



FIRST[®] ROBOTICS COMPETITION STOP BUILD DAY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why is *FIRST* Robotics Competition retiring Stop Build Day?

- Retiring Stop Build Day creates a more equitable program for teams globally by allowing for greater flexibility to accommodate for seasonal events outside of the team's control, including regional/cultural holidays, school vacations, and extreme weather. This change is intended to remove barriers for participation for students and mentors in many parts of the world.
- Approximately half of all *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams choose to build a second robot to allow for practicing between Stop Build Day and Competition, which can be a significant or prohibitive cost to teams; Retiring Stop Build Day gives these teams an opportunity to cut their material costs.
- Under-resourced teams without the financial ability to build a second robot will now have a greater *opportunity* to use their existing resources. The mandated six-week build season was an institutional barrier to their success. We are striving to provide equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome.
- Retiring Stop Build Day and shifting to the real-world deadline of the first day of competition gives our dedicated mentors and student participants choice and control over their team's build season, including more flexibility in how they plan their timeline and how they allocate costs and other resources.

Why is *FIRST* Robotics Competition waiting a year until 2020 to retire Stop Build Day?

- Retiring Stop Build Day during the 2020 season gives current teams a year to plan for future seasons and any possible schedule changes the team decides on. Teams can use the 2019 season to evaluate their season timeline and whether they'd like to make changes to the team's project plan. We also recognize it is likely many teams have already made significant plans around the traditional six-week build season for 2019. Hence, we will continue the traditional practice of Stop Build Day on February 19, 2019 during the 2019 competition season.
- We encourage veteran teams to use this period to evaluate the team's build-season timeline and think creatively and critically about how the team can achieve its goals while maintaining other work, school, and life commitments.

What are the benefits to veteran teams?

- As in the sports model where teams determine how and when to practice leading up to game day, *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams will operate under a real-world deadline and take charge of their own build season leading up to Competition.

- Teams will have more flexibility in how they plan their time and goals between Kickoff and Competition. For example, instead of meeting five days a week for six weeks to build, the team could choose to meet three days a week for ten weeks.
- Teams have the opportunity to lower their material costs if they have previously built multiple robots for practicing after Stop Build Day.
- Teams have the opportunity to better accommodate mentors and students who have other professional, academic, and family obligations.
- Retiring Stop Build Day creates a more equitable program for teams globally by allowing for greater flexibility to accommodate for seasonal events outside of the team's control, including regional/cultural holidays, school vacations, and extreme weather.

Are you asking us to spend *more* time building our robot?

- Retiring Stop Build Day means we will no longer *require* teams to bag their competition robot six weeks into the build season. No team is required to change how it operates. Teams wishing to stay with the traditional six-week build season may do so and can take significant pride in what they accomplish during a traditional six-week build season.
- How teams run their season between Kickoff and Competition is in the control of the team.
- Retiring Stop Build Day gives both mentors and students more flexibility in planning their season to accommodate schoolwork, professional obligations, family, and more.

Will retiring Stop Build Day impact mentor burnout or student grades?

- Retiring Stop Build Day is an opportunity for teams to rethink build season expectations and better accommodate dedicated mentors who volunteer their time with the team year after year. We encourage teams planning for this change to think creatively and compassionately about how to best manage their build-season resources, including the adults who support the team.
- We encourage teams to adopt strategies and set expectations that accommodate students' academic obligations. For example, many school-based teams require student participants to maintain a certain grade point average as a condition of participation.

Is *FIRST* concerned about the potential advantage that teams who compete later in the season will have? Those teams will have more time to work on their robot.

- Teams competing later in the season will be competing at events against teams who have had the same amount of time to design and build their robots.

Is *FIRST* concerned about design convergence? Teams will be able to see what works in the early weeks of competitions and incorporate those designs on their robot.

- While we may see some design convergence, learning from your competitors and iterating on your design based on what you have learned is a valuable part of the design process. We believe the trade-off is worth it. Also, given the amount of resources it takes to produce a typical *FIRST* Robotics Competition robot and the varied successful strategies in most games, we don't believe many teams will adopt the approach of fully cloning other's robots.

Is *FIRST* concerned about the change in the message that *FIRST* Robotics Competition robots are built in six weeks?

- We have already moved away from using that language. With the Withholding Allowance and many teams building multiple robots, it hasn't been strictly true for several seasons. What teams can accomplish in the limited time available to them is still impressive.

Is *FIRST* concerned about the change to an important tradition in *FIRST* Robotics Competition?

- The rules-limited six-week build season was appropriate when it was initiated and will always be an important part of our history. However, *FIRST* Robotics Competition has evolved significantly from its early days to better meet the needs of our increasingly diverse community, and this is a next logical step in that evolution.

What happens to the Withholding Allowance? Does this mean teams can bring an extra robot to competition?

- The Withholding Allowance allows teams to keep a set number of pounds of fabricated items outside of their bag for continued work after Stop Build Day. This Withholding Allowance will remain in effect during the 2019 season, as will Stop Build Day on February 19, 2019. As Stop Build Day is being retired in 2020, there will no longer be a Withholding Allowance starting in 2020. However, this does not mean teams will be able to bring extra robots to events. We will be working on the specific rules updates necessary to support this significant change and will publish them prior to the 2020 Kickoff to give teams time to adapt their season strategy.

Is *FIRST* concerned about those teams who are required to ship their robots to events because of their geographic location?

- It's true that teams who must ship their robots to events necessarily have less time with their robots than teams who live nearby. Teams living close to events have other advantages as well, such as not necessarily needing hotel rooms to attend events and potentially lower transportation costs. We will be reviewing this situation and doing our best to balance competing concerns. All needed rules updates related to this issue will be published prior to the 2020 Kickoff.

Does this mean teams can wait until after the Week One events to decide what to build?

- Yes, although given the incredible amount of time and resources it takes to build a robot, we don't recommend it. Teams can define their build season in the way it works best for their team members and their community.

Can I host an unofficial event or scrimmage during the regular competition season?

- Teams can host unofficial events or scrimmages any time during the year. We encourage all teams and communities to make the *FIRST* Robotics Competition as welcoming and inspiring as possible. Please keep in mind, however, that *FIRST* staff will remain focused on the official competition events that are happening, and as such, will not be available for support at these unofficial events.