even choose to hand out extra copies to other teams during the event).

Present at a Tournament

When team members enter the Project judging area at a tournament, they should introduce themselves and ask if the judges are ready for them. Each team has only 5 minutes to present—including setup. Exceeding the time limit is a common mistake. Some judges will interrupt your team and stop the presentation at 5 minutes while others may shorten the question time afterward to compensate.

Judges at a tournament will only consider what your team tells them, so make sure your team shows or describes how they met the requirements below. Anything they want the judges to know should be included in your team's presentation.

After your team's presentation, the judges may ask questions of your team as a whole or may direct questions to individual team members. Your team should be prepared for either format.

To be eligible for Project awards your team must:

1. Meet any season-specific requirements outlined in the Project document.
2. Identify the problem your team chose to research.
3. Describe your team's innovative solution.
4. Describe how your team shared its findings with others.
5. Meet the format requirements:
 - ▲ Present live; teams may use media equipment (if available) but only to enhance the live presentation.
 - ▲ Include all team members; each team member must participate during the judging session in some way.
 - ▲ Setup and presentation must be completed in 5 minutes or less with no adult help.

Learn more about how your team's presentation will be judged in [Chapter 8](#) and by reviewing the awards and rubrics located at: <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> in the Events section under Judging and Awards.

**Notice that among other criteria
the rubrics encourage teams to:**

- ▲ Clearly explain both the problem and your team's solution.
- ▲ Use different types of research resources, including professionals in the field.
- ▲ Consider existing theories and solutions as they develop their own.
- ▲ Be innovative.
- ▲ Think about real-world implementation factors.
- ▲ Target their sharing toward those who might benefit from the team's work.
- ▲ Find a way to present their work that is both effective and creative.



Audio-Visual Equipment

If your team needs special equipment, such as a projector, call the tournament organizers ahead of time to see if it will be available. If you need to bring your own equipment, make sure there will be a power source available in the judging room.

If your team decides to use audio-visual equipment, be sure the team members are prepared to present without it if it fails or is not available. This applies no matter what technology the team was planning to use. The entire presentation is only 5 minutes long, including setup time, so they need to be prepared to proceed quickly without the failed or missing equipment. The judges almost always have a very tight schedule, so no extra time is given for equipment problems.



COACH-TO-COACH

Teams are allowed to use some video or multi-media clips during their presentations if the equipment is available. However, using technical equipment is risky! What happens if the equipment fails? Your team may get the best results with low-tech solutions like acting, singing, or showing posters and models.

After Tournament Season

As part of their project, your team will probably design something that will amaze adults. Do not feel like that great idea is dead at the end of the FLL season. We encourage you to consider the following options for your team's idea:

- ▲ Continue to share your team's project with additional audiences you might not have had time to present to before your tournament.
- ▲ Talk to your local lawmakers about laws that might help to solve the problem you identified.
- ▲ Share your team's ideas at academic conferences or gatherings.
- ▲ Apply for a patent on your team's invention. (You may need to begin this process before attending a tournament. Check the laws in your region or work with a patent attorney if your team would like to apply for a patent.)
- ▲ Submit your team's idea for the FLL Global Innovation Award at <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

PROJECT QUESTIONS?

- ▲ Check the Project Updates on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>
- ▲ Email other Project questions to fllprojects@usfirst.org



7

FLL® Tournaments





FLL® Tournaments

A tournament is an opportunity for teams to learn, showcase their accomplishments, and celebrate their hard work throughout the season. Even if your team does not feel 100 percent ready, we encourage all teams to participate in a *FIRST*® LEGO® League (FLL®) tournament.

This chapter will provide you with an outline of the tournament day, but expect the unexpected and focus on creating a fun experience for your team members.

Event Types

There are several types of FLL events. They all offer a fun and exciting way for teams to demonstrate the result of their efforts, but it is important to understand the differences between them. In many regions, you will be responsible for signing your team up for the event(s) you wish to attend and paying any required event fees. Check with your Partner about what steps you need to complete in your region.



- ▲ **Community (Unofficial) Events** may include demonstrations, practices, scrimmages, or summer camps. They are generally, but not always, smaller than official tournaments. They may run by teams, Volunteers, or local coordinators who have the freedom to choose the format, judging guidelines, and awards. Community Events do **not** qualify a team to attend a Championship tournament. For more information about Community Events, see [Chapter 9](#).



- ▲ **Qualifying Tournaments** (usually called Qualifiers or Regionals) are the first level of official competition in most regions. Qualifying tournaments follow the same judging standards and a similar format to Championship tournaments, but they are usually much smaller. Some teams from each Qualifier will advance to your region's Championship. Teams must participate in all aspects of the Qualifying tournament to advance.
- ▲ **Championship Tournaments** are the highest level of competition teams can attend in a state, country, or region. Championships abide by FLL standards in format, judging, awards, and overall quality. Some Championship tournaments require that teams win at a Qualifying or Regional tournament in order to advance to the region's Championship tournament. For many teams, a Championship tournament will be the highest level of FLL tournament available.
- ▲ **Open Championship Tournaments** are invitational events where the hosts invite specific regions to send a team. "Open" refers to inviting teams from outside the host region's borders. Opens are hosted by FLL Partners and abide by Championship standards. These events are not held every year, but they represent another great way for FLL teams to get together and showcase their achievements.
- ▲ **The FLL World Festival** is part of the annual FIRST® Championship. It is the global celebration of FLL teams from around the world, and it is the only event hosted by FLL headquarters. The invitational process for the World Festival depends on the number of spaces available. The list of World Festival invitations is released in late fall.

Most FLL events are free and all are open to the public. We recommend that you encourage parents, siblings, sponsors, and friends to attend the tournament and cheer on your team!

Tournament Applications

Choose Your Event(s) Carefully

Before you apply for any events, carefully consider which region you want to compete in. This may be obvious if you live in the middle of your region, but some teams live on the border between 2 regions. FLL teams are only eligible to win awards or advance through the first official event they attend each season. Teams may not shop for awards by attending multiple Qualifiers or events in different regions.



REMINDER

In the U.S. and Canada, a team's national registration fee does not guarantee your team a spot at a tournament.

Some teams want to attend more than 1 Qualifier for the challenge and fun of it. Tournament space is limited, so your team must receive permission from the FLL Partner for that region if you wish to apply for more than one Qualifier.

If your region has more than 1 level of Qualifying tournaments, please check with your FLL Partner about how teams are selected to advance at each level.

Qualifying and Championship Tournament Applications

A listing of confirmed Qualifying and Championship tournaments will usually be posted on your region's website or communicated in the fall with instructions on how to apply or qualify. Teams apply either online or directly with the tournament organizer for most of these tournaments. It is the team's responsibility to find out when the tournament they want to attend begins accepting applications.

Be sure that your team's contact information is up-to-date and complete before applying for a tournament so you can receive further instructions and updates during the season.

Some regions may not have a finalized tournament schedule until the season is well underway. Do not let that prevent you from starting to meet with your team. If you do not see any tournaments listed in your area, contact your FLL Partner for more information.



TIP

In the U.S. and Canada, you must pay your national FLL Team Registration fee in full before you will be allowed to register for a tournament, so take care of your payment as soon as possible.

