



**2026**  
**About *FIRST*®**  
**Overview**

*FOR INSPIRATION & RECOGNITION OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY*

## Table of Contents

<b>About FIRST® FAQ</b> .....	<b>3</b>
What is FIRST®? .....	3
What programs does FIRST offer? .....	3
What are the purpose, vision, and mission of FIRST? .....	3
What is Gracious Professionalism®? .....	3
What is Coopertition®? .....	3
Who participates in FIRST programs? .....	3
Are special skills or expertise in STEM required for students to participate in the FIRST programs? .....	4
What do the students gain from participating? .....	4
Are there other benefits to participating? .....	4
What does research show about participation in FIRST? .....	4
Who are FIRST alumni? .....	4
What are FIRST season themes? .....	4
What is the FIRST Championship? .....	4
Where are FIRST programs run? .....	5
Who manages the teams? .....	5
Who manages the official events? .....	5
What is the role of a FIRST Program Delivery Organization (PDO)? .....	5
Who are some of the organizations that sponsor FIRST? .....	5
FIRST Strategic Partners are: .....	5
FIRST Founding Sponsors are: .....	5
FIRST has Strategic Alliances in place with: .....	5
Why is FIRST More Than Robots®? .....	5
What is STEM for Everyone™? .....	6
How do I contact FIRST? .....	6
How can volunteers get involved? .....	6
<b>About FIRST® Robotics Competition FAQ</b> .....	<b>7</b>
What is FIRST® Robotics Competition? .....	7
What does it offer? .....	7
What does every FIRST Robotics Competition team need? .....	7
When does FIRST Robotics Competition happen? .....	7
How is the game played? .....	7
<b>About FIRST® Tech Challenge FAQ</b> .....	<b>8</b>
What is FIRST® Tech Challenge? .....	8
What does it offer? .....	8
What does every FIRST Tech Challenge team need? .....	8
When does FIRST Tech Challenge happen? .....	8
How is the game played? .....	8
<b>About FIRST® LEGO® League FAQ</b> .....	<b>9</b>
What is FIRST® LEGO® League? .....	9
What does it offer? .....	9
When does FIRST LEGO League happen for teams? .....	9
What is the status of the partnership between LEGO® Education and FIRST? .....	9

For more frequently asked questions and support, visit [help.firstinspires.org](http://help.firstinspires.org).



### What is *FIRST*®?

*FIRST* is the world's leading youth robotics community, delivering hands-on STEM learning that inspires innovation, builds confidence, and prepares kids for life. Across the globe, students thrive in our programs — powered by mentorship, teamwork, creativity, and engineering challenges.

Operating as a nonprofit for more than three decades, *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) prepares young people for the future through a suite of welcoming, team-based robotics programs for ages 5-18 (K-12).

### What programs does *FIRST* offer?

*FIRST* offers a suite of robotics programs for students in kindergarten through eighth grade (ages 5-18, may vary by region). Each program can be facilitated in school or in structured after-school programs.

Through the 2026-2027 season, the *FIRST* programs are: *FIRST*® Robotics Competition for grades 9-12 (ages 14 to 18); *FIRST*® Tech Challenge for grades 7-12 (ages 12 to 18); and *FIRST*® LEGO® League with divisions spanning grades K-8 (ages 5 to 16).

Following the 2026-2027 season, *FIRST* LEGO League will conclude along with our partnership with LEGO Education.

*FIRST* is actively developing our next generation of K-8 offerings for 2027 and beyond. Part of this effort includes introducing new program names, experiences, and supporting technologies.

### What are the purpose, vision, and mission of *FIRST*?

- **Purpose:** *FIRST* exists to prepare the young people of today for the world of tomorrow.
- **Vision:** To transform our culture by creating a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology leaders.
- **Mission:** The mission of *FIRST* is to provide life-changing robotics programs that give young people the skills, confidence, and resilience to build a better world.

