



PRESENTED BY  **Raytheon**  
Technologies

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# Judge Practice Day

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## Volunteer Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to volunteer for a *FIRST*® Tech Challenge event. *FIRST*® and *FIRST*® Tech Challenge rely heavily on volunteers to ensure events run smoothly and are a fun experience for teams and their families, which could not happen without people like you. With over 6,500 teams competing yearly, your dedication and commitment are essential to the success of each event and the *FIRST* Tech Challenge program. Thank you for your time and effort in supporting the mission of *FIRST*!

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## Contents

Contents.....	3
Introduction.....	4
<i>What is FIRST® Tech Challenge?</i> .....	4
<i>Gracious Professionalism®</i> .....	4
<i>FIRST</i> Privacy Policy .....	4
Volunteer General Information.....	5
<i>Volunteer Training and Certification</i> .....	5
<i>Volunteer Minimum Age Requirement</i> .....	5
<i>Bring a Friend!</i> .....	5
What is the <i>FIRST</i> ® Tech Challenge Judging Practice Day?.....	6
<i>Judging Practice Day Volunteer Needs</i> .....	6
<i>Volunteer Registration</i> .....	6
Judge Practice Day Agenda .....	6
<i>Team Check-In</i> .....	7
What you should provide to teams.....	7
<i>Team Presentation &amp; Interview</i> .....	7
Optional Team Observation.....	7
Format of the Team Presentation & Interview Process .....	8
<i>Judges Review/Deliberation</i> .....	8
<i>Team Workshop/Scrimmage</i> .....	8
<i>Lunch/Break</i> .....	9
<i>Review with Team interviews</i> .....	9
Criteria to Consider When Giving Review Feedback .....	9
Judging Practice Day Schedules and Logistics.....	9
<i>Schedules</i> .....	9
Ways to Adjust the Schedule .....	10

Logistics.....	11
Event Setup.....	11
Appendix A – Resources .....	12
Game Forum Q&A .....	12
Volunteer Forum .....	12
FIRST Tech Challenge Game Manuals.....	12
FIRST Headquarters Pre-Event Support.....	12
FIRST Websites.....	12
FIRST Tech Challenge Social Media .....	12
Feedback.....	12
Appendix B: Sample Team Observation Sign-Up Sheet .....	13

## Introduction

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### **What is FIRST® Tech Challenge?**

FIRST® Tech Challenge is a student-centered program that focuses on giving students a unique and stimulating experience. Each year, teams engage in a new game where they design, build, test, and program autonomous and driver operated robots that must perform a series of tasks. To learn more about FIRST® Tech Challenge and other FIRST® Programs, visit [www.firstinspires.org](http://www.firstinspires.org).

### **Gracious Professionalism®**

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FIRST® uses this term to describe our programs' intent.

*Gracious Professionalism®* is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.

Watch Dr. Woodie Flowers explain *Gracious Professionalism* in this [short video](#).

Learn more about the roles of volunteers on our [Volunteer Resources page](#), "Volunteer Role Descriptions."

### **FIRST Privacy Policy**

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FIRST takes the privacy of our community seriously. As a nonprofit and a mission-driven youth-serving organization, we are compelled to understand who we are serving, how our programs are performing, and make improvements so that we can achieve our goals of making FIRST accessible to any youth who wants to be part of the fun, exciting and life-changing experience. Thus, we need to collect certain personal data from participants and volunteers to ensure we are meeting our goals and responsibilities as a youth-serving nonprofit organization.

As a volunteer, you may be asked to handle the personal data, or personally identifiable information (PII), of coaches, team members, and even other volunteers. It is critical that you understand and follow the [FIRST Privacy Policy](#) and complete any data protection and privacy training required by your role. If you have any

questions regarding data protection and privacy, please reach out to the *FIRST* Data Governance Team at [privacy@firstinspires.org](mailto:privacy@firstinspires.org).

## Volunteer General Information

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### ***Volunteer Training and Certification***

#### **To Access BlueVolt and Complete a Volunteer Role Training Course:**

Once you have applied for a volunteer role that requires certification a link will appear in your *FIRST* dashboard that will connect you to our learning management system BlueVolt.