Tournament Logistics

Adult Supervision and Safety

Adult supervision is a critical factor for a successful tournament. Whether the team is moving about the site or performing, make sure all team members are supervised. Use the buddy system and have each child travel with at least one other person. Remind each person attending with your team that everyone is expected to demonstrate FLL Core Values at all times. This includes parents and guests of the team.



TIP

Be warned – FLL tournaments are exciting and very LOUD. Between the children, the music, and the announcers, do not expect any quiet time! If you have anyone on your team with sensitive hearing, consider bringing ear plugs.

In the event that you witness any kind of incident, medical or non-medical, please report it immediately to the tournament organizers. They may have questions or ask you to help them document what happened.

Registration

Upon arrival at the tournament, your team must first find the registration table and check in. At most tournaments, all of the teams arrive during the same half hour. It can be very chaotic, and lines sometimes form at the registration table for a brief period. Keeping your forms organized, and ensuring that you have all the necessary paperwork when you arrive, can help to reduce the wait for everyone.

Have these forms ready when you arrive at registration:

- ▲ A Consent and Release form for each student, Coach, and Mentor who attends the event with your team. Anyone participating in an FLL event may be photographed or recorded, so FIRST requires a signed consent form from each participant.
- ▲ A Team Profile Sheet. This is an opportunity to provide some basic information about your team. Some tournaments collect the Team Profile Sheets and other tournaments ask teams to provide them directly to the judges.
- ▲ Any other forms or information required by your tournament organizers.



FIND ONLINE

*Download the forms from
<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.*



TIP

Remember to bring these items to your tournament:

- Consent and Release form signed by each team members' parents or guardians
- Any other forms or documents required by your tournament
- Robot and any attachments
- Spare parts
- Materials, props, and equipment needed for Project presentation
- Laptop computer (if available) with batteries and/or power cord
- USB cable
- Team banner, posters, or other decorations for the team's on-site pit space, if desired
- Snacks and drinks

The Pit

The pit will be your team's home for the day. It will usually have a pit administration table where you can ask questions or get updates during the day. Check with the event Volunteers to find out if spectators are allowed in the pit, as some facilities allow only team members, Coaches, and Mentors in this area.

Your team may be assigned a specific location to set up when you register (a pit station or pit table), but some events have areas that are first-come, first-served. Generally, a pit table will be provided so your team can set up a display for other teams to see, showcase your Core Values, robot, and project, or make minor repairs. If your team has any posters or banners, set them up to show your team spirit. Regardless of the size of your team's pit station, be gracious and keep your team within the borders of your space.

Electricity might be provided at the pit, but some venues do not have convenient electrical outlets. If your team brings a laptop, make sure it's fully charged just in case.

Important Locations

When your team completes registration at the event, Volunteers will probably provide a map or let you know where to find important areas of the event. Make sure your team knows how to find:

- ▲ **Practice Playing Field(s):** Many tournaments provide access to a practice field where teams take turns running matches with their robot. If a field is provided, scheduling is often tight and teams may need to reserve a time slot to practice.



TIP

Teams must participate in all elements of an FLL competition (including the Robot Game as well as Core Values, Robot Design, and Project judging) in order to be eligible for any FLL Core Award. Read more about judging in [Chapter 8](#).

- ▲ **Competition Area:** The competition area is where the official Robot Game playing fields are located and robot performance matches are scored by official referees. Competition tables will be set up in pairs. At each double table, 2 teams will compete side-by-side with their robots.
- ▲ **Judging Sessions:** Judging sessions for Core Values, Robot Design, and the Project generally take place in rooms separate from the competition area. Your team will participate in each session at some point during the day, so make sure you understand where and when your team should line up.

How the Day Works

Time Management

Review the day's schedule with your team members. Competition schedules are usually very tight, so it's important that your team is ready and on time. There is a sample schedule on [page 57](#) to give you some idea of what to expect.

As the Coach, you will concentrate on getting to the scheduled judging appointments and rounds on time. Delegate the responsibility of keeping your team together to other Volunteers.

The Coaches' Meeting

Many events hold a meeting for Coaches at the very beginning of the day while teams are setting up their pit areas. Find out where this meeting will take place and make sure you attend or send an adult representative. The tournament organizers often use this time to discuss any changes to the day's schedule or any logistical concerns. This is also your last opportunity to clarify the rules before the competition begins, so be ready with any last-minute questions your team may have.

The Opening Ceremony

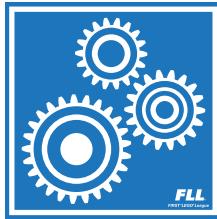
Usually the opening ceremony is very high energy and sets the tone for the day. Judges, referees, and special guests are introduced, the Challenge and scoring are explained, and tournament organizers tell teams about the exciting day ahead of them.



Queuing is the process of lining teams up for their robot matches to ensure that they stay on time.

After the opening ceremony, teams not immediately scheduled for robot performance matches or a judging session should return to the pit to listen for queuing, use the practice fields for final robot adjustments, or prepare to meet with the judges.

Robot Performance Matches



ROBOT GAME

There are 2 types of robot performance matches: practice and competition. Practice matches are optional but may help your team work out any last minute issues. During the day, teams get at least 3 competition matches lasting 2½ minutes each.

Your 2 team members who operate the robot should follow the table referee's instructions at the table, but they should not be afraid to ask the referees if they have any questions or concerns. Before starting, have them scan the table to make sure it is properly set up. If the robot operators have a question about the table setup they should talk to the referee immediately. Once the match starts, it is too late to change the table.

When your team's match begins, have both robot operators move to the table while you get your team settled in the team standing area. FLL expects tournaments to allow teams to rotate robot operators out during their matches, but there are a few tournaments where fire codes prevent switching. Your tournament organizer should alert you if tournament policies do not allow switching during a match.

If your team rotates operators in and out between missions, make sure all operators are prepared to change. Remember that the clock does not stop for operators to change. Be aware that most tournaments do not allow Coaches or team members who are not robot operators into the area immediately around the table. You will need to watch from the designated spectator area.

TIP

By the time your team runs several matches, performs for the Robot Design judges, and tests any programming changes, the robot's batteries may be low.

Remember to check the batteries throughout the day.



Scoring Confirmation

At the end of each match, the referee will record your team's score with the 2 robot operators. They will show your team members the points they earned on each mission. A team member, not an adult, must talk to the Head Referee if there is any disagreement. The Referee will then ensure that the score sheet accurately reflects the condition of the field. This is your team's only opportunity to bring up any difference of opinion.

Once your team leaves the area and the competition table is cleared for the next team, you are no longer permitted to dispute the score. As in other competitions, the referee's ruling on the field is final. Graciously accept the referee's final decision.