### What is *Gracious Professionalism*®?

*Gracious Professionalism*® is part of the ethos of *FIRST*. The idea and phrase are found throughout the *FIRST* community, but no one was a stronger champion than the late *FIRST* Distinguished Advisor, Dr. Woodie Flowers:

“*Gracious Professionalism* is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community. With *Gracious Professionalism*, fierce competition and mutual gain are not separate notions. Gracious professionals learn and compete like crazy but treat one another with respect and kindness in the process.”

### What is *Coopertition*®?

*Coopertition*® fosters innovation by promoting unqualified kindness and respect in the face of intense competition. At *FIRST*, *Coopertition* means that teams help and cooperate with each other, even as they compete. It's about learning from teammates, teaching others, collaborating with mentors, managing, and being managed. *Coopertition* embodies the spirit of competing while assisting and enabling others whenever possible.

### Who participates in *FIRST* programs?

*FIRST* programs have reached more than 4 million youth participants in 110+ countries around the world since 1989. For the latest global statistics, please visit [firstinspires.org/about/impact](https://firstinspires.org/about/impact).

*FIRST* encourages inclusive participation through an expanded team structure that allows all young people to experiment with jobs and tasks, build a foundation of STEM and workforce skills, and find where they excel.

## **Are special skills or expertise in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) required for students to participate in the *FIRST* programs?**

No; ***FIRST* welcomes every student with or without specialized skills.** In fact, *FIRST* is designed to inspire, motivate, and encourage students to learn basic principles while challenging more experienced students. Since there are critical roles for students in everything from design and building, to fundraising and research, to marketing, every student can actively participate, learn something new, and benefit from the program.

Student team members and adult volunteers are encouraged to bring any skills they already have, like programming, electronics, metalworking, graphic design, web creation, public speaking, videography, and many more.

## **What do the students gain from participating?**

Throughout their *FIRST* experience, students gain maturity, build self-confidence, learn teamwork, and gain an understanding of professionalism. Students have fun while building a network of friends and professional mentors who enrich their lives.

A series of awards honor accomplishments in areas including engineering, design excellence, competitive play, sportsmanship, and high-impact partnerships between schools, businesses, and communities. A judging committee of distinguished professionals makes award decisions. The most prestigious awards are the *FIRST* Impact Award, *FIRST* Inspire Award, and *FIRST* Champion's Award, which recognize a team within each program that best represents a model for other teams to emulate and best embodies the purpose and goals of *FIRST*.

## **Are there other benefits to participating?**

Young people gain foundational skills and knowledge to explore in-demand careers. Sponsors benefit by finding future employees and interns. Mentors benefit from renewed inspiration and a reminder as to why they chose a STEM career. Volunteers benefit from building community and are recognized as an integral part of the way in which young people connect to community and opportunities.

## **What does research show about participation in *FIRST*?**

More than a decade of data and research shows that exposing kids to fun, exciting *FIRST* programs builds 21<sup>st</sup> century work skills and greatly increases their motivation to seek education and careers in STEM fields. Learn more at [www.firstinspires.org/about/impact](http://www.firstinspires.org/about/impact).

## **Who are *FIRST* alumni?**

*FIRST* alumni are high school graduates who participated in high school-level *FIRST* Tech Challenge and/or *FIRST* Robotics Competition. Participants and alumni of *FIRST* programs gain access to education and career discovery opportunities, connections to exclusive scholarships and employers, and a place in the *FIRST* community for life. Visit [www.firstinspires.org/alumni](http://www.firstinspires.org/alumni) for more details.

## **What are *FIRST* season themes?**

Every year, *FIRST* celebrates a common theme connecting our community and three programs – from energy to transportation to oceans, each program challenge focuses on objectives unique to the annual theme. The themes are selected to engage students in STEM learning via a topic relevant and applicable to their real life. By connecting the experience to real-world issues, we're empowering participants to explore how science and technology can contribute to solving problems.

## **What is the *FIRST* Championship?**

The annual championship event is the world's largest celebration of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) for students. Hosted by *FIRST* each April to culminate the season, more than a thousand student robotics teams from around the world put their innovation, teamwork, and robotics skills to the test. More than 50,000 sponsors, volunteers, and attendees gather for the competition and celebration. Learn more about *FIRST* Championship at <https://www.firstinspires.org/programs/first-championship>.