1. Login to your *FIRST* Dashboard
2. On the grey menu below “Dashboard” Click on “Volunteer Registration”
3. Click on “Roles Missing Certification”
  - a. Click into the link to “Review Outstanding Tasks” which will take you to the BlueVolt site where you can complete your certifications and sign up for new training

#### **How to Access BlueVolt After Certifications are Complete:**

Once you complete your certifications, you will no longer see a “Roles Missing Certification” link or a link to “Review outstanding Tasks” to get to BlueVolt. If that is the case, follow the steps below to access BlueVolt courses and updates.

1. Login to your *FIRST* Dashboard
2. At the top right of the page, click on the dropdown under your name and go to “My Profile”
3. Once there, on the left menu of the page, click on the “Certifications” link which will take you to the BlueVolt site where you can view/print your existing certifications and sign up for new training

If you have applied for a role but do not see the link to training in your dashboard, or you have other training related questions please email [FTCTrainingSupport@firstinspires.org](mailto:FTCTrainingSupport@firstinspires.org).

### ***Volunteer Minimum Age Requirement***

The minimum age requirement of a *FIRST* volunteer is **13 years old**.

A minor must have a parent or guardian give written permission to volunteer. In addition, the *FIRST* Consent and Release Forms will need to be signed by a parent or guardian in the Volunteer Registration system for any volunteer under age 18.

### ***Bring a Friend!***

Volunteers are a huge part of the *FIRST* Tech Challenge Program and continuing to inspire students to seek out careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). *FIRST* Tech Challenge needs your help in recruiting new volunteers to keep our programs thriving for future generations! If you have a friend or co-worker you think would be interested in volunteering at an event, there are just a few simple steps to help get them involved!

1. Check out our full list of [volunteer opportunities](#) online!
2. Have them apply for the Event in the [Volunteer Registration System](#). Volunteers must be screened before volunteering.
3. Have them contact [Firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org](mailto:Firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org) with any questions they may have.

If they are concerned about jumping in headfirst, no worries! Job shadowing at a *FIRST* Tech Challenge Event is a great way to get a taste of what a full day’s worth of competition looks like. New volunteers can discover ways they can fit their personal skills into a volunteer position!

## What is the FIRST® Tech Challenge Judging Practice Day?

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FIRST Tech Challenge Competitions are composed of two main parts: matches (where we assess the performance of the robots that teams build) and interviews (where we assess the performance of the teams themselves through their season's journey). The purpose of the Judge Practice Day is to help teams (and volunteers) feel better prepared for the interview/judging process. Events that include the judging process include:

- World Championship
- State/Region Championship Tournament
- Qualifying Tournament
- League Tournament

Judging interviews give students:

- An increased probability of having a successful robot
- Help build a stronger program for future season
- Match what is needed in professional technical careers

### **Judging Practice Day Volunteer Needs**

- Judge Advisor
- Judges (2-3 for every 6 teams, minimum)
- Event Organizer
- Queuer (1-2)
- Team/Volunteer Check-In
- Staffing for your workshop/scrimmage

### **Volunteer Registration**

Volunteers will need to check in early. All US (United States) and Canadian volunteers must be pre-screened through [Volunteer Registration](#). If you have a walk on volunteer, download and follow the instructions provided by FIRST on the [General Volunteer Resources](#). Having coffee, water, or a light breakfast or snacks is critical to keep them fueled.

Upon check-in, volunteers receive the following:

- Meal Voucher (if applicable, consider only for long day format)
- Name tag
- Registration packet – judging packets are extremely helpful to outline what judges are looking for during the presentation & interview process. This packet is in the judge and judge advisor manual (which lives on the [Volunteer Resources page](#)).

## Judge Practice Day Agenda

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A Judge Practice Day would have the following agenda:

- [Team Check-In](#)
- [Team Presentation & Interview](#)
- [Judges Review/Deliberation](#)
- [Team Workshop or Scrimmage](#)

- [Lunch/Break](#)
- [Interview feedback sessions](#)

Let us break this down.

### ***Team Check-In***

Like any typical *FIRST* event, teams must check in at team registration and provide the event organizers a copy of their team roster. All team members must have their parent or guardian complete their consent and release forms online ahead of the event.

