Social Media and Website Guidelines

FIRST® Tech Challenge
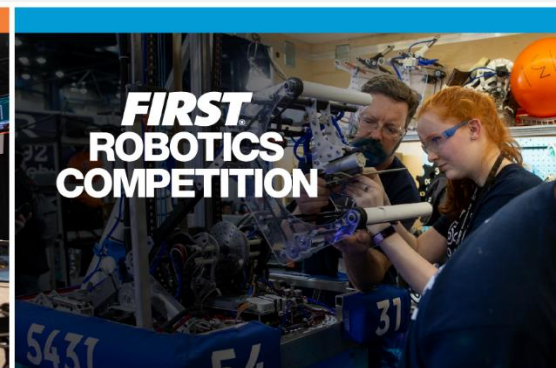
Introduction

What is *FIRST*® Tech Challenge?

FIRST® Tech Challenge is a student-centered program that focuses on giving students a unique and stimulating experience. Each year, teams engage in a new game where they design, build, test, and program autonomous and driver operated robots that must perform a series of tasks. To learn more about *FIRST*® Tech Challenge and other *FIRST*® Programs, visit www.firstinspires.org.

FIRST Core Values

We express the *FIRST*® philosophies of *Gracious Professionalism*® and *Coopertition*® through our Core Values:

- **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!*

Gracious Professionalism®

FIRST® uses this term to describe our programs' intent.
Gracious Professionalism® is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.
Watch Dr. Woodie Flowers explain *Gracious Professionalism* in this short video.

Social Media and Website Guidelines Introduction

Social Media is now more prevalent than ever. People, businesses, and organizations all have social media pages. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone. Your online presence says a lot about who you are as an individual or as a group. You should be intentional when creating your online presence and make sure that your social media footprint represents you or your team in a positive light.

Social media is a great way to create and share your team's brand. Creating a strong social media presence can help your team be successful in your community outreach, finding sponsorships, or even just participating in the worldwide community that is *FIRST*! Our social media guidelines are meant to help you be successful in creating your team's individual brand while also helping you connect with our *FIRST* network.

Creating an Online Presence

Before you begin you should think about why you want to create an online presence. Is it to share information? Is it to spread the word about *FIRST* in your community? Is it to thank your

sponsors? Is it to connect with other *FIRST* teams and alumni? Is it to teach robotics? You need to identify your purpose so that you can decide the best route to take.

For example, if it is just to share information, a website is often an easy tool with which to do that. However, if you are making regular updates to the information you are sharing, then perhaps Facebook or X (formally Twitter) is a better strategy. We talk about the various options below.

The next question you should ask yourself is who are you trying to communicate with? The general public? The volunteers in your state? Students at your school and in your community? Parents and sponsors? Again, this will impact the choice you make, we recommend that you find out which platform your target audience is using the most and start there.

Remember, bigger isn't always better. Don't try doing too much at once or you might end up making more work for yourself and will have a harder time being successful. How much time and resources can you devote to this project? Is it something you can do each week? Every day? A couple times a year? Most social media outreach works best if there is a regular presence. Lastly, what is the personality you want to create with your presence? Is it professional? Is it silly? You need to identify the tone that you want to set so that you can be consistent, and your audience and community will know what to expect.

General Guidelines and Recommendations

FIRST has policies about the use of our name and logos. Be sure that you have read the [FIRST Branding & Design Standards information.](#) This is a super helpful document.
Always remember that you are representing *FIRST* and *FIRST* Tech Challenge and to bring your *Gracious Professionalism* online with you.

You are going to need an email address to create your online presence. Choose a name that clearly states who you are (such as FTCTeam1234@gmail.com) and make sure a few people have the name and password and access.

Whatever online presence you create, be sure to make it clear that you are affiliated with *FIRST* and/or *FIRST* Tech Challenge, using the correct logos, and directing people to the website so they can find out more.

Be sure that whatever your plan is that you stick with it. Most social media platforms work best if you maintain a posting momentum (with the exception of a website). For example, if you start out posting once a day on Facebook and then drop to once a month, your posts are going to get lost in the newsfeed and result in a lower reach.

Use your analytics to see how you are doing at achieving your goals. If your numbers are low, you might need to adjust how often you are posting or the time of day. Do a search for ways to improve your online presence and there will be tons of articles out there with advice. Cross-post, but not too much. If you have a website and Facebook account, mention your website on Facebook, especially when you post new information. On your website, have a link to your Facebook page.

Website Recommendations
A website is a great way to share information with the public. A website, once created, only requires a little maintenance as people expect the information to be pretty static.

Tips:
- Make the webpage easy to navigate: people should be able to tell what the pieces of the page are and how to get around.
- Update your page at least 3-4 times a year. You can upload new photos, change the dates or season logos, etc to keep it a little fresh and up to date.

Facebook Recommendations
Facebook is a tool to share information with people, including photos, upcoming events, and progress reports. Facebook requires regular maintenance, at least weekly, but daily is even better.

Tips:
- Check in regularly to reply to comments and messages.

