

JUDGES

Overview

FIRST invites luminaries from many fields to be Competition judges. These men and women 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					
Regional Capacity (# of Teams)	PIT Interview Judges	*Match Observers	**RCA Judges	Maximum Total Judges	No of Fields in Play
24	6	2	3	11	1
28	7	2	3	12	1
32	8	2	3	13	1
36	9	2	3	14	1
40	10	2	3	15	1
44	11	2	3	16	1
48	12	2	3	17	1
52	13	2	3	18	1
56	14	2	3	19	1
60	15	2	3	20	1
64	16	2	3	21	1
68	17	2	3	22	1
72	18	4	3	25	2
76	19	4	3	26	2
80	20	4	3	27	2

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THOSE RECRUITING JUDGES

The FIRST budget for Judge Shirts and gifts, as well as the on-site venue space for the Judge Room is based on the formula above for number of judges. FIRST looks at each events planned capacity for the coming year and then budgets and purchases accordingly. This formula takes into account last minute cancellations.

* **Match Observers**, max two for three team alliances, can get away with one if the game is a two team alliance. Since recruiting begins before the game is known, plan for a three team alliance.

** **RCA Judges**- max three, but can manage with two veteran judges

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 over and above the allocation for shirts and judge gifts will be charged to the regional event.

The Role of the Judge

FIRST Judges are role models for the team members. They are there for many more reasons than to choose which team receives a given award. By the very nature of who they are, they are providing inspiration to the team members. In essence, the awards, although an inspirational in themselves, give the judges a reason to interact with the teams and the team members an opportunity to interact with these leaders of industry and community.

Who should be a Judge?

An individual asked to be a judge at the FIRST Robotics Competition event, should be a leader in the community. Types of individuals a planning committee might approach are local inventors, scientists, business leaders, university department heads and other individuals who hold a high position or are highly regarded in their organization or community.

Who should NOT be a Judge?

FIRST does not consider college students (including graduate students) ready to meet the criteria for a judging a FIRST Robotics Competition, as they have not yet become successful in their fields. Please, do not recruit students to be a part of your judge panel. Also, whenever possible,



individuals who are direct team mentors should be avoided, not because they are biased or do not have stature (many do), but due to avoid appearance of impropriety. If having an active team mentor on your judge panel is unavoidable, that team should not be participating at your event.

Timing of Judge Recruitment

Judge recruitment should begin in September. Since the individuals you are recruiting for your judge panel are well recognized or important individuals in the community, their schedules book quickly. *FIRST* recommends beginning to recruit judges for the FRC events 4-6 months in advance of the event. A final judge panel should be in place by no later than 12 weeks prior to the event. *This will also allow adequate time for the judges to get into VIMS for screening, and to obtain and edit bios for the regional program books.* It should be noted that judges recruited after the deadline for the Regional Program Books will NOT have their bios in the Regional Programs.

The Judge Panel

The judging panel consists of several judges and a Judge Advisor. The number of judges needed is based on the number of teams participating in the event. Please use the matrix found on Page 7-1 to determine the correct number of judges to recruit. If in doubt about the capacity for your event, please contact your Regional Director for the information. The Judge Assistant, although an important role, is not considered part of the Judge panel at the event and is not included in the judge count.

The *FIRST* Regional Director in your area will work closely with your Judge Coordinator to develop a judge panel, guide you in the judge recruitment efforts, and answer any questions or concerns that may arise. The Regional judge panel should reflect a good balance of veteran and first time judges, 50/50 is ideal. The judge panel must also achieve racial, ethnic, gender and age diversity similar to that of your community. The veteran judges serve as mentors for the first-time judges during the event and guide them through the intense judging process.

Criteria for Regional Judges

- It is important that the Judge panel reflect the age, gender and ethnic diversity of the local community
- 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 or from fields outside the technical community.

