

FLL Coaching – Team Management

Hosted by Senior Mentor, FLL Coach and FLL Partner
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Resources for management of teams:

Coaches' Handbook Chapter 2

FIRST LEGO League website: <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

FIRST website: <http://usfirst.org>, section for coaches and mentors

FIRST NEMO(Non-engineering Mentor Organization): www.FIRSTnemo.org

http://www.FIRSTnemo.org/PDF/organizational_tips.pdf

FLL Forums – opportunity to talk to other coaches

General questions:

FLL Partner for your region of North America

FLL at FIRST Headquarters, flteams@usFIRST.org

FIRST Senior Mentor Hotline. The hotline will provide a means and opportunity for teams, coaches, and mentors to direct their questions, and quickly obtain information and/or request other assistance from FIRST Senior Mentors. All correspondence and inquiries should be addressed to FIRSTseniormentors@usFIRST.org.

Please contact your local FLL Operational Partner for the specifics for the FLL program locally including training and tournaments. To find your FLL Partner go to the FIRST LEGO League website and click on 'Regional Contacts' in the left hand navigation.

1. Things to keep in mind regarding team management.

- a. No two teams will be alike – there are no cookie cutter teams in FLL!! Every team will develop its own personality!! So, what works well for one team may not work well for another.
- b. Many factors will influence how you manage your team.
 - i. Size of the team – there is a major difference between a team with 10 members and a team with 4 members. Remember that 10 is the maximum. [A good size is 6-8.]
 - ii. Ages of team members – a team with mixed ages or are all team members close in age.
 - iii. Boys vs. girls vs. boys and girls.
 - iv. New members vs. veteran members vs. mixed members
 - v. Combine all of these factors and throw in multiple personality types and WOW – it gets interesting!!
- c. Recruitment: what to do if you have room for more members
http://www.FIRSTnemo.org/PDF/Recruiting_Students.pdf
- d. Managing the administrative aspect of your team
 - i. Important to track and maintain the team's schedule of milestone events.
Set goals early and check your goals periodically during the season
 - ii. This can be done by the coach or the coach can designate a parent, assistant, etc.
 - iii. Events such as registration, arrival of the kits, tournament registration, etc.

iv. You or your designee to arrange for meeting locations, transportation for field trips, refreshments, fundraising, etc.

2. Team Building – why important

- a. Team members *FIRST* need to get to know one another; some may not even know each others' names. This is especially important in new teams or existing teams that add in new members.
- b. Team members need to feel comfortable with each other so they are willing to share ideas with each other.
- c. It's important to get the team communicating with each other in a more relaxed environment at *FIRST*.
- d. Goal for all members to feel that they are part of the team, their ideas will be listened to and respected by everyone and that they have contributed.
- e. FLL Core Values and Gracious Professionalism should be emphasized throughout the season.
- f. HAVE FUN – one of the most important things to team building!!

3. Team Building reminders.

- a. Team Building is an ongoing process – it will not happen in one or two meetings.
- b. Some meetings you will feel like you have taken two steps forward and one step backward (or vice versa). This is part of learning to be a team and how to solve problems when there are differing opinions. It is an important step for them to learn.

4. Team Building activities – can really vary!

- a. Structured team building activities such as ice breakers and/or games. You can get ideas from books from the library, the internet, or maybe activities you have done in schools, Scouts, etc.
- b. Fun structured activities such as bowling, laser tag, etc.
- c. Non-structured activities. Fifteen minutes of Frisbee, tag, or soccer during every meeting can go a long way!! Each meeting it is important to provide a chance for them to just have fun in a relaxed fashion.
- d. Team Spirit type activities during a meeting:
 - i. Picking a team name
 - ii. Naming the robot and/or the project
 - iii. Designing a team shirt
 - iv. Writing a team cheer
 - v. Making a team banner
 - vi. Building a team mascot
 - vii. Making little items to trade at the competition
 - viii. Team building activity related to the theme – give example.
 - ix. Activity where they write down strength about each team member. Makes them realize that everyone is a valuable member.

5. How the team makes decisions is important

A. Brainstorming – a great way to engage the entire team.

- a. Have someone write down all the ideas during the session.
- b. Remind the team that during the brainstorming session all ideas are good ideas. There are no stupid ideas.
- c. Crazy ideas are good as well; you never know where one may lead!