## **Where are *FIRST* programs run?**

*FIRST* programs operate in over 100 countries around the world. Teams can be formed by schools, afterschool programs, home schools, community groups, or any other creative learning environment. Find teams and events in your area at <https://www.firstinspires.org/programs/events> .

## **Who manages the teams?**

Teams are managed by lead coaches, mentors, and team volunteers who volunteer their time and talent. The growth and success of *FIRST* is a direct result of their efforts.

## **Who manages the official events?**

Official events are the responsibility of the Program Delivery Organization, which partners with local volunteers to deliver high-quality events. For the 2024-2025 season, there were more than 493,000 volunteer opportunities. The growth and success of *FIRST* is a direct result of the efforts of these local volunteers.

## **What is the role of a *FIRST* Program Delivery Organization (PDO)?**

*FIRST* collaborates with local organizations that have a similar mission to deliver *FIRST* programs in specified regions. A PDO identifies their Program Delivery Partner who manages a *FIRST* program on a daily basis. These individuals fundraise, run official events, hold workshops and demonstrations, market the program locally, handle public relations, and recruit volunteers and teams. A current list of *FIRST* PDOs is available at <https://help.firstinspires.org/s/article/program-delivery-organizations>.

## **Who are some of the organizations that sponsor *FIRST*?**

*FIRST* is supported by a strong network of corporations, educational and professional institutions, and individuals. Industry-leading companies – including more than 200 of the Fortune 500 companies – provide funding, mentorship time and talent, volunteerism, and equipment, and help make *FIRST* more accessible to students all over the world.

## ***FIRST* Strategic Partners are:**

The 3M Company, Apple, The Argosy Foundation, BAE Systems, Bechtel Group Foundation, The Boeing Company, Caterpillar, Inc., DEKA Research & Development Corporation, DoD STEM, Dow, FedEx Corporation, The Gene Haas Foundation, General Motors Company, Google.org, John Deere, LEGO Education, Medtronic, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), NI, Novelis, Qualcomm Incorporated, Rockwell Automation, RTX, and TE Connectivity.

## ***FIRST* Founding Sponsors are:**

Aptiv, Baxter International, Inc., Boston Scientific Corporation, Chrysler, DEKA Research & Development Corporation, General Motors Company, Johnson & Johnson Family of Corporations, Kleiner Perkins, Motorola Solutions Foundation, and Xerox Corporation.

## ***FIRST* has Strategic Alliances in place with:**

Alpha Omega Epsilon, Boys & Girls Club of America, Girl Scouts of the USA, Girls Who Code, National 4-H Council, National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT), National Fluid Power Association (NFPA), National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), PMMI Foundation, Sigma Phi Delta, Engineering Fraternity, Society for Information Management (SIM), Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), Society of Women Engineers (SWE), and Triangle Fraternity.

## **Why is *FIRST* More Than Robots®?**

*FIRST* inspires young people to be drivers of positive change and use science and technology as a force for good in the world by encouraging them to learn and collaborate under the *FIRST* Core Values and ethos of [Gracious Professionalism and Coopertition](#), emphasizing friendly sportsmanship, respect for the contributions of others, teamwork, learning, and community involvement. Using robotics competitions as the vehicle, *FIRST* is developing innovators, technology leaders, and creative problem solvers. *FIRST* programs help students channel their raw curiosity to think critically and seek ways to improve the world around them.

## What is *STEM for Everyone*™?

*FIRST* is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of unity. We embrace and celebrate our global community. Exploring, developing and implementing strategies to ensure opportunities for any young person who engages in our programs is critical for *FIRST* to fulfill its mission. ALL young people should have the opportunity to become science and technology leaders who have the skills, confidence and resilience to build a better world. This commitment includes promoting and engaging in initiatives that ensure a welcoming community for all participants, including students, adult mentors, coaches, and volunteers. Learn more at [www.firstinspires.org/about/stem-for-everyone](http://www.firstinspires.org/about/stem-for-everyone).