New Events

FIRST Headquarters will assist with the recruiting of veteran judges for new regional events upon request of the regional planning committee and will work with the Regional Planning Committee to discuss the appropriate number of new judges needed for each regional Competition. ***Please note that having too many judges on the panel can be more detrimental to the judging effort as having too few.***

Being a *FIRST* Judge **requires** a two-day time commitment, as well as attendance at the Thursday night judge dinner meeting. Due to the nature of the judging process, this two-day commitment is essential; the judging process is such that interviews and discussions on Friday get carried over to decisions that are made on Saturday. It is unfair to the balance of the judging panel, and to the teams to recruit judges who cannot make this time commitment. If a potential judge cannot make the two-day commitment, ask if there is someone else in their organization that can. Potential judges should also be made aware of the hours they are needed on site (7:30 am to mid or late afternoon on both days as well as the Thursday evening Judges Dinner). Individuals who cannot make a complete commitment should be encouraged to become involved in some other way.



Judges are responsible for their own travel/accommodation expenses and arrangements. Each judge will be given one golf-style *FIRST JUDGE* shirt to wear during the Competition. Judge attire is casual, and comfortable shoes are a must! Judges do a lot of walking between the playing field, pit area, and the judge room!

During the recruitment of the judge panel, the following information must be obtained:

- Address and contact data, i.e. phone number, e-mail address (this information is shared with the Judge Advisor so that they can communicate with the judges prior to the event.)
- Title (to be used during introduction) and Company name
- A brief (not to exceed 50 words) bio for the program books

Judges and Segways™

Many of our judges now own Segways™ and will ask if they can bring them to the competition. We do not say “no”, however, do explain that they will be working in teams with other judges who do not have Segways™. They will be carrying clipboards, asking questions and taking lots of notes and that the Pit Area is not really conducive to modes of transportation other than walking.

Judge’s Non-volunteer Children

At some events judges may wish to bring their children and/or guests to the event with them, onto the field and into the Judge room. Please explain that it takes many volunteers to ensure the success of a *FIRST* Robotics Competition. We depend on the support of adults and teens, but due to *FIRST* insurance restrictions children must be 13 years or older to volunteer (see note). Let them know that you strive to have all the volunteer positions filled prior to the start of an event, thus cannot always accommodate “walk-ins”: individuals wishing to volunteer because they are attending the event. To best ensure a volunteer assignment at a Regional, please register prior to the event via the *FIRST* website, www.usfirst.org. Judges should also be aware that due to safety concerns, children are not allowed in the area of the playing field at events.

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 and perhaps take them home should they become tired. For their own safety we cannot allow young children in the field area during the event. We respectfully request you to not bring non-judges into the judge room.”

Our regional 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.”

NOTE: Some regional events may set a higher age limit. Please verify the age limit set for your event with the Regional Planning Committee and include it in all communications with the judge panel.

Judges in VIMS

VIMS is the *FIRST* Volunteer Information Management System. This system gives volunteers control over their own data, which in turn provides more accurate information for *FIRST* and for the Regional Planning Committees. All volunteers are required to enter their personal information into VIMS, which is accessed via the *FIRST* Website. This includes all Judges. The Judge Coordinator should instruct all judges to access VIMS to ensure that the contact data on file is accurate and current, or in the case of new judges to enter it. By having all the judges enter their



current data in VIMS, this will help to ensure that all of the judges for an event are screened. All event judges must be registered in VIMS by no later than 5 weeks prior to the event in order to ensure proper screening.

Nominating a Judge Advisor

FIRST Headquarters, working with nominations from the Regional Committee, will contact and recruit the Judge Advisor for each event. Please refer to the Judge Advisor Recruitment Procedure found in Policies and Procedures Section of the Regional Planning Guide, for more information on this process.

All new FIRST Judge Advisors must have two prior years experience judging at the regional and/or Championship level. New Judge Advisors may be nominated by the Regional Planning Committee and/or by other Judge Advisors. **Nomination of a Judge Advisor by the Regional Planning Committee does not automatically guarantee the individual will be the local Judge Advisor.** The FIRST Lead Judge Advisors and the Director of the FIRST Robotics Competition must approve all nominations of new judge advisors to be trained. Once a judge has been nominated and approved, FIRST headquarters will contact the individual to see if he or she is interested in becoming a Judge Advisor for the event and available for training prior to the event. Nomination of new Judge Advisors should happen by no later than September in the planning year.