- Post at least 2-3 times a week, although once a day is optimal to ensure your followers are able to get your content in their newsfeed.

Some of the best ways to engage your community on Facebook is through asking your followers a question, sharing intriguing videos, and asking your community to comment on photos or related posts. Community engagement with Facebook posts keeps your posts in more viewers newsfeeds.

Be sure to follow and re-share the *FIRST* and *FIRST* Tech Challenge Facebook pages, as well as your local *FIRST* Tech Challenge community on Facebook (teams, Affiliate Partner page, etc).

X (formally Twitter) Recommendations

X is an online tool for sharing information in real time. You are limited to 140 characters, so this is a perfect tool for regular, short updates. Because you have so few characters to work with, it's important to make them really count. Take the time to fine tune your message before you send it out to make sure that it relays the message you're intending to share. X requires daily maintenance to be successful, because the information moves fast. Tweets also use hashtags to align the Tweet in searchable conversations or social media/twitter trends.

Tips:
- There is such a thing as too much, so while X is ideal for posting a lot of little sound bites, the recommended number of tweets is about 3-5 a day to maintain a good balance. The 3-5 recommended tweet number does not include high quality and related content retweets from other accounts.
- Mix it up: post quotes, pictures, and video links in addition to text-only Tweets.
- Check out Buffer as a free tool to help space out retweeting and organizing your X content.
- Be sure to follow and re-Tweet the *FIRST* and *FIRST* Tech Challenge X feeds, as well as your local *FIRST* Tech Challenge community (teams, Affiliate Partner page, etc). To be a part of the conversation, we use the hashtags: #omgrobots #morethanrobots #FIRSTinspires

Instagram Recommendations

Instagram is a visual community where you take a photo and post it with a brief tag. Instagram is quick and easy, but it does require regular, weekly posting in order for your posts to be seen.

Tips:

- We recommend utilizing the Instagram Story feature as a way to engage followers, including asking questions and sharing responses, taking polls, posting countdowns, and hosting live videos, etc.
- You can also post videos in addition to photos, and can share multiple photos within the same post. This is a great way to tell a story or share your team's progress on your robot, season, or a project.
- Be sure to follow the *FIRST* Instagram account, as well as your local *FIRST* Tech Challenge community (teams, Affiliate Partner page, etc).

YouTube Recommendations

If you are interested in using videos to connect, then this is the platform for you. This is not a platform that requires regular updating, but it would work best when paired with one that does to announce when you've posted a new video.

Tips:

- Make sure you are posting quality videos! Learn how to use video editing tools, add text and sound, etc.
- Post original video content! Be entertaining!
- Make careful decisions about your thumbnails (image alongside the video link), titles, and descriptions. Before they see your video, this is the first impression you create. Be descriptive and original.
- Be sure to follow the *FIRST* and *FIRST* Tech Challenge YouTube channels, as well as your local *FIRST* Tech Challenge community (teams, Affiliate Partner page, etc).

Blog Recommendations

Blogging can be a great way to share detailed information with your community. A post is generally 300-500 words long. Topics can include status updates on the robot design and build, competition updates, instructions on how to do something, etc. Blogging doesn't require consistent maintenance, but 1-2 times a week is a good way to maintain an online presence.

Tips:

- More than the other platforms, blogging requires lengthy writing, so make sure it is good writing.
- Add one or two photos to your post to create visual interest.
- Be sure to follow the *FIRST* Tech Challenge blog, as well as your local *FIRST* Tech Challenge community (teams, Affiliate Partner page, etc)

Appendix A – Resources

Game Forum Q&A

https://ftcforum.firstinspires.org/

Anyone may view questions and answers within the *FIRST*® Tech Challenge game Q&A forum without a password. To submit a new question, you must have a unique Q&A system username and password for your team.

FIRST Tech Challenge Game Manuals

Part 1 and 2 - https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/ftc/game-and-season-info

FIRST Headquarters

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Email: Firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org

FIRST Websites

FIRST homepage – www.firstinspires.org

FIRST Tech Challenge Page – For everything *FIRST* Tech Challenge.

FIRST Tech Challenge Event Schedule – Find *FIRST* Tech Challenge events in your area.

FIRST Tech Challenge Social Media

FIRST Tech Challenge X (Twitter) Feed - If you are on X, follow the *FIRST* Tech Challenge X feed for news updates.

FIRST Tech Challenge Facebook page - If you are on Facebook, follow the *FIRST* Tech Challenge page for news updates.

FIRST Tech Challenge YouTube Channel – Contains training videos, game animations, news clips, and more.

FIRST Tech Challenge Blog – Weekly articles for the *FIRST* Tech Challenge community, including outstanding volunteer recognition!

FIRST Tech Challenge Team Email Blasts – contain the most recent *FIRST* Tech Challenge news for teams.

Feedback

We strive to create support materials that are the best they can be. If you have feedback about this manual, please email firsttechchallenge@firstinspires.org. Thank you!

This document was updated on 5/8/24