



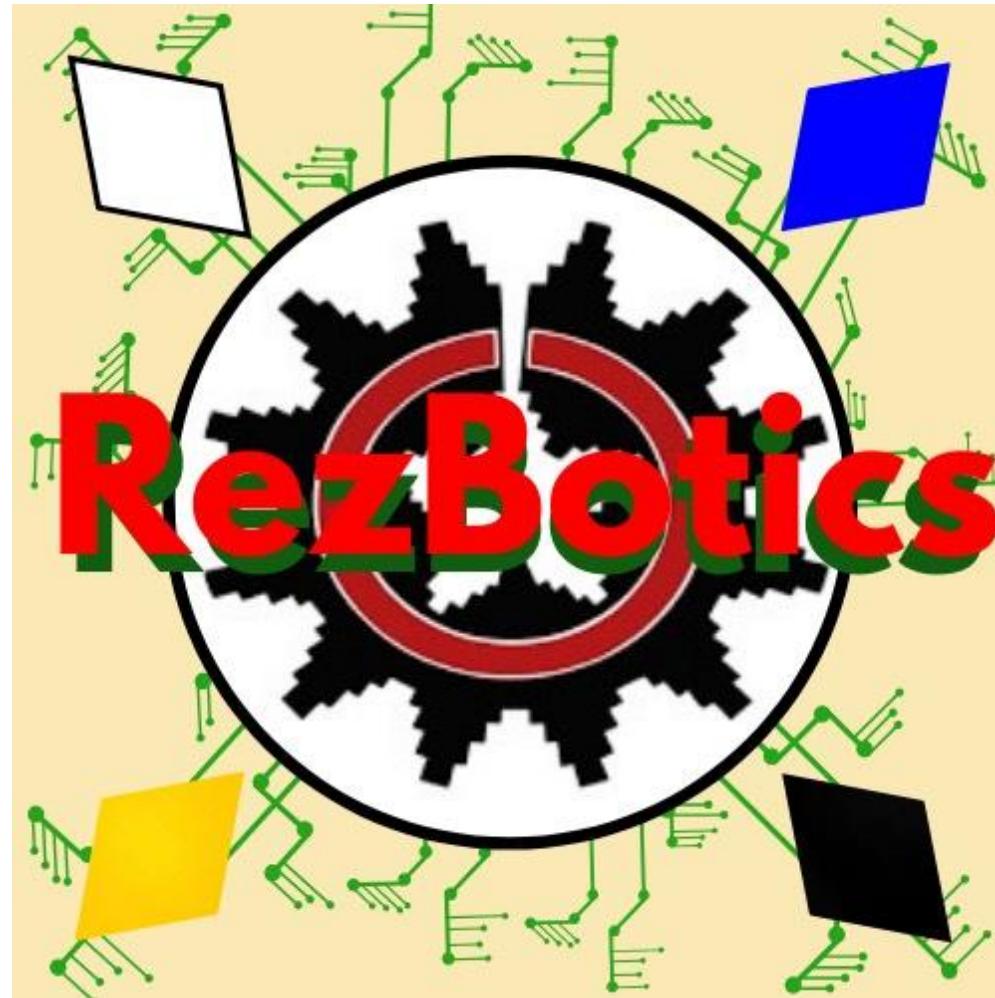
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Welcome & Introductions

Dave Thompson

Retired, NAU Teach, 37 yrs in education, 19 yrs in *FIRST*

Christine Sapiro

Physics Teacher @ Coconino HS, 20 yrs education, 19 yrs *FIRST*

Patti Strones

FIRST Ops, parent of *FIRST* Alumni

Susan Garduno

FIRST Senior Mentor, parent of *FIRST* Alumni

CocoNuts *FIRST* Robotics Team 2486

Haley, Riyana, Eleanor, Sam, Zane, Oscar, Levi, Caiden, Noah

Host

Nathan Tohtsoni (NTEC)



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Inspiring youth to become science & technology leaders & innovators,
by engaging them in exciting, experiential, Mentor and project-based programs
that teach science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills, inspire
innovation, and foster well-rounded life capabilities.