SAMPLE TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

8:00 – 9:00 am	Team Registration	<i>Building Lobby</i>
8:00 – 9:00 am	Team Setup	<i>Pit Area</i>
9:00 – 9:15 am	Coaches' Meeting	<i>Auditorium</i>
9:30 – 10:00 am	Opening Ceremony	<i>Gymnasium</i>
10:15 – 10:30 am	Core Values Judging Session	<i>Judging Room 1</i>
10:50 – 10:55 am	Robot Performance Match 1	<i>Gymnasium</i>
11:20 – 11:25 am	Robot Performance Match 2	<i>Gymnasium</i>
11:45 am – 12:00 pm	Robot Design Judging Session	<i>Judging Room 2</i>
12:00 – 12:30 pm	Lunch	<i>Cafeteria</i>
12:45 – 1:00 pm	Project Judging Session	<i>Judging Room 3</i>
1:20 – 1:25 pm	Robot Performance Match 3	<i>Gymnasium</i>
2:00 – 3:45 pm	Possible Judge Callbacks	<i>Judging Rooms</i>
3:00 – 3:45 pm	Team Clean-up	<i>Pit Area</i>
4:00 – 5:00 pm	Closing Ceremony	<i>Gymnasium</i>

FLL Judging

In addition to points scored during competition matches, each team is judged on its Core Values, Robot Design, and Project. This often happens in areas which are separated from the main competition areas to eliminate noise and distractions. Your team will report to each of these sessions at some point during the day, so make sure your team knows where all sessions are located and what time the team needs to be there.

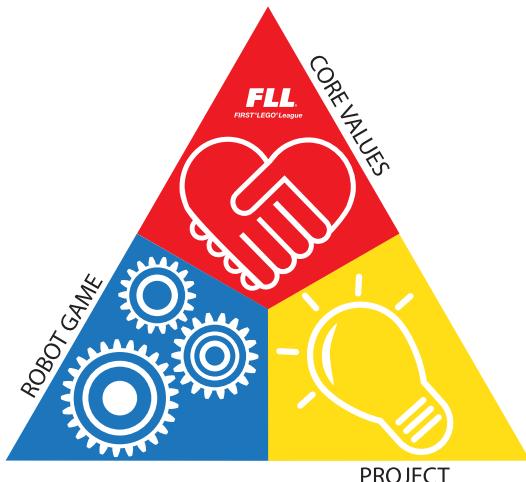
Teams meet with a panel of 2 judges for 10 to 15 minutes in each judged area. Teams should always ask the judges if they are ready to begin before starting to set up. Some judging is done by observing teams in action. Check with your tournament organizer to find out what format they use if it isn't mentioned in the information you receive.

There is usually a break between each judging session so teams can travel to their next location and judges can have a few minutes to discuss the team they just saw. A timekeeper typically ensures sessions remain on schedule.

Some tournaments have restrictions on the number of adults that accompany children into the judging sessions. Please recognize that these rules are not designed to make the judging or performance process secret, but to ensure fair judging. Your team should be proud of all it has done in FLL. Trust the children to represent themselves well.



If the tournament organizer said that there would be audio-visual equipment available in the judging areas, make sure that it is still available. Also double check that any equipment the team brought along is working (such as extension cords and projectors). If anything is not available or not working, prepare your team to present without those items.



Awards Selection Process

At the end of judging sessions, the judges meet to review all teams. They may ask some teams to return to a judging room for a “call-back” or visit you in the pit, so it is a good idea to have at least a few team members at your pit station when you are not competing.

The wait for the final awards decision can be difficult for teams. Prepare your team for a waiting period at the end of the day. This can be an ideal time for your team to pack up your pit table and displays and load up the cars to prepare to leave after the awards ceremony. Your tournament may choose to do a demonstration, have a special guest speaker, or run an exhibition round on the robot performance table to keep the crowd occupied while the judges make their decisions.



FIND ONLINE

Learn about how your team will be judged at a tournament by reviewing the rubrics at <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> and read more about judging in [Chapter 8](#).

The Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony is a celebration of everything the teams have accomplished all day and all season. Awards and medals are presented and teams are recognized for efforts demonstrated throughout the day. There is plenty of cheering, loud music, and smiling faces.



Top 10 Tips for Tournaments

From FLL Team: The Inventioneers, NH, U.S.

1. **Be enthusiastic** – tournaments are exciting and awesome!
2. **Be prepared for loud noise and a long day.** Pack a good lunch and some fun snacks. Don't forget to drink liquids; it is easy to get dehydrated when you're busy all day.
3. **Don't be nervous.** All the teams and judges are really nice.
4. **Use the Core Values skills you have gained over the season all day long – even if things don't go exactly as you planned.** That's why FLL emphasizes the Core Values – so you can work well together no matter what challenges you face. Remember, judges may observe your team at any time during the day.
5. **Have fun breaks throughout the day, especially before judging sessions.** Have a cheer, a song, or a game ready to get the team energized.
6. **Everyone on the team (including the Coach!) needs a good night's sleep the night before the tournament.**
7. **Go over what you want to say before going into your judging sessions,** either out loud to team members or silently to yourself.
8. **Bring a checklist of everything you need for each judging session.** Review it before heading to each session to make sure no one needs to run back to the pit area for a missing item.
9. **Take the time to go around the pits and meet the other teams;** show your enthusiasm for their projects and robots. Your encouragement can mean a lot to another team.
10. **Most important, have fun!** You've worked hard, so be proud of all you have accomplished!

Sample Questions to Ask Your Tournament Organizer

- How much are tournament registration fees, and how are they paid?
- What is the event's cancellation policy? If it's a qualifying event and it's cancelled, how will teams be advanced to the Championship?
- Are there any special forms or information sheets we need to complete before arriving?
- Is the pit open to the public or just to teams?
- What format will the tournament use for Core Values, Robot Design, and Project judging?
- Will there be power or audio-visual equipment in the Project judging area?
- Does the team need to prepare a presentation for the Robot Design judging? Will they be expected to demonstrate a mission on the Robot Game field? Are teams required to bring a printout of their programming for the Robot Design judging?
- Who is allowed in the judging rooms?
- How will lunch be handled?
- Will the tournament schedule be available before the event?

8

Judging and Awards



8

Judging and Awards

The FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®) tournament experience includes 3 judged components in addition to the points-based Robot Game: Project, Robot Design, and Core Values. The judging process is designed both to evaluate each team's accomplishments throughout the season and to provide meaningful feedback through interaction with the judges.

Awards at official FLL events recognize those teams that demonstrate extraordinary achievement in key areas central to the FLL program and mission. In addition to the awards, every child who participates at an FLL Championship tournament receives a season medallion to signify individual contributions and accomplishments. An important part of your role as the Coach is to help each team member to understand that the real reward is what they discover and learn, both from one another and through the FLL experience.



REMINDER

Judges will see everyone's behavior at tournaments. FLL expects Coaches, Mentors, parents, and other family members to model good behavior and Gracious Professionalism®, just like the team members.

Judging Roles

Judges at FLL events are Volunteers just like many Coaches. Judges may be veterans or rookies, and receive training from FLL or the local FLL Partner prior to the event. Judges may be educators, experts in an area related to the Challenge, or perhaps a community member or industry leader who cares about inspiring children.

The judging process at FLL events is overseen by a key Volunteer known as the Judge Advisor. The Judge Advisor leads the judging team and works with the tournament organizers to ensure that the event meets FLL judging standards. Just

as the Head Referee determines the recorded score at the Robot Game table, the Judge Advisor's word is final when it comes to any judging questions or decisions at an event.

Judging Sessions

As described in previous chapters, your team will participate in 3 judged sessions at an official event. While these sessions may take many forms, they are all designed to create an opportunity for judges to observe and interact with the team. During the judging sessions, the judges will ask your team questions about their work and season. Some questions may be standard ones, but judges are always free to use any questions they feel will help them assess and differentiate teams. Note that judges will address questions to team members. In regions where Coaches may join teams in their judging sessions, your job as a Coach is to sit quietly and allow the team to respond.

