

JUDGES

Overview

FIRST invites luminaries from many fields to be competition judges. These individuals serve as role models to the competitors by their actions and through frequent interactions with the competing *FIRST* teams while on site. Judges do not participate in referee decisions on the playing field. It is important to recruit enough judges, but not to over-recruit for your event.

Judge Recruitment Matrix					
Event Capacity (# of Teams)	Pit Interview Judges	* Match Observers	** FIA and DL Judges	Minimum Judges needed	No of Fields in Play
24	12	2	6	18	1
28	14	2	6	18	1
32	16	2	6	22	1
36	18	2	6	24	1
40	20	2	6	26	1
44	22	2	6	28	1
48	24	2	6	30	1
52	26	2	6	32	1
56	28	2	6	34	1
60	30	2	6	36	1
64	32	2	6	38	1
68	34	2	6	40	1

Important information for recruiting judges

The matrix on the left helps events when planning for number of judges to recruit. *FIRST* recommends a 2:1 ratio, 2 teams for every 1 judge.

Please note that *FIRST* only provides 25 judge polos for Regionals/ District Championships and 18 judge polos for District Events.

* **Match Observers:** We recommend at least 2.

** **FIRST Impact Award (FIA) Judges & Dean's List (DL) Award Judges:** Minimum of 2 but 3 recommended.

FIRST understands that many events are using the judge role to reward sponsors or as an incentive to recruit new sponsors. If you are going to exceed the allocation, please check with the Event Manager to be sure your judge space can accommodate the additional judges and be aware that any additional expenses above the allocation for shirts will be charged to the regional event (see the District MOU for specifics regarding District events).

The Role of the Judge

FIRST Judges are role models for the team members. By the very nature of who they are, they are providing inspiration to the team members. The awards, although inspirational in themselves, give the Judges a reason to interact with the teams and the team members an opportunity to interact with leaders of industry and community. You can read the full [judge role description](#) online.

Who should be a Judge?

FIRST has established a minimum age of 19 for judges, but suggests that events try to have judges that are at least 23. Our hope is that individuals who serve as judges are people working in the field of their choice, they should be a role model for the students. Types of individuals a Planning Committee might approach are local inventors, scientists, business leaders, university department heads, organizations such as SWE, and other individuals who hold a high position or are highly regarded in their organization or community.

Who should NOT be a Judge?

Students should not be a part of your judge panel as they do not meet the age requirement. *FIRST* does not consider college students (undergraduate) ready to meet the criteria for judging a *FIRST* Robotics Competition. Also try to avoid team mentors serving as a judge to avoid the appearance of bias. If you do end up with an active team mentor on your judge Panel, they must sign off on a "Conflict of Interest" form stating they will refrain from any conversations pertaining to that particular team and/or discussions about awards that team is being considered for.

Timing of Judge Recruitment

FIRST recommends beginning to recruit judges in September (6 months in advance of the event). A final judge panel should be in place by no later than 6 weeks prior to the event. Early recruitment will get the dates booked on the judges' calendars and allow adequate time for judges to access Volunteer Registration for updating of their volunteer information and to pass volunteer screening. *Note: Judges recruited after the Program Book deadline for submissions, will NOT have their name listed in the book.*

The Judge Panel

The judge panel consists of a Judge Advisor and numerous judges. The number of judges needed is based on the number of teams participating in the event (see table on page 1). Contact the Planning Committee for information on event capacity.

Note: The Judge Advisor Assistant is not considered part of the judge panel and is not included in the Judge count.

The *FIRST* Regional Director and/or Volunteer Coordinator will work closely with the Judge Advisor to develop a judge panel, guide them in the Judge recruitment efforts, and answer any questions or concerns they may have. The judge panel should reflect a good balance of veteran and first time (rookie) Judges; 50/50 is ideal. The veteran judges serve as mentors for the rookie judges during the event and guide them through the intense judging process.

Criteria for Judges

- A diverse judge panel (ethnicity, gender, age etc.).
- An ability to relate to students and the potential to further the goals of *FIRST*.
- May come from a technical or scientific background, ranging from junior engineer to individuals holding upper management positions or owning their own company.
- May be in education at the high school or university level
- May have a STEM (science, technology, engineering, & math) background.
- May come from fields outside the technical community.

