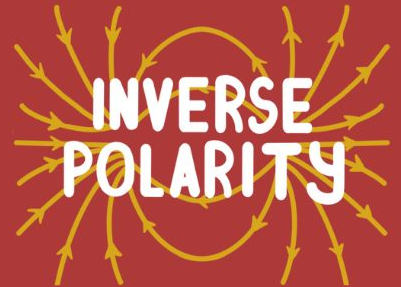


The Basics of Judge Talking

FRC 1100 Inverse Polarity
Updated Winter 2026



Who are the judges?

- Alumni
- Parents
- Friends of FIRST
- Sponsors



Where and How?

- Judges interview teams during the official competition
 - generally not load in night at a District – unless announced otherwise
 - Saturday Morning is prime time for judging but continues into the afternoon
- Judges will talk to the students, not to the mentors from the team.
 - Me as a mentor: 🏃‍♂️💡
 - My students: 👦 👧



Technical Awards

Source: <https://info.firstinspires.org/hubfs/web/program/frc/awards/award-workbook.pdf>

Autonomous Award

- A team must be able to describe:
 - How the robot perceives its surroundings, navigates on the field or positions onboard mechanisms and then executes tasks.
 - The factors the teams considered that could interfere with success during autonomously managed actions.
 - The design, development, and testing that was done for the robot's autonomously managed actions.
- Consistent and reliable operation is weighted more heavily than the ability to score maximum points during any specific autonomously managed actions.
- Consideration may be given to both autonomous actions during the first 15 seconds of the match and during teleoperated mode.

Creativity Award sponsored by Rockwell Automation

- A team must be able to describe the creative/unique feature(s) and can trace its conception and design.
- The creative element's uniqueness has a practical application and contributes to the objectives of the competition.
- Since creativity may involve risk of failure, the team should be able to describe how they mitigated that risk.
- When the creative component functions as designed, it contributes to the team's success on the field.

Excellence in Engineering Award

- A team must be able to describe:
 - problem(s) they identified pertinent to the game challenge and how their machine incorporates a solution (s).
 - Teams do not have to design a robot that solves all game challenges. o the engineering process they went through and can trace elements of the designs from conception through completion.
- The engineering solution is functional, practical, and did not create new problems.
- The engineering solution contributes to the team's success on the field.

Industrial Design Award

- A team must be able to describe how their machine design is elegant, efficient (simple/executable), and practical.
- The entire machine, and not just a single component, or the detailed process used to develop the design, is worthy of this recognition.
- The robot distinguishes itself from others by its aesthetic, design, and performance.

Example Questions

Example Questions

- What one component or control aspect of your robot has worked well (as originally designed) all season?
- If you could *snap* your fingers and change one component or control aspect on your robot, what would you change and why?
- What is your favorite (“Coolest”) feature on the robot?
- What feature are you most proud of this year?
- What is the most creative part on your robot?
- What features make your robot different/unique?
- Have you seen any other teams with a similar feature?
- Tell me about a design/idea that didn’t work this season and what you learned from it.

Example Questions

- Describe the aspects of your robot that are done autonomously.
- How effective has it been in match play?
- Tell me about the design process your team used to meet this year's game challenges.
- How did you decide what was critical for being effective in this year's competition?
- What features on your robot were specifically designed to give you a strategic advantage?
- What has been your biggest maintenance headache this season?
- What adjustments/upgrades have you made on your robot since you started match play?
- FINAL QUESTION ... Is there anything you would like to tell us about your robot that we didn't cover?

Team Attribute Awards

Source: <https://info.firstinspires.org/hubfs/web/program/frc/awards/award-workbook.pdf>

Engineering Inspiration Award

A team must be able to describe the following attributes, with an emphasis on the most recent year's efforts, and with performance indicators that provide measurable success of their efforts:

- The extent and inventiveness of the team's efforts to recruit students to engineering or other STEM fields.
- Extent and effectiveness of the team's community outreach efforts.
- A commitment to science and technology education among the team, school, and community.
- Achievement of the FIRST mission and ability to communicate that at the competition and away from it.
- Efforts are ongoing, not strictly concentrated on the build and competition season.

Gracious Professionalism Award

- The team exemplifies the principles of FIRST Core Values in relationships with other teams and by their demonstrated Gracious Professionalism.
- The team consistently demonstrates Gracious Professionalism and a positive attitude both on and off the field.
- If the team worked with another FIRST Robotics Competition team pre-season – they can describe the following:
 - How the collaboration was conducted during the offseason and during the build season.
 - How the teams divided up tasks fairly and equitably.
 - How the process of communication flowed from one team to the other.
 - How working together as a group was beneficial over working independently.
 - The financial impacts of working together vs working independently.

Imagery Award

- The team must be able to describe its theme and its origins.
- The theme is original and is fitting to the objectives, character, and/or history of the team.
- The theme is incorporated into all aspects of the team, i.e. uniforms, pits, machine, mascot, etc.
- Visuals of the integrated team/machine are exceptional and attractive.
- The team theme is supportive of the principles of FIRST Core Values.