- d. Remind them that everyone listens when a team member is talking. All ideas deserve respect!!
- e. Go around the table and have each person give one or two ideas. Continue to go around for as long as necessary.
- f. This is a good way to include everyone on the team such as the quiet member.
- g. This is a good way to handle the difficult member as it helps them realize that everyone's ideas are just as important as theirs.
- h. Brainstorming can be used for LOTS!!
 - i. Team name
 - ii. Shirt design
 - iii. Project topic
 - iv. Robot design
 - v. Presentation format
 - vi. Etc.

B. Voting and/or Consensus – One way to allow the entire team to make the decisions is for them to vote. It is important for the team to make the decisions since the focus in FLL is the kids!! Some teams may not officially “vote”, but work on getting consensus among the team members.

7. Orchestrating work among members – dependent on those team management factors.

- a. To begin the season it is important that every team member has a basic understanding of the robot (building and programming), the mission rules, and the “SMART MOVE” topic.
- b. Have the team members verbalize what is meant by working as a team and what is meant by teamwork. [as well as Gracious Professionalism: the value of sharing with others.]
- c. As the season progresses members may begin to spend more time specializing in specific roles.
- d. There is no right way, but what is necessary is that every team member understands their roles and responsibilities.
- e. Be sure that more than one person is knowledgeable about a specific task.
- f. To save meeting time members can do some research or activities at home and bring in their findings.
- g. May want to split the team into two workgroups for some meetings. This can be a very efficient use of time.
- h. You can spend one day for the Project portion and one day for the robot/technical portion.
- i. Rotate some roles such as keeping notes in a composition notebook each week about the robot/technical portion.
- j. Constantly ask the team questions. Your role is to facilitate and encourage the process, not the content. By asking questions you will push their thinking and problem solving, especially at times when they get “stuck” or frustrated.

8. Team roles:

- a. Have the members of the team select specific areas of need and have individuals take on the role of being that task's “chairperson”.
- b. It is the chairperson's job to track how this task is coming along, but not to do it by themselves. It is the job to just remind the team that this is at such a stage.

c. Use the Coaches' Handbook suggestions for a list of potential assignments. Team members take pride in knowing they were specifically responsible in making certain things happen so give them a job to do

9. Basic Meeting 101 – what will your *FIRST* meeting look like?

a. It is very helpful to have an initial meeting before the challenge is announced (September 3rd). If this is a new team or a team with new members, you may want to include parents at this meeting.

b. The purpose will be to give the team and parents an overview of *FIRST* and FLL and reinforce their commitment to the team.

i. What is *FIRST*, what is FLL

ii. What are the FLL Core Values

iii. Basic schedule of the season

iv. Components: Robot and Project Presentation

v. Importance of Teamwork

vi. Explain some of the roles and responsibilities that the team members may be taking

vii. Explain the roles and responsibilities that the parents will be taking

viii. Remind everyone that the two most important things are to HAVE FUN and THE KIDS DO THE WORK!!

10. Involving parents – don't be afraid to ask the parents to help!! With a large team, a new team, a younger team, any team some days it seems that it is going to take a village to raise the team!! Plus, parents that are involved are better supporters of you and their child. A helpful resources is: http://www.FIRSTnemo.org/PDF/101_ways_parents_can_help.pdf

Parents can:

a. Provide snacks

b. Order the shirts

c. Organize a fundraiser

d. Handle communication with all team members

e. Make photocopies

f. Help at meetings

g. Carpool to meetings or field trips

h. Act as a panel of judges before the competition. Have the team perform their presentation and the parents can ask questions.

i. Help the day of the competition – many hands are good!!

11. Communication:

a. Internal communication :

i. Helping the members of the team [students and adults] communicate with each other is critical.

ii. Often each meeting should start with a “team building” exercise and then a review of what needs to be done both at the meeting and in the future.

iii. Having a list of tasks as well as a “season” calendar on display is very helpful. A chart pad works well as well as having sticky notes for ideas to be added as they come up.

iv. Before the meeting ends a review of what will need to be done next time or before the next team meeting should be added to the calendar so at the next meeting these uncompleted tasks can be addressed.

v. Have an “opening” as well as a meeting closing run by the students.

- b. Keep parents informed! It helps them to stay involved and of course helps you.
- b. Community Communications: Members of the team should be making an effort to contact members of the larger community for help and support. Under this topic are public relations as well as resource development [\$\$, materials, etc.]

12. Question/Comments

13. Review the basics