TIP

If you have a team member who needs some special accommodation to participate in any part of a tournament, speak with the tournament organizer well before the event. They may be able to share relevant information with Judges and other Volunteers to make the event more successful for everyone.

Core Values Judging



CORE VALUES

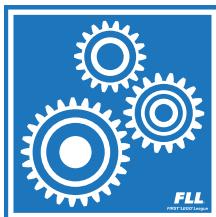
FLL Core Values are central to our mission. Throughout the tournament and particularly during any scheduled sessions, Core Values judges will assess how well your team understands and integrates these values into their tournament experience and daily life.

Judges will observe if the team has found a fun way to express a team spirit that is all their own. They will look for a balanced emphasis on all elements of the FLL competition, not just the part that comes easiest. They will ask about how the team sets and achieves its goals, manages conflict, creates different roles for team members, and manages time constraints.

Some events will rely on interviews, while others will utilize a hands-on teamwork activity, to help the judges assess how independently the team is able to operate and the level of respect accorded everyone's ideas and contributions. They will look for signs that Gracious Professionalism® is alive and well, on and off the playing field.

Refer to [Chapter 4](#) for more about the Core Values.

Robot Design Judging



ROBOT GAME

During the tournament day and any scheduled sessions, Robot Design judges will observe each robot and ask teams about their mechanical design and the programs they wrote. Judges want to hear why the team made certain choices in the development process to enhance durability, efficiency, or programming quality. They will want to see and hear about any innovative techniques or strategies the team came up with to solve problems and complete missions. The judges want to know about the overall design process and what the team considers the best parts of the robot. Importantly, through their questions they will ensure that the children completed and understand all work associated with building their robot.

Be aware that some events require formal robot presentations, so pay attention to any information provided by your tournament organizer about what your team should expect. Even when formal presentations are not required, some judges simply prefer to start interviews with a general, "Tell us about your robot." Others will ask very specific questions. Help your team prepare for different scenarios and make sure the children are comfortable demonstrating the robot. We also recommend that your team bring a printout of its best programming to leave with the judges.

Refer to [Chapter 5](#) for more about the Robot Game.



Project Judging



PROJECT

During their 5 minute Project presentation, the team must clearly demonstrate to the judges that they completed all required Project steps: they identified a real-world problem, created an innovative solution, and shared their findings with others. In addition, they must show that any other Challenge-specific requirements from this season's Project description were met.

The second half of each Project judging session is devoted to a question and answer interview. Judges will ask teams about how they selected and defined the problem they chose to study. They will want to hear about the research process and sources your team used to analyze the problem and existing solutions. Judges will want to learn about the team's innovative solution and how it has the potential to make life better. They will want to know that the team considered what would be needed to make their idea a reality. In addition, they will want to understand how the team shared their ideas with others prior to the tournament and how those people might benefit from the team's idea.

Refer to [Chapter 6](#) for more about the Project.

Judging Rubrics

Each FLL judging session is supported by a rubric, or worksheet developed to help judges record their feedback. The rubrics guide the judges through key criteria that reflect what we believe is most important about the FLL experience. Rubrics also create a consistent way to differentiate between teams at different levels of achievement. Your team will be assessed as Beginning, Developing, Accomplished, or Exemplary in each category.

The rubrics are not just a tool for the judges, however. After the event, completed rubrics should be returned to teams to help them learn their strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, teams are encouraged to use the rubrics as a roadmap

REMINDER

Make sure your team lets the Project judges know how they shared their work with others before the tournament. Teams often forget to include this in their presentations, but sharing is a required step.

FIND ONLINE

Learn about how your team will be judged by reviewing the rubrics at <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> under Judging and Awards. The rubrics are worksheets that the judges will use to evaluate your team at a tournament.

throughout the season. Refer to them often and use them to your advantage. Pay close attention to the higher levels of achievement to understand the criteria that will help define a reliable, well-programmed robot design, a thoroughly researched and effective Project, and a high-functioning team that embraces the FLL Core Values.

Judges Are All Around

In addition to evaluating teams using the rubrics during scheduled interview sessions, judges may also use less formal conversations and observations throughout the event to learn more about teams.

Remind your team that judges may not openly demonstrate who they are, but their ears and eyes are wide open. Lending a helping hand to a team that forgot to bring something speaks loudly about your team's understanding of Gracious Professionalism.

Judges will also consider any input provided throughout the day by referees, event Volunteers and others who interact with the team. Help your team members to understand the process and encourage them to feel comfortable speaking with judges and other event Volunteers.



Call-backs

When time allows, some events incorporate a second round of judging sessions referred to as "call-backs." The length and format for these sessions is not prescribed and can vary significantly due to event and schedule constraints.

Call-backs may be requested for many reasons, ranging from a judge wanting additional clarification about a team, Project, or robot to multiple judges needing to see closely ranked teams that may be in consideration for an award. Please be careful not to make assumptions about your team's chances based on a call-back request. Many awards are decided without the need for them and a call-back never guarantees an award will be given. If your team is asked to participate in a call-back, be sure to find out whether or not the team needs to bring their project, robot, or other materials to the session.

Judging Subjectivity

With the exception of Robot Performance, which is objectively determined by scores earned on the competition table, team achievement in all other FLL award categories is subjectively judged. Even the most experienced and skilled judges will not assess every team in exactly the same way. We have judges work in pairs so they create more balance in the way they review teams. In addition, FLL tournament organizers work hard to train their judges and utilize other tools to create a level playing field for all teams.

FLL continues to improve tools and training for our judges, and the processes we have developed yield fair, strong, and consistent results. However, the fact remains that judged awards are inherently subjective and this is important for all teams to understand. To account for this, awards are determined through a normalization process, which includes deliberations and discussions among the judges to help reduce the effect of subjectivity as much as possible.

FLL Deliberations

Led by the Judge Advisor, FLL deliberations rely on an in-depth discussion of all teams eligible for awards. Using observations and evaluations captured by the rubrics as one form of input, judges consider any and all additional team information gathered throughout the day.

Team achievements are reviewed and contrasted as the judges engage in an often intense discussion to decide which teams will be recognized with awards. Judges work together as a team to create an initial ranking of award candidates based on a team's relative strengths and weaknesses compared to other teams and the award criteria as defined in the rubrics.



Once these initial rankings are complete, the judges enter the final phase of deliberations. As a first step, each Champion's Award candidate is discussed and then a vote is taken by all judges to determine the winner. After the Champion's award winner is known, the other awards are determined utilizing the rankings from initial deliberations following the distribution policy outlined in the next section.

Awards Distribution Policy

The goal of the FLL awards distribution process is to recognize (remember the “R” in FIRST®!) the whole group of teams who most deserve recognition at the tournament. With the exception of Robot Performance (which any team may receive based on the points they earn), teams may only win 1 Core Award per tournament.



REMINDER

The FIRST in FIRST LEGO League stands for “For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.”

Judges must consider how to recognize the best set of award candidates. Sometimes this means an award may not go to the individual team with the highest ranking in a category if that team is being recognized with another award. For example, if a team receives the Teamwork Award they will not receive the Presentation Award even if they were initially ranked highest for Presentation. They will receive the award in the area where they excelled the most.