Note: As all Judge Advisors nominations must be approved by FIRST before being contacted, FIRST asks that the Regional Planning Committees not contact the nominee directly or make any commitments about being the Judge Advisor. Doing so, should the individual not be approved for some reason, only creates bad feelings with an otherwise dedicated volunteer.

All first time Judge Advisors must attend the mandatory Judge Advisor training session in January. FIRST Headquarters will reimburse Judge Advisors for this expense. Veteran Judge Advisors must attend at least one Judge Advisor training session every two years in order to remain a qualified FIRST Judge Advisor.

Role of the Judge Advisor

The Judge Advisor facilitates the panel discussions and the judging process throughout the event. He/she organizes 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 awards script. The Judge Advisor does not vote unless absolutely necessary. FIRST will recruit a Judge Advisor for each Regional Competition in keeping with the Policy on Judge Advisor Recruitment found in Policies and Procedures (Section 14) of the Regional Planning Guide.

Judge Coordinator

The regional planning committee should **designate a Judge Coordinator** to recruit judges for your regional Competition. This individual will work closely with the FIRST Regional Director and FIRST Headquarters to ensure that the Judge Positions are filled. This individual may be the local Judge Advisor in some instances.

Responsibilities of the Judge Coordinator include:

- Recruiting qualified judges who meet the FIRST Judge Criteria for the event
- Collecting Judge Contact information to send to FIRST HQ
- Coordinating with the Volunteer Coordinator to ensure that all Judges are registered in VIMS, assigned the role of judge and screened prior to the event.
- Obtaining a 50 - 100 word bio for the regional program books (editing if necessary) for FIRST HQ. Samples of well written judge bios can be found in Section 20.

- Notifying FIRST HQ of any changes in the judge panel.

In the cases where the Judge Coordinator is not the local Judge Advisor, FIRST recommends asking the Judge Advisor if he or she would like to be involved in the judge recruitment. Many of the Judge Advisors have excellent contacts and are interested in working with the Judge Coordinator to obtain a good mix of judges on the panel.

Judge Room Supplies

The Regional Planning Committee will need to supply certain items to the Judge Room at the event. The following is a list of items required:

- ◆ 2 Full pads of flip chart paper
Note: Post-it Self Stick are preferred, if standard pads are being used, Fun Tack putty should also be supplied.
- ◆ 1 multi-pack box of colored markers (5-6)
- ◆ 3 dozen ball point pens
- ◆ 1 ream white printer paper
- ◆ 3 Sharpie black markers (fine point)
- ◆ 1 12" ruler
- ◆ 2 boxes 1" round stickers (1 box in red or orange/1 box in blue or green)
- ◆ 1 box white labels of sufficient size to cover 1" round stickers
- ◆ 1 stapler with box of staples
- ◆ 1 box paperclips
- ◆ 25 clipboards or enough to have 1 for each judge
- ◆ 1 pair scissors

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 and will work with the Procurement Department at FIRST headquarters to fulfill the request. Neither the Judge Advisor nor any other volunteer, including the members of the Regional Planning Committee are authorized to purchase materials that are to be paid for by FIRST.

Judge Assistant (at the event)

The Judge Assistant's role begins Thursday at noon. The Judge Assistant should plan to attend the Wednesday night Volunteer orientation meeting. This individual is responsible for ensuring that the judge supplies/materials, supplied by the committee and FIRST, (easels, flipcharts, judge books, pens, etc.) are placed neatly in the judge room, and that the room itself is completely ready by Thursday afternoon prior to the Judges dinner. In most instances the Judge Advisor will also be in attendance on Thursday afternoon assisting with the setup.