### **What you should provide to teams**

The following are a list of material that should be provided to teams upon Check-In:

- Team Presentation & Interview Schedule
  - Time and Room of Presentation & Interview
  - Time and Room of Interview Feedback session
- Agenda of the Day
- Supplemental material for planned workshop
- Directions on signing up for interview observations (if applicable)

### ***Team Presentation & Interview***

Once teams have all finished checking in, their team presentation & interviews will begin. This portion of the Judging Practice Day is like Official *FIRST* Tech Challenge Competition Judging Presentation & Interviews, with one optional exception: the opportunity to observe other teams giving a Presentation & Interview. This is an **optional** component to the Judging Practice Day that is up to the discretion of the organizer to decide to implement or not.

### **Optional Team Observation**

Teams should be given instructions on signing up for team observations both prior to arriving and upon arrival to the event. If you plan to structure your event to allow team observations, please keep in mind:

#### *Prior to Event*

- If you choose to structure your event to allow team observations, inform teams about the process and benefits.
- Inform teams how many additional team representatives will be allowed to join them for their interview.

#### *Teams should plan on*

- Sending one team representative (student participant/coach/mentor) to attend each interview that does not overlap with their scheduled time.
- Sitting/standing in the back of the interview room.
- Observing *silently* (no conversations with other observers, no commentary to the team being interviewed, no comments to the judges).
- Taking notes *silently* (no laptops that may provide a distracting clicking sound when typing, phones on silent or turned off, no distracting team paraphilia – things that could potentially light up or make noise – are allowed).
- Absolutely no recording devices.
- There is no queuing for team observation. Teams arriving late to their sign-up time will not be allowed in.

### **Format of the Team Presentation & Interview Process**

Teams should prepare a 5-minute presentation that covers the topics they would like to share with the judges. Judges have been asked to allow teams to present uninterrupted for 5 minutes. During the remainder of the session, judges should feel free to ask questions of the students.

- 15-minute sessions\*
  - 5-minute presentation
  - Remainder of the time is spent asking interview questions
- Panel of 2-3 judges
- 5-10 minutes in between sessions for judges to review and make notes

\*Not all events are able to hold 15-minute judging sessions. Adjust and plan accordingly.

**Students should inform judges if they do not have a prepared presentation at the beginning of their interview appointment.**

### ***Judges Review/Deliberation***

As this is not a full competition, judges are not able to perform team observations and follow-up questions. This Judging Practice Day focuses on the presentation & interview portion of the *FIRST* Tech Challenge experience. This portion of the day should follow the judge and judge advisor manual (located on the [Volunteer Resources page](#)).

### ***Team Workshop/Scrimmage***

During deliberations, teams should be engaged in a planned workshop or scrimmage. This is a learning day for teams and this time away from the judges allows the event organizers to provide a pre-determined workshop or scrimmage that will help further develop teams. Examples of potential workshop topics:

- Engineering portfolio – requirements, how to's, etc.
- Fundraising
- Future careers
- Game strategy
- How to pass inspection
- Judging process – break down the awards, the requirements, and
- Scouting
- Leadership
- Marketing and branding your team
- Meet the field
- Outreach
- Sponsor provided material
- Team building skills
- Technical topics: CAD (Computer Aided Design), coding/programming, deeper dives on how to use different tools, electrical, mechanical engineering, etc.
- Q&A with the referees

This is a good event to encourage local involvement. Find experts in the community and see if they would be able to present on a topic relevant to teams. For example, is there a local business that could provide an accountant to talk about budgets? Or a company with marketing experts that could discuss the importance of brand recognition and how to have a successful marketing campaign?



### **Lunch/Break**

The Judging Practice Day can be treated like a competition event with regards to the timeline. With this in mind and depending on the number of teams participating, it may be necessary to either provide meals or the opportunity to purchase meals for teams. If a team is hosting this event, it could be a great fundraising opportunity for them. Food for volunteers should also be considered if you are planning an extended timeline. Check out [Ways to Adjust the Schedule](#) if you hope to remove the need for a lunch/break by shortening the timeline.