The goal of the FLL deliberations process is to recognize the entire field of teams in the most appropriate way possible, to celebrate the achievements of **all** teams.

FLL Awards Structure

The **Champion's Award** is the most prestigious award that a team can win at an official FLL event. A champion is someone who passionately supports a cause, and this award celebrates the ultimate success of the FIRST mission. To be considered as a candidate, a team must perform well across all areas of FLL competition. The Champion's Award recognizes a team that embodies the FLL experience by fully embracing our Core Values while achieving excellence and innovation in both the Robot Game and Project.

The remaining FLL Program awards fall into 3 categories:

- ▲ **Core Awards:** recognize teams in areas we consider “core” to our mission.
- ▲ **Special Recognition Awards:** honor the service of individuals who support FLL and our teams in an exceptional way. A team may win a Special Recognition Award even if they have also won a Core Award.
- ▲ **Optional Awards:** recognize the most remarkable teams for which a standard award does not exist. These may take the form of FLL Judges Awards or a separate local award with criteria established by an individual tournament organizer.

The full list of FLL awards and their descriptions may be found at <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

The selection of awards offered at tournaments may vary by event size and type, so please contact your local organizer if you have questions about the specific awards available at your tournament.



FIND ONLINE

The full list of FLL awards and their descriptions may be found on our website at <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.

Awards Eligibility

FLL teams work extremely hard over the course of a season, and after so much effort, the last thing anyone wants is for a team to be ineligible for tournament awards. As the Coach, make sure your team and everyone associated with your team understand FLL policies that may impact award eligibility. If you need clarification, the time to ask questions is **before** an event. Once on site, all decisions impacting award eligibility are determined by the local Judge Advisor and/or event organizer. And just like decisions made by the Head Referee at the table, their authority is final.

A serious issue in the eyes of the judging team could disqualify a team from winning any awards, advancing within the region's tournament system, or participating in any other FLL events for the remainder of the season. Alternately, an exceptional display of Coopertition® might make the difference in an award decision between two very close teams.



Adult Intervention

It is easy for anyone to get caught up in the excitement at tournaments, but they are also the team's opportunity to shine. Adults play an important role in Coaching and supporting the team, but the team's robot and Project must be the work of team members. If judges or referees notice adults directing a team's performance, cuing the team, or prompting children, they may ask the adult to leave the immediate area.

Judges are trained both to give any benefit of the doubt to the team and to recognize an overabundance of adult participation. A team's inability to answer questions, or to make robot adjustments without the direct assistance of an adult, will be evident and will impact award eligibility.

REMINDER

Most FLL team members understand the importance of Gracious Professionalism® and exhibit it consistently. This is part of what makes FLL events so special. FLL also expects Coaches, Mentors, parents and other family members to model good behavior and Gracious Professionalism® at all times.

Other Rules to Keep in Mind

As relayed throughout this Coaches' Handbook and other materials, there are a number of additional award eligibility requirements that teams must meet. We have listed some of them here:

- ▲ FLL teams may include up to 10 children. No team member may exceed the maximum allowed age in your region. See [Chapter 2](#) for more details.
- ▲ Teams are only eligible to win awards and advancement at the first official Qualifier or tournament they attend each season. Teams who have the opportunity to attend multiple Qualifiers for fun cannot win additional awards or receive multiple chances to advance to a Regional or Championship. Please contact your FLL Partner with any questions about how this works in your region.



- ▲ Teams must participate in all elements of an FLL competition including the Robot Game as well as Core Values, Robot Design, and Project judging in order to be eligible for any FLL Core Award.
- ▲ All team members present at an event are expected to participate in all judged sessions, in addition to showing up as a team for the Robot Game.
- ▲ For Core Values award eligibility, teams (including Coaches, Mentors, parents and others associated with the team) must uphold and display FLL Core Values at all times, not just during Core Values judging sessions.
- ▲ For Robot Performance and Robot Design award eligibility, the robot must be built in accordance with all allowable parts, software, and other rules.
- ▲ For Project award eligibility, teams must demonstrate completion of all 3 steps of the Project process (identify a problem, develop an innovative solution, and share results) as part of their presentation, and fulfill any other Project requirements as defined in the annual Challenge documents.
 - Project presentations must be no more than 5 minutes in length, including set up time; they must also be “live” with media used for enhancement only.



COACH-TO-COACH

Remember: *What we discover is more important than what we win!*

If your team doesn't win an award, make sure you stay positive and continue to model the Core Values. If you take the attitude that “we got robbed!” then your team may adopt this attitude too. FLL is about an entire season, not just 1 day.

Talk to your team about this before the tournament, but also be prepared to address it at the event. Have some examples ready of things your team accomplished. It might not make the children feel better right away, but the worst possible outcome is for your team to walk away feeling like their hard work was “all for nothing.” Take the time to help them see the benefits they got from the season, and start talking about how they are going to do even better next year!

JUDGING QUESTIONS?

Check the Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

Email other judging questions to flljudge@usfirst.org

9

Celebrate Your Season





Celebrate Your Season

Acknowledging and celebrating your team's accomplishments, both individual and collective, is essential. Even if the team didn't reach all its goals, they have accomplished a lot and the members should be proud. Perhaps the team created a unique Project presentation, designed and programmed a robot to perform a task autonomously, or learned how to work together. Celebrate these and their many other accomplishments!

Celebrations

There are many ways to celebrate. While most teams enjoy attending a tournament, this is just 1 way of celebrating. Whether you use the following suggestions or your team comes up with its own ideas, it is important to celebrate together. Be sure to include a plan for celebrating in your season's schedule.

Acknowledge Each Team Member

Be sure to make some time for each team member. Tell each child how he or she contributed to the team. Talk about the great ideas each team member had, the problems solved, the way each supported teammates, and the things learned during the season.



As an end-of-the-season teamwork exercise, ask your team to write down what each member contributed. Then present to each child a certificate showing the contributions that other team members cited. Or ask the children to review the list of FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®) Core Values and choose the 1 that best describes each team member. One might receive a Gracious Professionalism® award, and another might receive the Spirit of Friendly Competition award. This is a great way for members to understand that their contributions to the team are greater than the tasks that each performed. You can find special FLL certificates with the season's logo on the FIRST® website (<http://www.usfirst.org/fll>) in the FLL Marketing Tools section.

COACH-TO-COACH

Find ways to keep your final celebration focused on fun and positive experiences, especially if your team didn't win an award. Try asking each team member to tell their favorite thing that happened during the season. The story doesn't have to be about how they solved an FLL problem. It could be about the time that they did a really successful teambuilding exercise or someone told such a great joke that the whole team laughed for 10 minutes. It will help them remember what they liked about the FLL experience.

Salute the Group

Plan a team celebration. Organize a pizza party or pot-luck dinner. Invite family and friends to see what your team has accomplished. The team can display its Project, demonstrate its robot, and showcase team mementos, scrapbooks, and photos. This can be an opportunity to hand out the certificates you create that acknowledge each team member's contributions.

Ask your school to hold a special assembly or your sponsoring organization to hold a team social. Each time your team has the opportunity to exhibit their talents, they gain experience as well as confidence and poise.

Applaud Your Sponsors, Mentors, Volunteers, and Host Site

Be sure your team recognizes the contributions of Mentors, Sponsors, Volunteers, and your host site. The team can give a personal thank you gift of a team or robot photograph, framed season certificate, or personal thank-you letters recognizing the special talents or contributions of each.