FIRST Worldwide Impact

FIRST By The Numbers



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2.5 million+ student participants impacted in 100+ countries since 1989



Millions of volunteer hours served annually



Thousands of events held each year



81% of FIRST alumni declare a STEM major by their fourth year in college (compared to 68% of peers in [FIRST Longitudinal Study](#))



50% of female FIRST alumni declare a major in engineering or computer science by their fourth year of college (compared to 14% of peers in [FIRST Longitudinal Study](#))



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FIRST Alumni



By sophomore year of college, *FIRST* alumni are more likely to be majoring in STEM fields than comparison group peers.

DECLARE A MAJOR IN STEM

FIRST Alumni

89%

Comparison group

59%

DECLARE A MAJOR IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE

FIRST Alumni

70%

Comparison group

25%

Women in *FIRST*

Young women in *FIRST* have significant gains in all STEM areas including STEM interest, career interest, activity, knowledge, and identity compared to their non-participating peers.

DECLARE A MAJOR IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE

FIRST female alumni are more likely to declare majors in engineering and computer science than their peers.

FIRST Female Alumni

59%

Comparison group

12%



TAKE COURSEWORK IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE

Compared to their peers, *FIRST* female alumni are more likely to take coursework in engineering and computer science.

3.7x Engineering

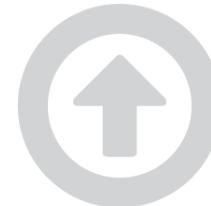
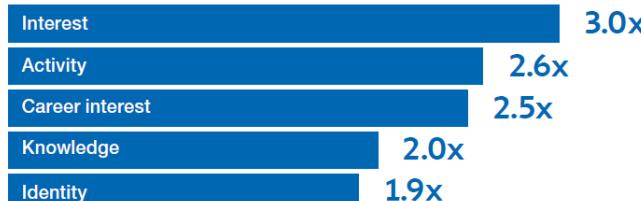
5.3x Computer Science

Benefits of *FIRST*

FIRST students are three times more likely to show an increase in STEM interest than comparison group students.

Positive impacts are evident for all *FIRST* students regardless of race, gender, income, or community type.

FIRST STUDENTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO SHOW GAINS IN STEM OUTCOMES THAN COMPARISON STUDENTS





**FIRST
LEGO®
LEAGUE**

Grades
PreK-8 Ages
4-14

FIRST® LEGO® League introduces STEM to children ages 4-14 through fun, exciting hands-on learning. Participants gain real-world problem-solving experiences through a guided, global robotics program, helping today's students and teachers build a better future together.

FIRST LEGO League's three divisions inspire youth to experiment and grow their critical thinking, coding, and design skills through hands-on STEM learning and robotics.



**FIRST
TECH
CHALLENGE**

Grades
7-12 Ages
12-18

FIRST® Tech Challenge students learn to think like engineers. Team's design, build, and program robots to compete in an alliance format against other teams. Robots are built from a reusable platform, powered by android technology, and can be coded using a variety of levels of Java-based programming.