### **Review with Team interviews**

Similar to the team presentation & interviews, teams are provided a time and room assignment upon check-in. Unlike the initial team presentation & interview, if you are planning to have [team observation](#), the review process is not open for other teams to observe. The review process should be the time judges talk with the team and point out the areas they were strong and provide suggestions on how they can better showcase themselves to a judging panel.

### **Criteria to Consider When Giving Review Feedback**

- The Judging feedback form is the only written feedback provided to teams.
- Focus on the team’s strengths.
- When offering suggestions on how the team can better highlight themselves, keep a positive outlook. For example:
  - “More eye contact would allow us to feel more engaged with you.”
  - “Your engineering portfolio provides a great look into your season. Think about providing more attention on the ‘Why’ you make the decisions you make.”
  - “We really enjoyed the outreach you highlight in your engineering portfolio. Giving more attention to that during your presentation would provide more insight into your team for us.”
  - “Your robot design is unique. It would help us understand better if you took a bit more time to bring us through your process: from brainstorming, trials, and what did and didn’t work.”
- Provide areas to help a team grow, rather than focusing on what they should have done to “win.”

## **Judging Practice Day Schedules and Logistics**

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### **Schedules**

The following would be a typical Judging Practice Day schedule for 12 teams. If you plan to host more teams, plan your schedule accordingly. Remember that each phase should begin a little earlier than the scheduled time to ensure the event stays on schedule.

Time	Activity
7:00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff, judges, and all volunteers arrive (volunteer needs may vary based on the planned workshop/scrimmage)</li> <li>• Provide breakfast</li> <li>• Distribute T-Shirts, name badges, etc.</li> <li>• Judges meet and receive briefings on their specific responsibilities</li> <li>• Judges receive assignments and job specific tools</li> <li>• Place signs to direct traffic outside and inside the venue</li> </ul>

7:15 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place crowd control volunteers at entrances to help direct teams to appropriate areas</li> <li>• If the planned workshop has IT (Information Technology) needs, Check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Video</li> <li>○ Sound</li> <li>○ Computers</li> <li>○ Scoring Display (if you are doing a scrimmage)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
7:45 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration Desk is staffed and ready to go</li> <li>• Ensure EMT/Nurse is on duty</li> </ul>
8:00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration begins, pit opens (have a plan in place for addressing the inevitable early arrivals)</li> <li>• Practice matches begin (only if you plan to provide a field for teams to practice on)</li> </ul>
8:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduled judging sessions begin (3 judging panels, 30 minutes between appointments) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 8:30 am: teams A, B, C</li> <li>○ 9:00 am: teams D, E, F</li> <li>○ 9:30 am: teams G, H, I</li> <li>○ 10:00 am: teams J, K, L</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Set up for workshop/scrimmage</li> </ul>
10:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judging session ends</li> <li>• Workshop/scrimmage begins</li> <li>• Judge Deliberation</li> </ul>
12:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch for all</li> </ul>
12:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review sessions begin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 12:30 pm: teams A, B, C</li> <li>○ 12:45 pm: teams D, E, F</li> <li>○ 1:00 pm: teams G, H, I</li> <li>○ 1:15 pm: teams J, K, L</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End of review sessions</li> <li>• Debrief</li> <li>• Break-down/clean-up</li> </ul>

### **Ways to Adjust the Schedule**

For some event organizers, the timeline may need to be adjusted to either eliminate the need for lunch or allow for a shorter schedule so teams can leave early enough to return home. Here are some ways to abbreviate the schedule:

- Increase the number of judges – you should have 2-3 Judges minimum for every 6 teams. Consider having 12 judges, splitting into 6 panels.
  - Presentation & Judging
    - 1<sup>st</sup> 30-minute session: teams A, B, C, D, E, F
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> 30-minute session: teams G, H, I, J, K, L
  - Review
    - 1<sup>st</sup> 15-minute session: teams A, B, C, D, E, F
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> 15-minute session: teams G, H, I, J, K, L

- Reduce workshop/scrimmage time. Keep in mind that this will also reduce the deliberation time.