The Judge Assistant needs to attend the Thursday night Judge dinner so that they may begin to learn the names/faces of the judges and begin to interact with them. The Judge Assistant is responsible for bringing the FIRST Program Books and FIRST judge shirts to the dinner location site and for distributing them to the judges immediately after the dinner meeting.

Judge Assistants may be provided with a Judge Assistant Checklist by *the Judge Advisor* which details the responsibilities and activities required daily. *As each Judge Advisor runs their judge room in their own manner, expectations may vary from event to event.*

The Judge Assistant is **not** a FIRST judge, or Assistant Judge Advisor; the Judge Assistant is a volunteer who has been specifically recruited to help the Judge Advisor keep the panel on



schedule, assist with typing the award scripts, etc. The Judge Assistant functions as a liaison between the event management and the *FIRST* judge room. The Judge Assistant does not provide input on decisions made in the Judges room nor should the Judge Assistant wear a *FIRST* Judge shirt because it causes confusion among the teams. *The Judge Assistant will be issued a volunteer t-shirt at the event.*

During the Competition the Judge Assistant functions as an assistant to the Judge Advisor. The Judge Assistant keeps the Judge Advisor and the panel on schedule throughout each day. This is VERY important. The Judge Assistant also helps the judges and the Judge Advisor in writing the award scripts each day and getting them to the Event Manager who will provide them to the Production Manager and Master of Ceremonies each afternoon at the agreed upon time. The Judge Assistant is on radio communication throughout each day and communicates any changes in playing schedule/timing to the Judge Advisor and the panel as needed. This person needs to have an outgoing personality, a lot of energy, and strong writing skills (including basic word processing). The Judge Assistant keeps the judge panel motivated and spirited throughout each day, and ensures that the judge room is well kept.

Thursday Night Judge Dinner Meeting

A Thursday night orientation dinner meeting is held the night before the Competition begins. This meeting is mandatory for all judges. At the dinner meeting, the judging panel will have an opportunity to meet each other, the Judge Advisor, and possibly *FIRST* staff. An overview of *FIRST*, the game, judging responsibilities, awards, and judge schedule will be discussed.

The Regional Planning Committee is responsible for organizing the judges dinner and communicating the time and place to the judge panel. In general, a location within or near the Competition site must be reserved for a 6:00 pm dinner meeting for the judge panel. Typically, the space should be able to accommodate 20 - 30 people, depending on the number of judges and invited *FIRST* personnel. Typically, this is a working sit down dinner with a brief "get to know you" period of approximately ½ hour at the start. The judge dinner is not a VIP event for non-judges. The dinner is generally a plated dinner and if appropriate in your area, wine may be served with the meal and at the 'meet and greet' period just prior to dinner. The *FIRST* Procurement office will assist you with the paperwork to cover the costs.

Judge Biographies

Once a candidate has agreed to become a judge, he/she needs to provide a very brief (no longer than 50 words) biographical statement. Ask the judges for three sentences, what do you do (title), what's your education (degrees), and something the teams might find interesting. These biographies will be printed in the Regional Program Books, and abbreviated versions may be used by the regional emcee on-site to introduce the judges each morning during the opening ceremony. The Judge Recruitment Coordinator is responsible for reviewing and if necessary, editing the biographies before giving them to the Program Book Coordinator to be emailed them to *FIRST* in keeping with the program book-printing deadline. The absolute deadline for receiving and including these biographies in the Regional Program book will be no later than 7 weeks prior to the actual event.

Judge, Judge Advisor and Judge Assistant Shirts

Judge shirts are available in both men's and women's sizes. Sizes are listed on the judge shirt order form found in FORMS (Section 13) of the Regional Planning Guide. Orders will be sent directly to the vendor from the Regional Planning Committee, with a copy to *FIRST* HQ. *FIRST* will provide the vendor with the allocation quantities of shirts for each event based on the event capacity (see matrix on page one of this section). Any quantity of shirts and gifts over the approved amount will be charged to the Regional as an additional expense. *FIRST* plans for one Judge Assistant at a Regional Event. Order only the shirts needed for your event. In order to fulfill your request, the vendor will need the shirt order complete with sizes and a shipping



address no later than 5 weeks prior to the event. Orders received later than 5 weeks prior to the event may incur priority shipping charges which will be charged to the regional event. *FIRST* will cover standard ground shipping for orders received on time.

