

Expanded Quiet Room Guide

Why a Quiet Room?

Mental health is one of the most common challenges that students face today. According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), 1 in 5 youth between the ages of 13 and 18 have or will have a serious mental illness, and currently, suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people between the ages of 10 and 34 years old. The issue of mental health translates directly to the world of the *FIRST* Robotics Competition as students are subject to long hours of work, stressful tasks, and a fast-paced environment throughout the build and competition season. [As stated by the Constitution of the World Health Organization](#), health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

A Quiet Room provides students, mentors and volunteers a safe place during the competition to get away from the common competition stressors of noise and motion. This safe place can lead to increased happiness and decreased levels of stress. In turn, this room can help individuals enjoy the competition more during events. Quiet Rooms are strongly encouraged at all *FIRST* Robotics Competition events.

Quiet Rooms were first successfully implemented during the 2018 competition season, with the implementation of Quiet Rooms at 12 events throughout the United States. This initiative was created by members of [The Compass Alliance](#). During the 2019 season, the number of events grew to over 53 different events, including Quiet Rooms at *FIRST* Championship Houston and *FIRST* Championship Detroit.



Quiet Room Overview

The purpose of the Quiet Room is to provide a space where our participants can relax, regroup, and prepare for the stress and commotion of the competition.

This room is staffed by volunteers who are **NOT** trained mental health professionals. If you or anyone you know needs professional help or is experiencing an emergency, please find the EMT on site or otherwise contact emergency services. Participants are expected to use the room as it is intended and return to the competition when they are ready to do so.

What the Quiet Room is Not

Quiet Rooms are aimed to help relieve stress and create a welcoming environment at *FIRST* competitions. Participants are welcome to use the Quiet Room as much as needed. However, the Quiet Room does **NOT** provide:

- Trained professionals
- Mental health care or support
- Emergency services

Furthermore, the Quiet Room is not a place for:

- Scouting
- Team meetings
- Talking or loud noises
- Leaving children unattended
- Playing video games

Best Practices

This section will cover best practices for implementing a Quiet Room at a *FIRST* Robotics Competition Event. Many events have seen the most success when you get a team (or multiple teams) to help collaborate on this initiative. Teams may be willing to donate supplies or help find parent volunteers to staff the room in shifts. See the following sections for ideas on selecting a space, volunteers, supplies, and promoting the event.

Selecting a Space

Here are some considerations to take into account regarding where a Quiet Room should be set up at the competition. The space should:

- be comparable in size to the judges' meeting room which is 500-750 square feet. The space should provide enough space for everyone to spread out.
- be located within easy walking distance to the field and pits but should be far enough away to keep noise levels inside the room to a minimum.
- ideally, be easy to find.
- ideally, be able to adjust lighting within the room.
 - If the only option is to use overhead lighting, it is suggested to turn off those lights and instead use lamps.
- have chairs for people to sit on and desks or tables for people to rest their head on or work independently on the materials that the room offers.
- have open floor space for sleeping bags, blankets, or bean bag chairs

Alternative Spaces

When an event does not have the space to hold a Quiet Room you can still provide a quiet space for the attendees using the following tips:

- Have a table that can fit supplies on it (see supplies below)
- Have 1-2 separate tables for the attendees to use supplies
- Have 5 chairs at a table
- Can be in a public space such as cafeteria, library, etc. but ideally still out of the main path of commotion

Volunteers

Two [Quiet Room Attendants](#) are required at all times throughout the event. These volunteers oversee the Quiet Room and help to ensure that individuals using the room respect the nature of the space. The volunteers in this position will monitor the Quiet Room, supervise activities, answer questions, and provide gentle reminders on the purpose of this space. Here are some helpful suggestions to help recruit and staff the volunteer room:

- Work with teams attending the event to see if any are interested in helping sponsor the room. Many events have had success with finding 1 or 2 teams coordinate staffing the room with parents/mentors
- Consider breaking up this role to have people cover in shifts (e.g., 2 hour or 4 hour shifts)
- Advertise this role to teams attending and suggest that they ask if they have parents who may want to get a break from the noise

In Case of an Emergency:

The Quiet Room Attendant is responsible for the Quiet Room in the event of a medical, safety, or other emergency.

Before the event, the Volunteer Coordinator (VC) should establish a clear line of communication between Event Management and the Quiet Room Attendants, ensuring contact is possible throughout the event. This communication can be established either via the use of walkie-talkies or cell phone communication between the Committee Chair or VC and the Quiet Room Attendant(s).

In the event of an emergency, the Quiet Room Attendant should immediately contact Event Management via the pre-arranged communication channels, and should then clear the room of all users. Never try to restrain or give medical attention to a person in crisis.

Supplies

No supplies are required in order to host a Quiet Room. However, stocking the room with appropriate items can enhance the impact of the room for visitors. Consider reaching out to teams to request donations of materials and items. Once you start collecting supplies, use a tote so supplies can be reused from year to year. We strongly advise against supplies that may be messy or any activities that need guided instructions.

Here is a list of some suggested items. This list is just a starting point and there are many other ideas to consider:

- [Coloring sheets, other printed planners](#), crossword puzzles, etc. provided by The Compass Alliance's Hear For You team
 - Find more on the [Hear For You Pinterest](#) page
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers, or any other writing medium
 - According to the [Cleveland Clinic](#), coloring has been found to help decrease stress and increase mood, and the supplies themselves are both affordable and easily obtainable.
- Yarn

- Jigsaw puzzles
- Blankets & pillows
 - Be sure to have a plan to wash these between events
- Stress balls - ask for event sponsors to donate



- Post It Notes to leave notes of encouragement
- Yoga mats, along with yoga and mindfulness exercises
- Sensory balls or other sensory items
- Print and hang [signs](#) to direct participants to the Quiet Room and explain what a Quiet Room is and any expectations for the room.

 NOT A PLACE FOR	 EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scouting • Team meetings • Talking • Loud noises • Leaving children unattended • Fooling around • Destroying materials/room • Disrespectful language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the space • Respect others • Confidentiality - Giving others space • Keep noise level down • Clean up after yourself • Don't leave materials you used left behind

Promoting The Event

We highly recommend that events hosting Quiet Rooms contact teams prior to the event letting them know that a Quiet Room is available at the event. (see [Appendix A: Email to Teams](#))

Other ways to promote the Quiet Room at your event include but are not limited to:

- include quiet room hours & locations in any pre-event communication,
- include the location in any maps you provide of the venue,
- include a handout on the Quiet Room and available hours in the Registration Packets team receives,
- ensure that Pit Admin volunteers know where the room is located and the hours it is open,
- hang [directional signs](#) to help individuals locate the room,



- create a PowerPoint slide that can be displayed between matches, and

- provide information so the emcee can announce the Quiet Room at events.

Regional events are also provided a sign to be placed outside of the room.



Additional Information

This initiative was started by The Compass Alliance as part of the Hear for You campaign. Hear For You provides resources and tools to help teams and volunteers develop mental wellness on their teams and at events. You can learn more about The Compass Alliance, find quality assistance, and get involved at www.thecompassalliance.org.

Appendix A: Email to Teams

Greetings Teams,

We're excited to be offering a Quiet Room at the **INSERT EVENT NAME HERE** this year. A Quiet Room provides a space where our participants can relax, regroup, and prepare for the stress and commotion of the competition. This room is staffed by volunteers who are **not** trained mental health professionals.

The Quiet Room will be located **INSERT LOCATION HERE** and will open on **INSERT DAYS AND TIMES IT WILL BE OPEN**. If you have any questions, please feel free to let us know.