## How do I contact *FIRST*?

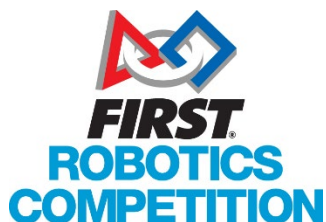
- [Contact us online](#)
- Phone Support: (603) 666-3906 or (800) 871-8326 | Mon-Fri 8:30am - 5:00pm EST/EDT
- Live Chat Support: Mon-Fri 9:00am - 4:00pm EST/EDT

## How can volunteers get involved?

- The best ways to start discovering the rewards of volunteering with *FIRST* are:
- Explore the [Volunteer Homepage](#) to learn about opportunities to volunteer.
- Search on the *FIRST* event page to find an event close to you.
- Additional information about volunteering can be found in the [FIRST Volunteer Handbook](#).
- Contact *FIRST* about volunteer opportunities at 1-800-871-8326 or email [volunteer@firstinspires.org](mailto:volunteer@firstinspires.org).

## Different ways to help:

- [Event Volunteers](#) – Run seasonal events at the local, regional, and national levels; take on a variety of roles from judging and field reset to crowd control and safety glasses attendant.
- [FIRST Championship Volunteers](#) – Support the annual *FIRST* Championship event with choices of many available volunteer positions.
- [Coaches & Mentors](#) – Guide students who participate on *FIRST* teams as they work through the challenges of each season; offer off-season support and guidance.



### What is *FIRST*® Robotics Competition?

Each January brings a new challenge for *FIRST*® Robotics Competition teams (ages 14-18, grades 9-12). Starting with a Kit of Parts, they design, program, and build industrial-sized robots to play an action-packed game on a themed field as part of a three-team alliance. Students learn engineering and problem-solving skills as they compete for awards, create a team identity, raise funds, hone teamwork skills, and advance appreciation for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) in their community.

*\*Ages may vary by region.*

### What does it offer?

- Students work on teams alongside professionals who mentor and guide them.
- Build and compete with a team-designed robot.
- Learn and use professional hardware and software.
- Develop skills in design, project management, programming, teamwork, strategic thinking, and *Coopertition*.
- Compete for judged and competition awards at action-packed, multiday events, qualifying up to the *FIRST*® Championship.
- Participants and alumni gain access to education and career discovery opportunities, connections to scholarships and employers, and a place in the *FIRST* community for life.
- Have fun as part of an engaged and supportive community.

### What does every *FIRST* Robotics Competition team need?

- 2 or more adult mentors with both technical and non-technical expertise willing and motivated to “coach” the team through the build and competition season (and beyond).
- Recommended 10 or more high school-aged students willing to put in time after school (and maybe some weekends) and to do any job the team needs to succeed (lots of roles available for all skill levels and interests).
- Suitable meeting location.
- A standard kit of parts and a common set of rules issued by *FIRST*.
- A community sponsor(s) that will help fund your efforts and provide other support.
- The desire to learn, explore, strategize, build comradery, share ideas and talents, make new friends, be inclusive, and have fun!

### When does *FIRST* Robotics Competition happen?

- May: Registration for the season opens
- January: Season Kickoff and start of build season
- February – April: Regional and district competitions
- April: *FIRST* Championship
- Summer/Fall: Off-season events and prep for next season

### How is the game played?

Each year’s kickoff event in January unveils a new, exciting, and challenging game. From the Kickoff, teams have limited time to build and program a robot to compete in the game using a Kit of Parts provided by *FIRST* and a standard set of rules. Visit <https://www.firstinspires.org/programs/frc/game-and-season> for current season game animation, game manuals, and other materials.