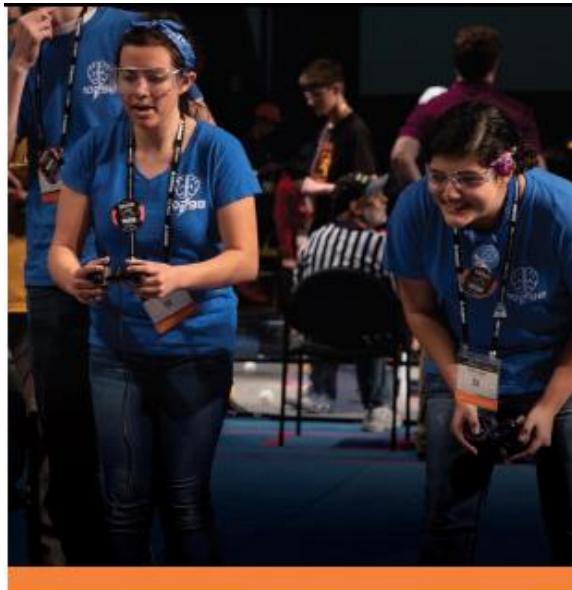
**FIRST
ROBOTICS
COMPETITION**

Grades
9-12 Ages
14-18

FIRST® Robotics Competition teams design, program, and build a robot starting with a standard kit of parts and common set of rules to play a themed head-to-head challenge. Teams also build a brand, develop community partnerships for support, and work to promote STEM in their local community.

FIRST Tech Challenge

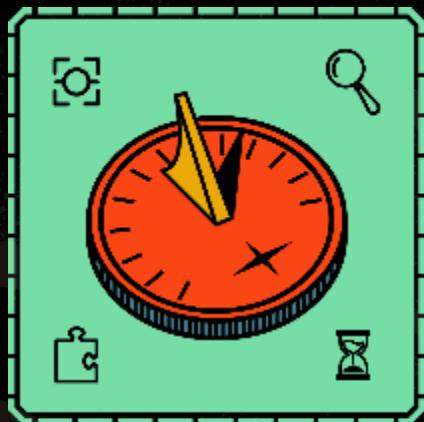
Grades 7-12



FIRST® Tech Challenge is designed for students who want to compete head to head using as sports model. Teams design, build, and program their robots out of a reusable platform, powered by Android technology, and programmed using Java-based languages.

- Teams of up to 15 students
- Model real-world engineering process
- Awards for competition + community outreach, robot design & other real-world accomplishments
- Compete & cooperate in alliances
- Compete in qualifying tournaments to advance to state or even World Championship
- \$80 million in scholarships for graduates

FIRST Core Values



If your team hasn't already talked about your goals for the DECODE Season, take some time this week to think about how your season goals will help build towards your life goals!

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- **Discovery:** We explore new skills and ideas.
- **Innovation:** We use creativity and persistence to solve problems.
- **Impact:** We apply what we learn to improve our world.
- **Inclusion:** We respect each other and embrace our differences.
- **Teamwork:** We are stronger when we work together.
- **Fun:** We enjoy and celebrate what we do!

The CocoNuts...are just one *FIRST* making a Positive Impact



Mentorship of Flagstaff *FIRST* Teams

1000's of hours running *FIRST* events

100's of outreach events statewide

FIRST Lego League "In a Nut Shell"

NAU PD program for rookie coaches

Sponsor & Organizer – AZFTC

Advocacy for STEM at AZ & US Capital

RezBotics FTC Program & New Four Corners Region

Flagstaff's Lunar Legacy

100% of AlumNuts go to College

- 95% in STEM
- 50% minority or 1st generation

“FIRST is....”

“An opportunity to do what I love, to further my future.”

“Where I can be myself.”

“FIRST gave me HOPE: for a new way to learn, a better tomorrow, to have a say in who I become.”

“A chance to teach the next generation of innovators to love the world’s beauty; to better ourselves & each other.”

“Everybody has to be able to participate in a future that they want to live for. That’s what technology can do.”
~ *Dean Kamen, Founder, FIRST*

“A community making the world a better place.”

“A place to be friends with anybody, no matter who they are.”

“FIRST brings out the best in everyone.”

2 0 2 5 / 2 0 2 6 S E A S O N



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FIRST Tech Challenge Sponsors



