

FIRST Best Practices: Team Behavior during Build Season and at Competition

Compiled and simplified by Nate Laverdure from:

The 101+ Things I Wish I'd Known before My First FIRST Tournament

Compiled by NEMO from the Chief Delphi *FIRST* Forum, 2005-2006
Available from http://www.firstnemo.org/PDF/first_competition_tips.pdf

My thanks to Rick Tyler and those at NEMO for making these hints available.

Good Team Practices

How should we design the robot?

Do:

Let the whole team get involved in the planning and building process
Read the entire manual, plus the updates on the *FIRST* website

Don't:

Value complexity over simplicity
Assume reliability—instead design for reparability

How should we build the robot?

Do:

Allow students to specialize
Expect everything to break on the robot at least once during its lifetime
Pick the drive team and alternates during the second or third week of build season
Pick the pit crew and alternates during the fourth or fifth week of build season
Remember that reliability the best asset you can have on the playing field
Recognize that a week of testing is more important than a week of adding extra features
Learn to diagnose common problems

Don't:

Let students use machines without sufficient safety training
Forget that the robot must fit in the size requirements

What should we bring to competitions?

Tools
Team banner
Key or tools for uncrating
White board and markers
Robot cart
Clock, watch, etc
Giveaway items like buttons
Extra raw material, hardware, and spare parts

How should the team behave at competitions?

Do:

Keep safety as the number one priority
Have students and parents sign a code of conduct
Be aggressive but professional when talking to judges
Check the robot, using a checklist, before every match
Make sure the robot's battery is charged, fastened securely, and plugged in
Make sure the robot has the correct code loaded before the match
Make sure you turn the robot on before the match
Coordinate strategy with your alliance partners
Keep up on FIRST's schedule of events
Keep the pit area organized
Ask for help when you need it

Don't:

Forget the big picture
Let adults touch the robot except to ensure safety
Forget to scout out your competitors
Lose hope if performance is subpar until qualifying rounds end
Let a problem between students get out of hand

Good Personal Practices

How should I behave during build season?

Do:

Be prepared to give up a lot of your time and energy
Speak up when it comes to a major decision about the robot

Don't:

Lose sight of just how fun science, technology and engineering can be

What should I wear to competitions?

One team shirt for as many days as you are competing
Jeans or cargo pants
Comfortable shoes

What should I bring to competitions?

Backpack or bag with your name on it
Filled water bottle
Comfortable pair of safety glasses
Eyeglass cleaning fluid
Earplugs
Notebook, Pen/Pencil
Wallet
Cell phone loaded with your team's phone numbers
Camera
Laptop (if necessary)

What should I leave at home?

iPods
Game devices
Weapons, cigarettes, non-prescription drugs, alcoholic beverages

How should I behave at competitions?

Do:

- Have fun
- Be patient
- Be respectful
- Wash your hands often
- Wear your safety glasses in the pits
- Get plenty of sleep at night
- Eat and drink regularly
- Network—get out of your pit and meet teams and volunteers
- Be enthusiastic and act foolish—yell, cheer, chant, dance, and join a conga line
- Always be open and willing to teach any skills or knowledge you have
- Remember that your second year in FIRST is your first year as a mentor
- Remember that your opinions and statements do reflect on your team and its' reputation

Don't:

- Run
- Panic
- Fall asleep in the pits or stands
- Use a machine if you are tired or inexperienced
- Stress about robot problems
- Show public displays of intimate affection
- Crowd the pit if you aren't doing a job
- Take anything too seriously except safety