If your team wants to give a gift with a FIRST logo, visit the FIRST online store linked off the FIRST website. There are clothing, awards, and other customized items available.

Extend Your Season

Host a Community (Unofficial) Event

Your team can host an unofficial or off-season tournament and invite other teams in the area to attend. These events do not allow teams to qualify for your region's Championship tournament, but they are a great way for teams to demonstrate their talents and share their knowledge in a low pressure environment. The children enjoy the opportunity to see what others have done and be recognized for their unique results. Visit the *FIRST* website (<http://www.usfirst.org/fll>) for information on running your own event.

Feel free to customize your local event to suit your team's needs and resources. Include special robot challenges, teamwork activities, mini projects, and other special components your team develops. Local events do not have to be expensive to host and you can be as creative as you like. Encourage parents and guardians to become planning members for the event. Whatever your team chooses to do, let other participating teams know what they can expect and how they might be able to help.

Graduate to Other FIRST Programs

All FLL team members grow up eventually, so it is never too early to start thinking about the next step. The *FIRST* progression of programs spans from 6 years old through high school, so your team will have the opportunity to continue participating with *FIRST* even after they graduate from FLL.

You may want to consider attending a *FIRST*® Tech Challenge (FTC®) or *FIRST*® Robotics Competition (FRC®) event in your area. Many occur after the FLL tournament season, and they will give your team a great taste of the *FIRST* experience for older students.

To learn more about our programs for older students and search for events in your area, visit the *FIRST* website at <http://www.usfirst.org>.

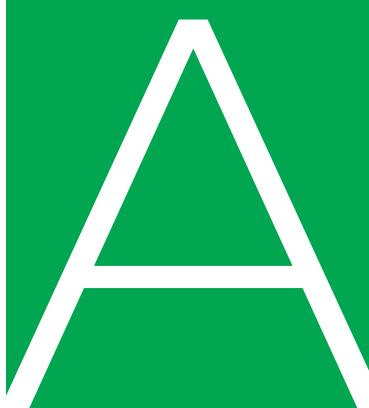
Pat Yourself on the Back

You have been the team's foundation: juggling schedules, providing structure, encouraging everyone's participation, facilitating decision-making, and praising each team member's efforts. In addition, you have negotiated, guided, listened, cajoled, and maybe even consoled. After committing endless hours and significant energy to guiding and managing your team, you deserve a "pat on the back." **Thank you so much! The team would not have had an FLL season without you!**

A

Money Management





Money Management

Money management is important for every team. Whether your team is supported by a school or organization, or you are self-funded, you are going to have expenses. That means that you will need a system to manage the money you have coming in and the expenses you have going out. We have compiled a few tips from experienced team Coaches to help you navigate this process.

1. **Write a budget.** Every team should write a budget. It should not be long, and it does not need to be complicated, but it should include anything you think your team will need. See the [sample team budget](#). Write out each big item you will need along with the cost. Also include at least 1 line for other miscellaneous expenses. Even if you only use that extra money for snacks, you will be glad that it was available.

Many teams use a simple spreadsheet to track fundraising and expenses. However, the most important thing is that you write your budget down! Even if it is just on a piece of paper that you can photocopy and hand out to the other adults who will help you, writing down your budget will help you see where you stand and what still needs to be done to meet the team's needs. It will also help you track your progress as you raise money or decide how far you can travel for a tournament.

If your team receives donations from parents, local businesses, or other donors, tracking your budget carefully will allow you to show your donors that you used their money wisely. This may even help you earn their support again next year.

2. **Receive donations.** Most teams use fundraising to pay for some or all of their team expenses. You can find some fundraising suggestions on the following pages. No matter what fundraising method you use, your team will need a responsible adult to collect the money you raise.

If you approach a local business to support your team, you may find that some of them will only donate to officially recognized non-profit organizations. They may ask you for a tax ID number. Teams are not covered by the *FIRST* 501(c)(3) tax status, so some teams have chosen to set up their own non-profit organization to handle their finances. However, this can be a complicated and expensive process.

If you have any connection to a school or local non-profit, we strongly recommend that you talk to them about your dilemma and request their support with your fundraising efforts. If they are willing to accept donations on behalf of your team, this might make new sources of funding available to you. Just make sure you define the arrangement in writing so that both sides understand how the donations will be handled and how your team will receive the money.

3. **Deposit incoming funds.** If your team is handling its own expenses, you will need a way to deposit the money you collect. Many banks and credit unions offer “club” accounts designed for clubs and school groups. You can contact your local bank(s) to find out if they offer these accounts and what requirements they have. Do not be afraid to try a few different banks, because they may offer different options.

Some banks may require you to provide an employer or tax ID number to open a team account. Teams are not covered by the *FIRST* 501(c)(3) tax status, so you will need to work with your school, sponsors, or a local non-profit to obtain a tax number if you need it (see number 2 above).

Some teams have a Coach or parent Volunteer who deposits the funds into their personal bank account and writes checks for the team as needed. If you choose this route, just keep careful track of the budget to ensure that any surplus either gets returned to the donors or used on team activities.

4. **Pay bills.** Your team will need to pay for expenses such as FLL team registration, tournament registration fees, a new Field Setup Kit each year, travel to and from your tournament(s), and other miscellaneous supplies (such as markers, poster board, and snacks).

You may purchase other materials from local stores, catalogs, or online, so it may be helpful for your team to have more than 1 method of payment available. If you set up a club account at a local bank, they should offer you a check book and possibly a debit or credit card that will draw money from the account. If you have a Coach or parent handling the money through their own bank account or in cash, they will need to make the payments and track the team spending.

Sample Budget

(Based on estimated 2014 U.S. and Canada costs)

Keep in mind that you may be able to get some items as donations.

Required Items	Cost	Comments
National Team Registration	\$225 USD \$260 CAD	Required for all FLL teams; non-refundable; does not include tournament registration
FLL Robot Set (EV3)	\$499 USD \$570 CAD	Teams must have a LEGO® MINDSTORMS® set; can be reused from year to year
FLL Field Setup Kit	\$75 USD \$88 CAD	Required, but teams may share; non-refundable; changes each year
Shipping and Handling (add sales tax, if applicable)	\$60 USD \$70 CAD	7% of the total cost of your order; will vary based on the materials you order
Estimated Total (Required Items)	\$770 USD \$899 CAD	

Optional Items	Est. Cost	Comments
Robot Game Table	\$60	Built by team from common home improvement store materials; surface and borders \$25-30; sawhorses \$30
Tournament Entry Fee	\$50-100	Varies by event – contact your tournament organizer for details
T-shirts	\$50-100	Contact a local shirt vendor or purchase FLL branded gear from http://first.epromo.com
Other Items	\$100	Might include markers, paper, copies, scissors, folders, poster board, binders, other office supplies, snacks or travel expenses
Estimated Total (Optional Items)	\$360	

Fundraising Ideas

Pick a fundraiser that is appropriate for your team and your community. Make it fun. The more fun you have holding the fundraiser, the more donors will want to be a part of that excitement.

When raising money for your team, be sure to ask community groups to support you in any way they can. Think of fundraising ideas that don't require additional Volunteers or a big time commitment. A number of major retail franchises match money raised at their locations, while others offer community groups free or discounted products. Be sure to call local businesses and ask them what they might do to help you. Every little bit you raise is helpful!