FIRST AGE Season Sponsor



Arizona & Four Corners *FIRST* Tech Challenge
Program Delivery Organization

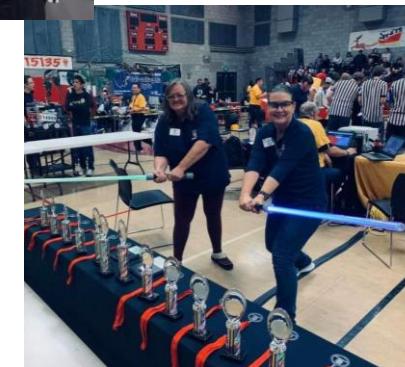
DECODE Presenting Sponsor



Four Corners *FIRST* Tech Challenge
Sponsor

Special Thanks to All Four Corners Planning Committee

Rich Gomez	Head Ref
Robert Garduno	Head Ref
Denise Thompson	Scorekeeper
Susan Garduno	FIRST Senior Mentor
Patti Strones	Head Scorekeeper
Christine Sapiro	Email Sender
Dave Thompson	Box Packer
Nathan Tohtsoni	RezBotics Coordinator



2025 FIRST World Championship Teams:

- Techalongs
- BMS Rez Kids
- Rocksisaan
- Metal Masters
- Hexadecimal Nibble



2025 FTC Premier Event Teams:

- RoboCougars: New England
- Beep Patrol: Canadian Rockies
- Testing is Optional: Canadian Rockies
- Herberger Javalinas: Europe
- BroncoBots ONE: Indiana

**IS YOUR TEAM
NEXT???**



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Key Contacts

Dave Thompson: dthompson@firstpartners.org

Christine Sapiro: csapiro@firstpartners.org

Susan Garduno: sgarduno@firstinspires.org

Rich Gomez: azfirst.referee@earthlink.net

Patti Strones: (800) 871-8326 (*FIRST Team Support*)



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Welcome Rookies!

*Any advice from
Veteran Coaches?*



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**FIRST
TECH
CHALLENGE**

What is an FTC season like?



ROBOT TIMELINE

Weeks 1-2

Brainstorming, prototyping, decide game strategy
build drive train
Portfolio: What's your team's strategy?



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Weeks 3-4

Decide on robot design, begin building mechanisms
Begin programming autonomous paths
Portfolio: Initial drawings of the robot design



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Weeks 5-6

Finish mechanisms, program mechanisms, test and
troubleshoot mechanisms
Portfolio: What aspects of your design work?
What are you changing?



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Weeks 7-8

Driver practice, finalize autonomous programs
Continue troubleshooting mechanisms and code
Portfolio: Autonomous paths, final mechanism
drawings, game play strategy



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TEAM TIMELINE

Weeks 1-2

Choose a team name, design a logo, assign members roles on the team (build, programming, marketing, etc)
Portfolio: Introduce your team!

Weeks 3-4

Design team shirts, fundraising events for team travel
Portfolio: How is your team building an identity?

Weeks 5-6

Reach out! Share what your team is doing with others (example: younger schools, businesses, chapter houses)
Portfolio: What has your team done in the community?

Weeks 7-8

Prepare for competition! Judging interview prep, polish portfolio, be sure to submit on time! Assemble competition packing list
Portfolio: Goals for competition, what have you learned so far this season?



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TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE EXAMPLE

Friday

5-8 pm Pits open for inspection

Saturday

7:00 am	Pits open, Registration, Inspection, practice fields
open	
8:00 am	Drivers meeting & Coaches meeting
8:30 am	Judging interviews
10:00 am	Opening Ceremonies
10:15 am	Qualification matches
12:30 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm	Qualification matches resume
2:30 pm	Alliance Selection
3:00 pm	Playoff matches & Awards
4:30 pm	Final awards
5:00 pm	Event ends



FIRST
TECH
CHALLENGE

2025/2026 Season Updates

<https://aznmfirsttechchallenge.blogspot.com>

- Links
- Resources
- Grant information
- Event information
- Advice for teams from key volunteers
- Packing lists
- Event rosters and results
- Weekly memes ☺
- ***No really, you should read the BLOG every week!***



Key Season Dates

- **September 22:** Team Q&A Opens
- **October 27:** Earliest date for official events (League Meets, League Tournaments, or Qualifying Tournaments)
 - Your local season timeline may start later
- **November 17:** Total of registered teams per region helps set *FIRST* Championship Allocations
- **March 15:** Last date for Regional Championship Events to advance to the *FIRST* Championship
 - Your local season timeline may end earlier
- **March 30:** Last day to complete payment and housing registration for the *FIRST* Championship
 - Payment and housing is a 2-week rolling deadline from when the team is first invited to attend
- **April 29 - May 2:** *FIRST* Championship
- **May 2:** Storefront closes, last day to use restricted grants