Any shirts ordered above the budgeted amount will belong to the Regional. We encourage you to keep them in a safe place so that you may use them the following year to keep your costs down. If you order only the budgeted amount, any additional shirts should be put in the judge crate to be returned to *FIRST*. Judge shirts may only be given to current year FRC Judges.

Judge Recognition

FIRST recognizes the efforts of the judges in several ways. In addition to the biography in the Regional Program Book, the acknowledgement at the opening and awards ceremonies and the Judges shirt, a small token gift is given to each judge at the event. These gifts are to be given to the Judge Advisor, the Judge Assistant and the Judges (1 per person). Please do not give Judge Recognition gifts to other event volunteers, sponsors or VIPs. Depending on where *FIRST* buys the Judge Gifts from, they will either be shipped with the shirts or in the judge crate (determined annually).

Sample Judge Time Commitment

The time commitment required of a judge candidate begins with a Thursday night dinner meeting and runs through the close of Competition on Saturday late afternoon. **It is important that a judge candidate be able to commit to that entire time period.** If a potential Judge cannot make the two-day commitment, ask if there is someone else in the organization that can. Due to the nature of the judging process, this two-day time commitment is essential.

The judge panel starting time on Friday and Saturday morning is finalized at the Thursday night dinner. Most Judge Advisors ask their Judge Panels to be on site and in the room by 7:30 a.m. both Friday and Saturday. A sample schedule and listing of the regional awards is shown on the following pages.

Please make certain all judges are aware that travel, transportation, and hotel expenses are not paid for by *FIRST*.



◆ Sample Regional Judge Schedule

Thursday

6pm - 8: pm Judges' meeting and dinner

Friday

7:30 am - 9 am Judges' Breakfast/Meeting

9 am - 4 pm Matches

12 pm - 1 pm Judges Lunch/Meeting

4 pm Awards

6 pm -9 pm Team Social (optional)

Saturday

7:30 am - 9 am Judges' Breakfast/Meeting

9 am - 4 pm Matches

12pm -1 pm Judges Lunch/Meeting

4 pm Awards

Judges should arrive by 6:00 PM on Thursday to have an initial dinner meeting. This is where they will meet their fellow judges; receive preliminary instructions and their judge's shirt for the event. If parking passes are required, they will be distributed at this time.

Judges are expected to be at the event throughout the tournament on Friday and Saturday. Judges will visit the Pit Area to meet team members and learn more about their robot, etc.

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

Judges will meet on Saturday morning for a breakfast meeting prior to the matches. Early Saturday afternoon, a final judges meeting will be held to determine the Saturday award winners. At approximately 4:00 PM, the award trophies and medals are given to the Saturday award category winners, finalists, and winners of the regional competition.

Regional Judge Responsibilities

When on-site, judges interview *FIRST* teams in the Pit Area, as well as watch the Competition on the playing field. **Final award categories for the current FRC season are currently under review and may differ from those shown below.**

SAMPLE FRIDAY AWARDS

- Imagery Award
- Innovation in Control Award
- Creativity Award
- Engineering Excellence Award"
- Entrepreneurship Award
- Judges Award
- Web Site Award *
- Excellence in Design Award**
- Woodie Flowers Award *

* *Judged by off site panel*

** *Judged by Teams*

SAMPLE SATURDAY AWARDS

- Industrial Design
- Quality Award
- Gracious Professionalism™ Award
- Spirit Award
- Coopertition™ Award+++
- Rookie Inspiration Award
- Rookie All Star Award
- Highest Rookie Seed +
- Industrial Safety Award ++
- Finalist +++
- Winner +++
- Engineering Inspiration Award
- Regional Chairman's Award

+ *Determined by team standings*

++ *Determined by Safety Advisors*

+++ *Determined via matches*