### What is *FIRST*® Tech Challenge?

*FIRST*® Tech Challenge (ages 12-18, grades 7-12) students work together with their mentors to design and build robots to compete in a dynamic and exciting challenge released every September. Teams program classroom-scale robots to follow autonomous commands before student drivers take control in two-on-two matches. On and off the field, students develop STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) skills, engage in community outreach, practice engineering innovation, and build confidence to help them succeed.

### What does it offer?

- Design, build, and program robots using blocks-based or text-based coding and custom fabrication with 3D printing.
- Model a real-world engineering process.
- Apply math and science concepts.
- Develop strategic problem-solving, organizational, and team-building skills.
- Develop life skills, confidence, and resilience to build a better world.
- Compete at local and regional events, qualifying for the *FIRST*® Championship. Earn awards based on teamwork, creativity, innovation, and the engineering design process.
- Gain access as participants and alumni to education and career discovery opportunities, connections to scholarships and employers, and a place in the *FIRST* community for life.
- Have fun as part of an engaged and supportive community.

### What does every *FIRST* Tech Challenge team need?

- Two or more adult mentors/coaches who are willing and motivated to coach the team through the build and competition season and beyond.
- Other adults can volunteer to help with administration, fundraising, community outreach, technical advising, and other tasks.
- A suitable meeting place and space to design and build a robot about the size of a microwave oven or approximately 18 by 18 inches.
- A standard kit of robot parts and a common set of game and robot rules issued by *FIRST* Tech Challenge.
- A budget and a fundraising plan.
- The desire to learn, explore, strategize, build camaraderie, share ideas and talents, make new friends, be accepted, and have fun!

### When does *FIRST* Tech Challenge happen?

- May: Registration for the season opens
- September: Season Kickoff
- October – March: Local and regional competitive events
- April: *FIRST* Championship

### How is the game played?

Each September, the season's kickoff event unveils a new, exciting, and challenging game to be played on a themed 12'x12' playing field. From the Kickoff, teams have limited time to build and program a robot to compete in the game, typically composed of three sections: autonomous, driver-controlled, and the end game. Visit [www.firstinspires.org/robotics/ftc/game-and-season](http://www.firstinspires.org/robotics/ftc/game-and-season) for current season game animation, game manuals, and other materials.



### **What is *FIRST*® *LEGO*® League?**

*FIRST*® *LEGO*® League introduces STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) to children ages 5-16 (varies by region) through fun, exciting hands-on learning.

Participants gain real-world problem-solving experiences through a guided, global robotics program using *LEGO*® technology, helping students, families, and educators build a better future together.

*FIRST* *LEGO* League inspires participants to experiment and grow their critical thinking, coding, and design skills and showcase what they learned.

### **What does it offer?**

- Application of science and math concepts.
- Hands-on problem solving.
- Programming experience.
- New real-world theme each year.
- Builds STEM skills and develops habits of learning.
- Culture of sharing, learning, and fun.
- Presentation skills development.
- Celebratory in-school and partner-led events.
- Alignment with national educational standards.

Visit <https://www.firstinspires.org/programs/fll/game-and-season> for current season materials.

### **When does *FIRST* *LEGO* League happen for teams?**

*FIRST* *LEGO* League season calendar

\*May vary by region:

- May: Season registration opens
- August: Season Kickoff
- August-March: Teams meet, build, program, and research
- October-April: Local and regional festivals and tournaments
- April-July: *FIRST* Championship (World Festival) & International Opens

### **What is the status of the partnership between *LEGO*® Education and *FIRST*?**

*LEGO*® Education has chosen not to renew the partnership agreement with *FIRST*. The 2026-2027 season will be our final season, after which *FIRST*® *LEGO*® League will conclude. We are proud of what we built together and deeply grateful for the impact *FIRST* *LEGO* League has had on millions of young people around the world.

The final 2026-2027 *FIRST* *LEGO* League season will include two editions:

Founders Edition of *FIRST*® *LEGO*® League Challenge and Explore (Based on *LEGO*® Education *SPIKE*™ technology) as well as the Future Edition of K-2 and 3-8 (Based on *LEGO*® Education Computer Science & AI hardware). Event availability, format, and timing vary by region.