[Key Season Dates Blog](#)

Season Resources – Quick links

ftc.game	Game and Season Page
ftc.game/manual	Competition Manual PDF
ftc.game/cm-html	Competition Manual HTML
ftc.game/cm-html#R104	Direct Rule Linking (Example Rule R104)
ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/field	Playing Field Resources, Field CAD
ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/team	Team Resources, StarterBot Links
ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/volunteer	Volunteer Resources (coming soon)
ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/event	Event Resources (coming soon)
ftc-events.firstinspires.org/	FTC Event Listing and Results
ftc-scoring.firstinspires.org/	Avatars, Hybrid Judging, Premier Event Preferencing
ftc.game/calculator	Practice Scoring Calculator

Competition Manual Structure and Updates

The Competition Manual is broken down into sections which are mostly self-contained.

- Not everyone needs to review every section, but the team as a whole is responsible to know and understand the rules.
- Sections with a letter in parentheses "(A)" have specific rules, sections without the letter, are overview or process sections.
- Words in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS have specific meanings, check [Section 16: Glossary](#) for details.

Competition Manual Sections

<u>Section 1: Introduction</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About FIRST and FIRST Culture • How the manual is set-up and how to interpret it
<u>Section 2: FIRST Season Overview</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short description of the season theme and other FIRST Programs
<u>Section 3: Competition Eligibility and Inspection (I)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What teams need to do before competing to be eligible “I Rules” • Includes ROBOT Inspection
<u>Section 4: Advancement</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do teams earn advancement
<u>Section 5: Event Rules (E)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall event rules (not game specific) “E Rules”
<u>Section 6: Awards (A)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the Awards Process • Provides specific rules about Awards and Judging “A Rules”
<u>Section 7: Game Sponsor Recognition</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you to <u>RTX</u> for being our presenting sponsor for DECODE
<u>Section 8: Game Overview</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level “story of the game”

<u>Section 9: ARENA</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the playing field
<u>Section 10: Game Details</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the game and match set-up and process • Scoring and Violations
<u>Section 11: Game Rules (G)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific Game Rules “G Rules”
<u>Section 12: ROBOT Construction Rules (R)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules about what is allowed when building the ROBOT “R Rules”
<u>Section 13: Tournament (T)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification and Playoff Match process • Playoff brackets • Tournament Rules “T Rules”
<u>Section 14: League Play (L)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional rules for League Play
<u>Section 15: FIRST Championship (C)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes specific to the FIRST Championship • Specific Championship rules “C Rules”
<u>Section 16: Glossary</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All DEFINED TERMS

AI Rules Assistant

New this year: AI Chatbot available to help find answers to rules questions

- <https://ftc-cmchatbot.firstinspires.org/>
- The chatbot is trained specifically on the current version of the Competition Manual and will update throughout the season.
- The chatbot can help you find what you're looking for, but it's still **up to you to review and verify the answers.**

Team Updates and Team Q&A

- Competition Manual is updated frequently throughout the season to improve the clarity and intent of rules, and to fix any errors found.
 - When the manual is updated a Team Update (TU) is published which shows a summary of the changes.
 - Adults can sign up to get an email notification for all Team Updates.
 - ftc.game/tu-combined links to a PDF of all the team updates this season.
- Team Q&A is available for teams to ask questions about things they believe are not already clarified by the rules.
 - Answers may point teams to a specific rule or sometimes questions will result in a Competition Manual update.
 - At events, the Head Referee and Event Director make the final decision based on the Competition Manual Rules.
- Team Q&A opens on Sept 22nd.
 - Instructions: ftc.game/q-a-help
 - Log in here: <https://ftc-qa.firstinspires.org/>