Judges are responsible for their own travel arrangements and expenses. New judges will be given one *FIRST* judge polo to wear during the competition. Veteran judges are asked to wear their shirt from the previous year. Judge attire is casual, and comfortable closed toed shoes are a must! Judges do a lot of walking between the playing field, pit area, and the judge room and some areas require close toed shoes.

Volunteer Registration

All *FIRST* volunteers, including judges, are required to apply to volunteer at the event online. Volunteer Registration is the system volunteers use to apply to volunteer at an event. Individuals interested in volunteering are directed to Volunteer Registration via the *FIRST* website, <http://my.firstinspires.org/Dashboard/>. They create a personal profile that includes their contact information and interest in specific event positions. Judges should be instructed to access Volunteer Registration to create a profile or to ensure their information is accurate annually. All volunteers are screened - this includes a criminal background check and a sex-offender registry check.

Children at Events

At some events judges may wish to bring their children and/or guests to the event. Children are allowed in any area deemed safe for the public (i.e. the pits or stands) as long as they follow all posted rules. No one, other than judges, are allowed into the judges room due to potential access to confidential team material.

Please explain that due to *FIRST* insurance restrictions, children must be 13 years or older to volunteer at Regional or District events and 16 years or older to volunteer at the *FIRST* Championship. Communicate this age limit to your judges. In addition, volunteer positions are filled prior to the start of an event and "walk-in" volunteers can't always be accommodated.

Some suggested verbiage you might use to handle this situation is below:

“We welcome you to invite family and friends to see the event, but please remember that as a volunteer, you have a role requiring your full attention. Family and friends, including children, are guests who are welcome to visit the pit and watch the event from the stands. If children are too young to be left alone at the event, arrangements should be made to have someone with them who can supervise them at all times. We respectfully request you to not bring non-judges into the judge room. In addition, the Planning Committee has worked hard to raise money for this event, and we are able to feed all of our volunteers while they are working at the event, but we are unable to provide meals for guests. We thank you for your understanding.”

Nominating a Judge Advisor

FIRST HQ, will solicit Judge Advisor nominations from the Program Deliver Partner in the early fall. All new FIRST Judge Advisors must have three (3) years' experience judging for FIRST Robotics Competition. **Nomination of a Judge Advisor by the Planning Committee does not automatically guarantee the individual will be the local Judge Advisor.** Once nominated, the individual must be approved through FIRST; including the Chief Judge Advisors. Once approved the candidate will be contacted and assigned by FIRST Headquarters. Nomination of new Judge Advisors should happen by no later than September for the following competition season.

Note: FIRST asks that the Planning Committees do not make any commitments to the Judge Advisor as all Judge Advisor nominations must be approved by FIRST before being contacted. If the individual is contacted and then is not approved for the position, this could create negative feelings with an otherwise dedicated volunteer.

JA Training

All Judge Advisors are required to attend and participate in training. The training sessions will be remote and will include pre-recorded content and live content to allow for Q&A. If unavailable during the scheduled live times, Judge Advisors can listen to the recording at their earliest convenience.

New Events

The Planning Committee is urged to contact FIRST Headquarters for assistance if they are having trouble recruiting a Judge Advisor for a new event. FIRST may be able to place a veteran Judge Advisor at a new event to help train a local Judge Advisor Trainee who will serve as the Judge Advisor the following year. The Planning Committee is responsible for recruiting a Judge Advisor Trainee in this case and ensuring that this person adheres to all guidelines and standards as set by FIRST.

Role of the Judge Advisor

The Judge Advisor facilitates the panel discussions and the judging process throughout the event. They organize the judge panel into groups, sets the schedule for the day's judging process, assigns the judging tasks, and works with the judges to write the award scripts. The Judge Advisor does not vote on awards, they facilitate the judging process. You can read the full [Judge Advisor role description](#) online.

Responsibilities of the Judge Advisor include:

- Recruiting qualified judges who meet the FIRST judge criteria for the event.
- Communicating with all judges, the screening requirements and the need to use Volunteer Registration and then ensuring all judges complete an application
- Coordinating with the Volunteer Coordinator to ensure that all judges are assigned the role of judge and screened prior to the event.
- Working with the Volunteer Coordinator to order judge polos by the deadline set by FIRST each year.