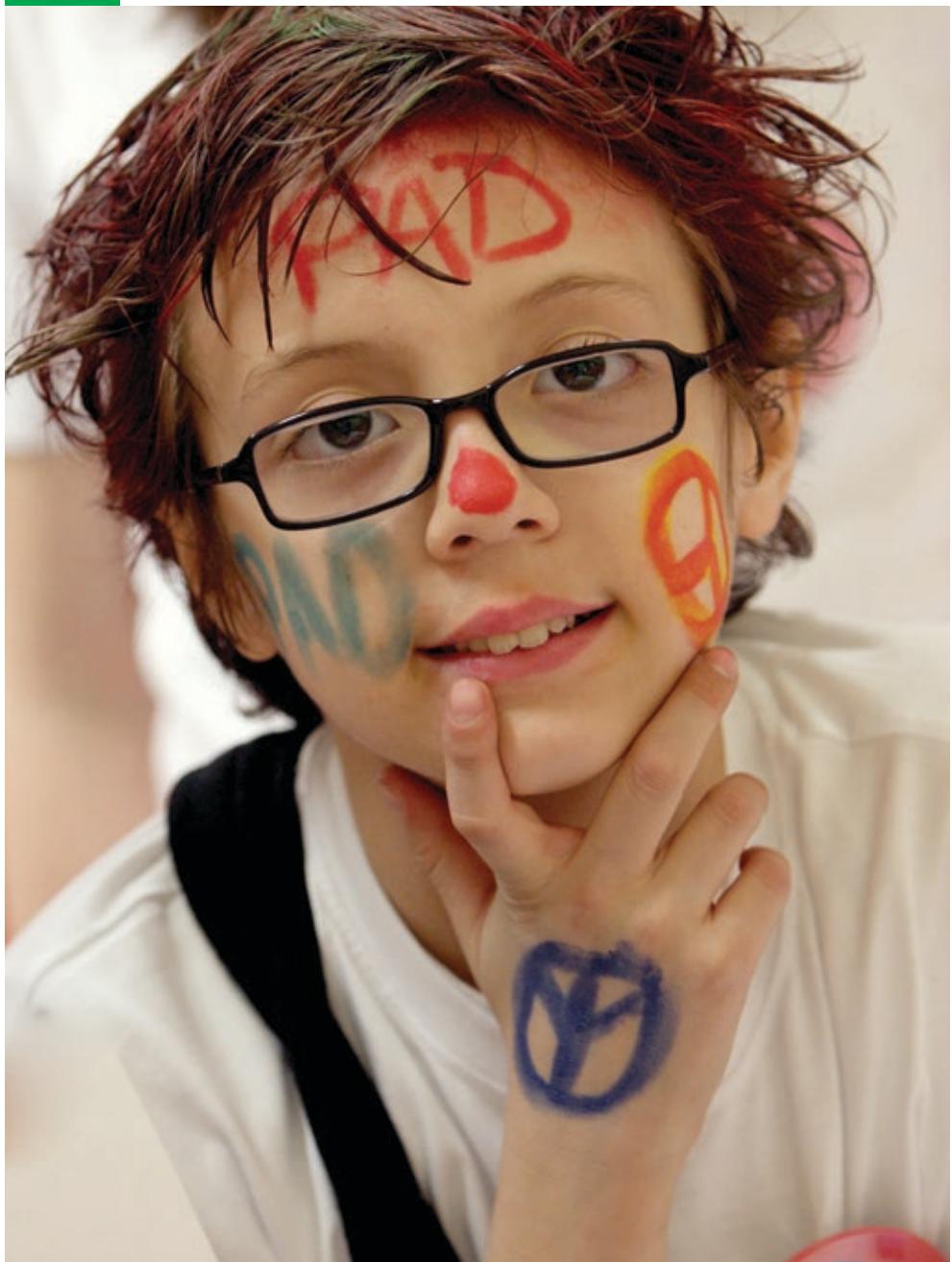
Some fundraising ideas include:

- ▲ Bake sale or carwash.
- ▲ Raffle items donated by parents or local businesses.
- ▲ Write letters or proposals to foundations that support youth programs.
- ▲ Sell balloons for \$5 each. Some contain donated gift certificates; others have a thank-you note from the team.
- ▲ Organize a reverse raffle. Guests receive a raffle envelope with an assignment inside. They have to sing the national anthem — or buy their way out of it! They pay twice as much to assign the task to another attendee.
- ▲ Kiss the pig. Recruit a few Volunteers at a school or community gathering. Put out jars with each Volunteer's name. Attendees put money in the jar of their choice. The person whose name is on the jar with the most money kisses a pig, frog, or silly object of your choice at the end of the event.

Remember, how your team handles its money is up to your team. FLL does not regulate how teams raise or spend money. However, we recommend keeping it as simple as possible. Although your team will probably need to spend some time raising and spending money, keep the main focus of your team's activities where it belongs — on completing the Challenge and having fun!



B Sample Schedule



B

Sample Schedule

These week-by-week milestones are only a guide. If this is your first year, you may find that your team needs a little more time to get acquainted with the robot set or to find useful Project resources. Just make sure you set some reasonable goals and then reassess as you go along. Having goals will help to keep your team focused even if you need to adjust the goals later.

Before the Challenge is Released (if possible)

- ▲ Review the **FLL Core Values** as a team.
- ▲ Choose a team name.
- ▲ **Robot Game**
 - Open your robot set and have team members try building some sample robots.
 - Have your programming team begin working through the tutorials included on the robot set CD.
 - Have team members try to program a simple robot to perform some practice tasks (like moving forward and backward, turning, or climbing a small obstacle).
- ▲ **Project**
 - Have your team watch Project videos on the Coach/Team Resources page at <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.
 - Have your team begin researching the general theme of this year's Challenge.
- ▲ As a team, learn about some careers in the field of this year's Challenge.



CORE VALUES



ROBOT GAME



PROJECT

WEEK 1

- ▲ Start with team building exercises.
- ▲ Review the **Core Values** as a team (it never hurts to repeat this!).
- ▲ Review all the team member roles and responsibilities (it is OK if these change over time).
- ▲ Brainstorm team goals and create a season calendar.
- ▲ Download and review the Challenge document from <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.
- ▲ **Robot Game**
 - Read the **Robot Game** information (from the Challenge document) with your team. Work together to understand the requirements.
 - Begin constructing the mission models from the instructions found on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.
- ▲ **Project**
 - Read the **Project** description (from the Challenge document) with your team. Work together to understand all the steps your team must complete.
 - Have team members share what they know about the Challenge theme.
 - Brainstorm sources to research, possible field trips, or professionals your team could contact.
- ▲ Visit the Judging and Awards page on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to download the Rubrics and list of awards offered at FLL tournaments.

WEEK 2

- ▲ Check the **Robot Game** Updates, **Project** Updates, and Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to see if there are any updates.
- ▲ **Robot Game**
 - Finish building the mission models.
 - Set up your mission mat to create your practice field.
 - Brainstorm possible mission strategies.
 - Experiment with different chassis designs and simple programming tasks.
- ▲ **Project**
 - Discuss what each team member has learned about the **Project** topic.
 - Select a specific problem to focus on and begin researching existing solutions to that problem.
 - Ask team members to assign themselves research to do at the library, on the internet, or other places before the next meeting.
 - Plan a field trip or a phone call with a professional in the field of this year's Challenge.