### **Logistics**

The following list reviews the flow of the day and details important notes and reminders:

- Volunteers should arrive between a half hour to an hour before you plan to allow teams to check in.
  - Assign volunteers and make certain they understand their roles.
- Teams arrive to register, set up tables in the pit (This is not a full pit day. It would be helpful for the teams to have a space/table for their belonging and where they can work throughout the day and get ready for their team presentation & interview).
- Teams could receive judging schedule in advance of event or may be assigned a judging time when they arrive on-site.
- Judging sessions begin. When scheduling judging, remember that judges will want time to interview teams and then make their notes. 30 minutes between appointments is ideal. Teams must have at least a 15-minute interview.
- Host your workshop/scrimmage.
- Plan enough room in your schedule to allow for small delays.
- Check in with your key volunteers often.
- Make sure that your volunteers have water.
- Make sure that your volunteers take breaks and eat.

### **Event Setup**

One to two weeks prior to your event, you will want to ensure that you have collected all the necessary items and printed any materials. Much of the event day setup could potentially follow what is outlined in the Event Guides that live on the [Volunteer Resources page](#). The main components necessary for the judging practice day to occur is:

- Venue
  - Judging interview/review rooms
  - Judge deliberation room
  - Space for workshop/scrimmage
  - Volunteer space – if you have more than just judges
- Volunteers
- Snacks/water for volunteers
- Lunch/Opportunity to purchase food for teams (if using an extended timeline)

## Appendix A – Resources

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### **Game Forum Q&A**

<https://ftc-qa.firstinspires.org/>

Anyone may view questions and answers within the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge game Q&A forum without a password. To submit a new question, you must have a unique Q&A system username and password for your team.

### **Volunteer Forum**

Volunteers can request access to role specific volunteer forums by emailing [FTCTrainingSupport@firstinspires.org](mailto:FTCTrainingSupport@firstinspires.org). You will receive access to the forum thread specific to your role.

### **FIRST Tech Challenge Game Manuals**

Part 1 and 2 - <https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/ftc/game-and-season-info>

### **FIRST Headquarters Pre-Event Support**

Phone: 603-666-3906

Mon – Fri

8:30am – 5:00pm

Email: [Firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org](mailto:Firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org)

### **FIRST Websites**

*FIRST* homepage – [www.firstinspires.org](http://www.firstinspires.org)

[FIRST Tech Challenge Page](#) – For everything *FIRST* Tech Challenge.

[FIRST Tech Challenge Volunteer Resources](#) – To access public volunteer manuals.

[FIRST Tech Challenge Event Schedule](#) – Find *FIRST* Tech Challenge events in your area.

### **FIRST Tech Challenge Social Media**

[FIRST Tech Challenge Twitter Feed](#) - If you are on Twitter, follow the *FIRST* Tech Challenge Twitter feed for news updates.

[FIRST Tech Challenge Facebook page](#) - If you are on Facebook, follow the *FIRST* Tech Challenge page for news updates.

[FIRST Tech Challenge YouTube Channel](#) – Contains training videos, game animations, news clips, and more.

[FIRST Tech Challenge Blog](#) – Weekly articles for the *FIRST* Tech Challenge community, including outstanding volunteer recognition!

[FIRST Tech Challenge Team Email Blasts](#) – contain the most recent *FIRST* Tech Challenge news for teams.

### **Feedback**

We strive to create support materials that are the best they can be. If you have feedback about this manual, please email [firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org](mailto:firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org). Thank you!

## Appendix B: Sample Team Observation Sign-Up Sheet

Below is a sample sign-up sheet. Adjust the number of teams you allow per room/session based on the size of the interview room. Other things to consider:

- Number of teams in each room? Space vs. how large are the teams being invited?
- Are you allowing the team to send a representative to each room (so 3 per team, per timeslot)? Or once per timeslot?
- Is sign-up on a first come first basis? Or do they sign-up prior to arrival?

Time/Room	Team Name 1	Team Name 2	Team Name 3	Team Name 4	Team Name 5	Team Name 6
<b>Time: 8:30 am</b>						
Room A						
Room B						
Room C						
<b>Time: 9:00 am</b>						
Room A						
Room B						
Room C						
<b>Time: 9:30 am</b>						
Room A						
Room B						
Room C						
<b>Time: 10:00 am</b>						
Room A						
Room B						
Room C						