Judge Room Supplies

The Planning Committee will need to supply certain items for the judge room at the event. The following is a list of items required:

- (2) full pads of flip-chart paper and one flip-chart stand

- Hang large post-it paper (flipchart size) to the walls to assist in Award Deliberation. Write an award title at the top of each sheet.; include the award category. This is very helpful for the judges as they deliberate.
- Multi-pack box of colored markers (5-6)
- Ball point pens (one for each judge)
- Reams of white printer paper
- Sharpie black markers (fine point)
- Stapler with box of staples
- Box paperclips
- Clipboard for each judge
- Tissues
- Hand Sanitizer
- Masking Tape / Scotch Tape
- Sticky Notes
- Safety Glasses

These materials may be donated or purchased. If the materials must be purchased, a Planning Committee member must submit a request for the necessary supplies/materials to the Regional Director. The Regional Director is responsible for approving the request.

Judge Advisor Assistant (JAA)

The Judge Advisor Assistant functions as a liaison between the event management and the *FIRST* judge room. The Judge Advisor Assistant is **not** a judge and does not provide input on decisions made in the judges' room nor should the Judge Advisor Assistant wear a judge polo because it causes confusion among the teams. Instead, the Judge Advisor Assistant will be issued a volunteer t-shirt at the event, and their badge will say, "Judge Advisor Assistant". You can read the full [Judge Advisor Assistant role description](#) online.

Judge Training

Judge training is held remotely but some Judge Advisors may opt to do a refresher on day 1 of the event. Judges will be able to access pre-recorded training videos through the dashboard to get the training. More details will be sent to the Judge Advisors once the training is ready.

FIRST Robotics Competition events may choose to host a 'Judge Welcome' of some sort to nurture relationships and/or network among judges (who may be sponsors, alumni, etc) if they wish, but must be able to cover any associated costs. Judge Advisors will be asked to cover a few important topics on day 1 of the event as a reminder to all judges.

Judge Listing in FIRST Program Book

The Judge Advisor will need to extract some information for every judge at their event from our Volunteer Management System (VMS). Currently, we can print name, title and company of the judges. This information can be printed in the *FIRST* Program Book for the event and may be used by the emcee to introduce the judges each morning during the opening ceremony. The Judge Advisor Assistant is responsible for reviewing and editing the information before releasing them to the Regional Director, who will submit them to *FIRST* by the deadline.

Judge Polos

Judge polos are available in both men's and women's sizes. Orders will be submitted by the Volunteer Coordinator of each event. Please communicate with your event's Volunteer Coordinator to determine proper sizing. *FIRST* will provide 25 judge polos for Regionals/ District Championships and 18 judge polos for District Events. Any quantity of shirts over the approved amount will be charged to the event as an additional expense, all overages must be approved by the Regional Director. Please adhere to the deadline for submitting the judge shirt order. Orders submitted after the deadline, may incur priority

shipping charges which will be charged to the Regional event. *FIRST* will cover standard ground shipping for orders submitted on time.

We encourage you to keep the judge shirts in a safe place so that you may use them the following year to reduce cost. Judge shirts may only be given to current year judges, and they are **NOT** to be given to the Judge Advisor Assistants.

Sample Judge Time Commitment

Being a *FIRST* judge **requires** at least a two full-day time commitment as well as reviewing the judge training materials. Due to the nature of the judging process, this two-day commitment is essential since the judging process is such that interviews and discussions on day 1 get carried over to decisions that are made on day 2. It is unfair to the balance of the judge panel, and to the teams to recruit judges who cannot commit to the time requirements. If a potential judge cannot make the two-day commitment, ask if there is someone else in their organization who is qualified that can make that commitment. Potential judges should also be made aware of the hours they are needed on site. Individuals who cannot make a complete commitment should be encouraged to become involved in some way other than judging. Most Judge Advisors ask their judge panels to be on site and in the room by 7:30 a.m. on both days of the competition. Please make certain all judges are aware that travel, transportation, and hotel expenses are **NOT** reimbursed by *FIRST*.

Sample Regional Judge Schedule

Friday		Saturday	
7:30 am - 9 am	Judges' Breakfast/Meeting	7:30 am - 9 am	Judges' Breakfast/Meeting
9 am - 4 pm	Interviews	9 am - 4 pm	Interviews
12 pm - 1 pm	Judges Lunch/Meeting	12pm -1 pm	Judges Lunch/Meeting
5 pm	Awards	4 pm	Awards

Judges will meet Friday and Saturday morning for a breakfast meeting prior to the matches. They will reconvene throughout the day to discuss teams and award winners. Trophies for the awards will be presented at the Awards Ceremony each afternoon on the playing field.