WEEK 3

- ▲ Check the **Robot Game** Updates, **Project** Updates, and Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to see if there are any updates.
- ▲ Talk about how well your team is displaying the **Core Values** at practices and beyond. Review any **Core Values** that might need a little work.
- ▲ **Robot Game**
 - Design and program the robot to perform the 2 missions that the team considers the easiest.
 - Test, redesign, and repeat.
 - Consider robot designs and strategies for expansion to other missions.
 - Save copies and backup programs.
- ▲ **Project**
 - Share team member research on the selected problem, existing solutions, and the results of any professionals contacted by the team.
 - Focus on your team's problem and brainstorm some innovative solutions.

WEEK 4

- ▲ Check the **Robot Game** Updates, **Project** Updates, and Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to see if there are any updates.
- ▲ **Robot Game**
 - Design and program the robot to consistently achieve at least 50% of your team's **Robot Game** goals. (Not 50% of the missions – just 50% of your team's goals!)
 - Save copies and backup programs.
- ▲ **Project**
 - Select an innovative solution for your team's problem and begin researching what technology, materials, or expertise would be required to make it a reality.
 - Brainstorm how your team can share their findings with others who could benefit from their solution.

WEEK 5

- ▲ Check the **Robot Game** Updates, **Project** Updates, and Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to see if there are any updates.
- ▲ Reassess team goals based on how long you have before you attend your first tournament. Do you need to increase or decrease what your team hopes to accomplish?

▲ Robot Game

- Have some team members act as quality control. They should check that all team strategies meet the rules and achieve the team's point goals.
- Try to meet 75% of the team's robot-related goals.
- Begin working on a short introduction to your team's robot for the Robot Design judges at your tournament.

▲ Project

- Determine what would be needed to make your team's solution a reality.
- Have team members prepare a presentation to share your team's Project with people who could benefit from the solution.
- Brainstorm creative ways your team can present their Project to the judges at a tournament. This presentation will probably be slightly different than sharing with people who might benefit from the solution.

WEEK 6

- ▲ Check the **Robot Game** Updates, **Project** Updates, and Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to see if there are any updates.
- ▲ Talk about how your team has displayed the **Core Values** throughout the season. Ask team members to talk about specific examples they could share with the judges.
- ▲ **Robot Game**
 - Try to meet 75% of the team's goals consistently while working on the remaining goals.
 - Have team members test the robot in different lighting conditions in case the lighting is different at the tournament.
 - Save copies and backup programs.
- ▲ **Project**
 - Have team members write and practice their tournament presentation.

WEEK 7

- ▲ Check the **Robot Game** Updates, **Project** Updates, and Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to see if there are any updates.
- ▲ As a team, make final adjustments to your goals so that you know what you need to achieve in the last weeks.
- ▲ Discuss expectations for your tournament. Remember, even the tournament experience is about discovery and fun!

▲ **Robot Game**

- Try to meet 100% of robot-related goals most of the time.
- Run timed practice matches.

▲ **Project**

- Share your team's Project with people who could benefit.
- Hold practice tournament presentations with a timer. Make sure team members can set up and present in 5 minutes with no adult help.
- Double check that the presentation addresses everything listed on the **Project Rubric**.
- Have team members practice answering questions about their problem and solution.

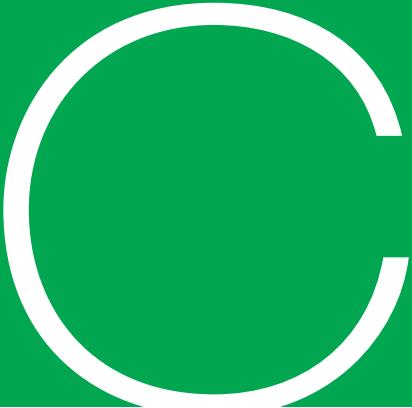
WEEK 8

- ▲ Check the **Robot Game** Updates, **Project** Updates, and Judging FAQ on <http://www.firstlegoleague.org> to see if there are any updates.
- ▲ Review the Rubrics one last time to make sure the team understands how they will be judged in all areas of the tournament.
- ▲ **Core Values**
 - Review your tournament's **Core Values** judging method with the team.
 - Remind team members to display the **Core Values** at all times while attending a tournament.
- ▲ **Robot Game**
 - Fine tune the robot's design and programming.
 - Make sure the robot can meet all goals consistently.
- ▲ **Project**
 - Make sure the team is comfortable with their presentation and that they can consistently set up and present in 5 minutes.
- ▲ Hold a dress rehearsal of all aspects of a tournament with volunteer “judges”:
 - Timed matches for the **Robot Game**.
 - Robot Design judging session.
 - **Project** presentation.
 - **Core Values** judging session.

C

New This Edition





New This Edition

- ▲ Update your web links! If you have any trouble accessing our website, make sure you add <http://www> to the web address.
 - For example: <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>.
- ▲ 2 to 10 children and 2 adult Coaches required for each FLL team. ([Chapter 2](#))
- ▲ New Coach-to-Coach advice. ([Chapter 3](#) and [6](#))
- ▲ Updated descriptions of Gracious Professionalism® and Coopertition®. ([Chapter 4](#))
- ▲ LEGO MINDSTORMS EV3 is allowed in the Robot Game. ([Chapter 5](#))
- ▲ Project FAQ changed to Project Updates. ([Chapter 6](#))
- ▲ Updated pricing to reflect new LEGO MINDSTORMS EV3 robot set. ([Appendix A](#))

What's **FIRST**?

For students aged 6-18, it's the hardest fun you'll ever have. For team Mentors, Coaches, and Volunteers, it's the most rewarding adventure you'll ever undertake. For Sponsors, it's the most enlightened investment you could ever make.



It's a competitive *sport*. It's a life *experience*.
It's *opportunity*. It's *community*. It's *amazing*.

FIRST® is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization devoted to helping young people discover and develop a passion for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Founded more than 20 years ago by inventor Dean Kamen, the 2013-2014 *FIRST* season attracted more than 350,000 youth and more than 130,000 Mentors, Coaches, and Volunteers from more than 70 countries. The annual programs culminate in an international robotics competition and celebration where teams win recognition, gain self-confidence, develop people and life skills, make new friends, and perhaps discover an unforeseen career path.



Jr.FLL
Junior *FIRST LEGO League*
Grades K-3

FLL
FIRST LEGO League
Grades 4-8

FTC
FIRST Tech Challenge
Grades 7-12

FRC
FIRST Robotics Competition
Grades 9-12

FLL is the result of an exciting alliance between FIRST® & The LEGO® Group.



In 1998, FIRST® Founder Dean Kamen and The LEGO® Group's Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen joined forces to create FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL®), a powerful program that engages children in playful and meaningful learning while helping them discover the fun in science and technology through the FIRST experience.

Dean and Kjeld have a shared belief that FLL inspires teams to research, build, and experiment. By doing so, they live the entire process of creating ideas, solving problems, and overcoming obstacles, while gaining confidence in their abilities to use technology in positive ways.



FIRST® LEGO® League
200 Bedford Street
Manchester, NH 03101, USA
<http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