Coaches: Sign up here to get Team Update emails

Team Update 00

- The first Team Update of the season is out now!
- TU 00 includes:
 - Major changes from last season's INTO THE DEEP to this year's DECODE manual
 - Updates from the V0 Preview Release
- Find it at: ftc.game/tu-00

Team Calls

- These are for **YOU!**
- Register to join a call and get help from *FIRST* Tech Challenge experts

Topic	Date	Time
Dean's List	Wednesday, November 12th	8-8:55 PM ET
	Wednesday, December 10th	8-8:55 PM ET
Judging, Gameplay and General Support	Thursday, October 16th	8-8:55 PM ET
	Thursday, November 13th	8-8:55 PM ET
	Thursday, December 11th	8-8:55 PM ET



Team Call Schedule

FIRST Mentor Development Initiative



- Training, Resources & Certification for coaches, mentors, and volunteers
- New adult role: Team Support (not a coach or mentor, could help with meals, transportation, logistics, etc)
- New title: Lead Coach 1 & 2
- Badges, recognitions, gifts
- Encourage ALL mentors on your team to do this!
- Available soon through your Dashboard



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**FIRST
TECH
CHALLENGE**

Advancement and Judging

Points-based Advancement Model

- Everything a team does well at an event helps contribute to their advancement points.
- Teams will be ranked based on the points they earn at an individual event.
- This model rewards **well rounded teams** who do well with Awards and Robot performance.
- Check out the [Advancement & FIRST Championship Update](#) blog more information.
- No math required! The scoring system will do the math, but you can see how points are calculated in [Section 4: Advancement](#).

Advancement Changes
Announcement Blog



Category	Advancement Points Earned
Qualification Phase Performance	Normal distribution of points from 16 to 2 across the highest ranked team to the lowest based on the equation in section 4.1.1 Qualification Phase Performance . (This will result in a minimum of 2 points and a maximum of 16 points being awarded for qualification phase performance.)
ALLIANCE lead	Equal to 21 minus the ALLIANCE lead number (e.g., 18 points for ALLIANCE #3 lead)
Draft Order Acceptance	Equal to 21 minus the Draft Order Acceptance number (e.g., 18 points for the team which accepts the third draft position)
Playoff Advancement	40 points for 1 st Place (Winners) 20 points for 2 nd Place (Finalists) 10 points for 3 rd Place 5 points for 4 th Place (See Section 13.8 Dual Division Events for modifications to this section)
Team Judged Awards	60 points for Inspire Award 1 st Place 30 points for Inspire Award 2 nd Place 15 points for Inspire Award 3 rd Place 12 points for all other 1 st Place Awards 6 points for all other 2 nd Place Awards 3 points for all other 3 rd Place Awards (See A211 for a list of points-eligible awards)

FIRST Championship and Premier Event Opportunities

- As announced in the [Advancement & FIRST Championship Update](#) blog, the FIRST Championship will have 336 FIRST Tech Challenge teams this year (up from 256 last year).
- FIRST Tech Challenge Premier Events are back and bigger! We have several returning and new locations:

New England Premier Event

Mexico Premier Event

Michiana Premier Event Presented by GEARS

Run for the Robots Premier Event

European Premier Event

Chicago Robotics Invitational Premier Event

Canadian Rockies Premier Event @ K Days

Canada Cup - Niagara Premier Event

Istanbul Premier Event

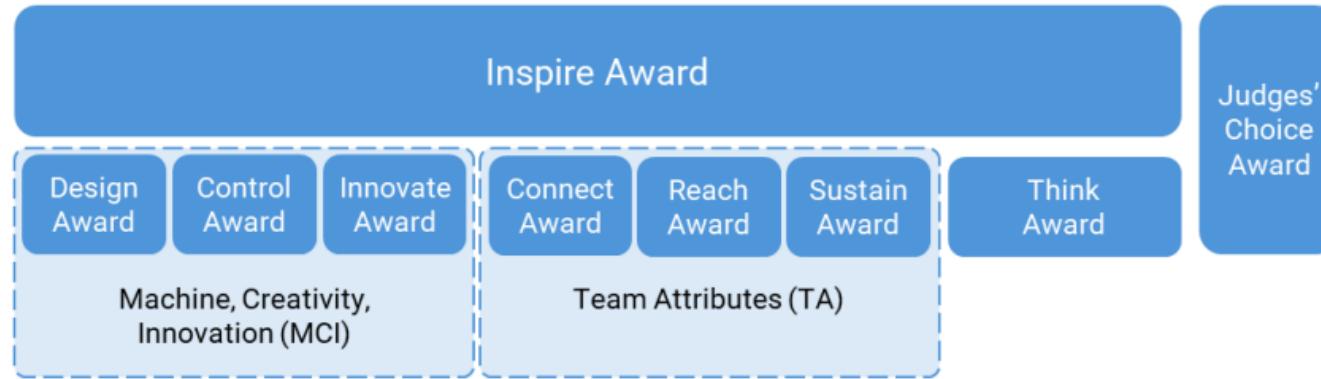
Western Edge Premier Event

Cowtown Invitational Premier Event

Section 6: Awards (A)

- Formal Interviews are now called “Structured Interviews”. There is no format change.
- PORTFOLIOS may only include content from Jan 1, 2025 or later. This universal date helps Judges and Teams understand what content can be included in the Portfolio.
- The Motivate Award has been retired. It has been replaced with two new awards: **Sustain** and **Reach**, so we can better celebrate the required and suggested achievements the Motivate Award represented.
- All non-Inspire awards, in Section 6.3, are given same number of advancement points. This includes the Judges’ Choice Award!
- Teams who have won 1st place Inspire at a Qualifying Tournament or League Tournament **can** be considered for 2nd or 3rd place Inspire at subsequent Qualifying Tournaments or League Tournaments.
- Teams can only receive one Judged Award recognition per event (1st, 2nd, or 3rd). This allows us to celebrate the accomplishments of many teams.

Team Awards



Individual Awards

- **Compass Award:** Coaches & Mentors, based on video nomination from students; Region & World Championship only
- **FIRST Dean's List Award:** Outstanding student leadership, based on essay submitted by coaches & student interview; Finalists are announced at Region Championship

Structured Interview



1. Team arrives and JUDGES welcome the team.
2. Teams may present to the JUDGES uninterrupted for up to 5 minutes.
3. JUDGES will ask open ended questions to the team for the remaining of the scheduled structured interview time.
4. Team departs from the interview space.
5. JUDGES discuss the structured interview and complete the feedback form.
6. JUDGES welcome the next team into the structured interview location and repeat the process.



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Table 6-1: Total judged awards available based on all event participating teams

Total Event Participating Teams					
Award		4-10 Teams	11-20 Teams	21-40 Teams	41-64 Teams
Inspire Award		1 st Place	1 st Place 2 nd Place	1 st Place 2 nd Place 3 rd Place	1 st Place 2 nd Place 3 rd Place
Think Award		1 st Place	1 st Place	1 st Place 2 nd Place	1 st Place 2 nd Place (3 rd Place*)
TA Awards	Connect Award	1 st Place (Only one of Connect, Reach, or Sustain will be given)	1 st Place	1 st Place (2 nd Place*)	1 st Place 2 nd Place (3 rd Place*)
	Reach Award		1 st Place	1 st Place (2 nd Place*)	1 st Place 2 nd Place (3 rd Place*)
	Sustain Award		1 st Place	1 st Place (2 nd Place*)	1 st Place 2 nd Place (3 rd Place*)
MCI Awards	Design Award	1 st Place (Only one of Innovate, Control or Design will be given)	1 st Place	1 st Place (2 nd Place*)	1 st Place 2 nd Place (3 rd Place*)
	Innovate Award		1 st Place	1 st Place (2 nd Place*)	1 st Place 2 nd Place (3 rd Place*)
	Control Award		1 st Place	1 st Place (2 nd Place*)	1 st Place 2 nd Place (3 rd Place*)
Judges' Choice Award		Optional*	Optional*	Optional*	Optional*