Judges Award

- This team has fully embraced the principles of FIRST
- Many judges have noticed and commented on the positive aspects of the team.
- The team exemplifies a positive attribute or feature that is not addressed in the criteria for other awards that merits recognition.

Rising All-Star

Optional Award - Celebrates the team that has persisted through challenges, despite the difficulties of being young. This could be the result of being a new team, or a team with recent turnover in membership.

- This team understands the power of the FIRST mission and demonstrates through their actions both at home and at the competition the ethos of Gracious Professionalism and Coopertition.
- This team is a role model for other young teams
- This team stands out as a team with a sustainable and promising future with FIRST.
- The purpose of this award is to recognize new teams or teams that have new beginnings
- **Teams do not have to be in their first year.** For example, the award could recognize a team in their second or third year who has undergone significant growth or succeeded despite challenges.

Rookie All-Star Award

Optional Award

Note: Any team with a team number of 10,900 or higher is eligible for this award.

Team Spirit Award

- The team displays obvious enthusiasm – in supporting teams, appearance, interactions with teams/judges, etc. – at the competition.
- Spirit is part of the team and is apparent in all they do, including at their school, in their community, with sponsors and other teams, etc.
- They demonstrate spirit as a unified team.

Team Sustainability Award sponsored by Dow

- Celebrates a team which has developed sustainable practices that focus on a “triple bottom line” (i.e. People, Prosperity, and Planet) to have a positive impact and achieve longterm continuity.
- The team must be able to explain their plans and actions associated with one or more of the following sustainability initiatives:

Team Sustainability Award sponsored by Dow

- People initiatives:
 - How the team recruits, trains, and retains students, mentors, and sponsors.
- Prosperity initiatives:
 - How the team fundraises and creates and tracks budgets.
 - How the team identifies and manages risks (e.g. money, students, mentors, etc.).
- Planet initiatives:
 - How the team assesses its environmental impact and what the team does to mitigate or reduce it.
 - How the team's environmental sustainability strategy impacts their team longevity.

Example Questions

Example Questions

- How has FIRST changed you? Your team? Your school?
 - What team accomplishment in FIRST makes you most proud?
- Outside of your team, who has given you the most help this year? How?
 - Who have you helped this season?
- What have been the top priorities for your team this year?
 - How did you establish them?
 - What has your team focused on improving this year?
- How has your team spread the FIRST Core Values in your school? In the community?
- Tell us how your team has demonstrated Gracious Professionalism® and/or Coopertition®.
- Has your team done any community outreach?
 - Does your team have any involvement with FIRST® Tech Challenge or FIRST® LEGO® League?

Example Questions

- How does your team support FIRST core values?
- How does your team integrate imagery and branding?
- How does your team find and “Thank” your sponsors/supporters?
- How does your team keep students, mentors, and sponsors actively engaged?
- How does your team celebrate success and document lessons learned to prevent repeating mistakes?
- Describe what your team does related to environmental sustainability.
- How does your team budget for the season?
 - How does your team ensure there's funds/resources available for future seasons?

Example Questions

- How long has your team been involved with FIRST?
- Can you describe a challenge you have had because of lack of experience?
- How many new team members do you have this year? How many team members are returning?
- Do you have a succession plan? Can you describe it?
- Did your team discuss potential risks for the season? Describe your contingency plan
- How do you ensure that your team is following correct safety practices?
- FINAL QUESTION... Is there anything you would like to tell us about your team that we didn't cover?

Best Practices

- Speak firmly and clearly.
- This is YOUR opportunity to tell the judges YOUR STORY about your team and/or your robot.
- Relax and HAVE FUN – judges love talking to you.
- All awards are earned by the team so everyone should be able to describe and answer questions.
- If your team is focusing on a specific award, describe how your team meets the guidelines.
 - Make sure all members understand awards being targeted and can answer questions

- Do not be afraid to say “I don’t know” to a judge question
 - Be sure to follow up with but “let me find out”
 - Use that as an opportunity to bring in more of your teammates
 - Use your in pit materials answer the question correctly and not make up an answer on the spot
- You are human! They are human!

- Keep handouts and supporting documents simple
 - Consider preparing a one-page summary covering your key machine attributes or team attributes
 - Highlight key aspects of your design & build processes, novel components incorporated and/or capabilities, as well as info on your approach to control/programming. Be sure to include a picture of your robot!
 - Highlight outreach your team does (including key statistics), team's accomplishments, sustainability, and more. Be sure to incorporate branding and logos!

- Always keep someone in your Pit that can speak to the judges -OR- have some type of sign telling judges where they can find your team (e.g. practice field, match queue, etc.). This will help to ensure the judges can easily find you for interviews.
- Remember your Gracious Professionalism and FIRST Core Values! This should be true for every team member and all those associated with the team during the season.

FIRST HQ Links

- <https://info.firstinspires.org/hubfs/web/program/frc/awards/award-workbook.pdf>
- <https://info.firstinspires.org/hubfs/web/program/frc/awards/technical-judging-tips.pdf>
- <https://info.firstinspires.org/hubfs/web/program/frc/awards/best-practices-for-teams.pdf>
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QUESTIONS?



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