Portfolios

- Cover page: Team Number, name, table of contents, team organization, sponsors, logo, motto, picture of team and/or robot
- No more than 15 additional pages of judged content (additional pages will not be reviewed)
- Must be a pdf less than 15 MB in size, submitted on ftc-scoring
- ONLY progress, challenges, and accomplishments that have taken place since Jan. 1, 2025
- Limit Personally Identifying Information (ex: only student first names)
- Take care with font size and contrast – make it easy to read!
- AI can be used as a writing and reference aid but MUST be cited

Dean's List Award – New Deadlines!

December 15th, 2025 is the deadline for all Dean's List Award nominations, for all regions.

Dean's List Award – Important Dates

September 6, 2025	Nominations open
December 15, 2025	Deadline for all nominations
Week of Jan. 5	AZ & FC Dean's List Interviews
February 7 (FC) February 21 (AZ)	Finalists announced at Regional Championship Tournaments
May 1, 2026	10 Winners announced at FIRST Championship



Dean's List Changes
Announcement Blog

NEXT STEPS – *Travel and Events*

- **Talk to your school admin – tell them how excited you are! Show them the robot and game animation!**
- Register for qualifying tournaments
 - Please do this no later than September 19 so your spots are secure (*especially at the Flagstaff event*)
- Get permission to travel & arrange transportation – NOW!
- Obtain school/district travel permission slips for students
- Secure hotels if needed for qualifiers
- Arrange for meals at qualifiers (breakfast and lunch)
- Arrange for chaperones – most schools require 1 male + 1 female
 - *Parents, teachers, administrators could all assist*

2025/2026 Four Corners Tournaments

- Flat Rate for plays will continue (\$225 for two qualifiers, \$300 for three qualifiers; separate fee for Four Corners Championship)
- Four Corners teams must play at least one qualifier to advance to the region Championship.
- Teams will receive a personalized invoice for registration after they signup for their tournaments (late September). **Payment is due November 1!**
- **EVENTS:**
 - **November 8: Flagstaff, AZ***
 - **November 22: Shiprock, NM**
 - **December 14: Kayenta, AZ**
 - **February 7: Four Corners Championship, Chinle**



NEXT STEPS – *Team Administration*

- Have all registered coaches clear Youth Protection
 - Mentors who work with the team regularly need to be invited to clear YPP by the Lead Coach 1 or 2
- Verify your team is registered and paid with *FIRST* no later than November 1
 - Ensure that Purchase Orders are made to Pitsco
- Send payment for qualifying tournaments by November 1 to Coconino High School
 - Apply for a CocoNuts Registration Grant if needed
 - Your team will receive an invoice from Christine once registered for events

NEXT STEPS – *Team Management*

- **Recruit your team – more than 15 students, we suggest a 2nd team**
- Decide on a meeting location and times (*at least 2x per week*)
- ***Read the game manual with your team! Be sure they understand the rules.***
- Have a parent meeting
 - Complete youth registration with FIRST
 - Share with your parents the game animation, what is FTC
 - Emphasize that FIRST opens doors beyond high school
- Plan to be at your **first event** and **every event** – *students will learn more in that one day than they will in the two months prior!*
- REMEMBER...you never feel “READY!”

NEXT STEPS – *Packing List for events*

- **Safety glasses for ALL team members (students & adults)**
- Robot batteries and chargers
- Programming computer and charger
- Portfolio – submitted on *FTC Scoring*
- Power strip & extension cord
- Small cart for transporting robot & materials
- Robot, spare parts & tools
- Closed toed shoes & hair ties
- Printed team roster from *FIRST* dashboard – all consent forms signed

CocoNuts Registration Grant

To discount your qualifier registration fees (\$225 for 2, \$300 for 3 events)



FTC Hardship Grant

For use on your dashboard (season entry fee, robot kits, field elements...fundraiser is half done!)





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Professional Development Certificate from NAU

