

FLL Team Mentor – The How To's of Being an FLL Mentor:

Hosted by Senior Mentor, FLL Mentor and FLL Sponsor ie Rockwell Collins
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Resources for coaching an FLL team:

FIRST LEGO League Coaches' Handbook – Chapter 2, pg 9,-10

FIRST website: <http://usfirst.org> – section for coaches and mentors

FIRST NEMO(Non-engineering Mentor Organization): www.FIRSTnemo.org

http://www.FIRSTnemo.org/PDF/organizational_tips.pdf

FIRST Forums an opportunity to talk with other mentors

General questions:

FLL Partner for your region of North America

FLL at FIRST Headquarters, flteams@usFIRST.org

FIRST Senior Mentor Hotline. The hotline will provide a means and opportunity for teams, coaches, and mentors to direct their questions, and quickly obtain information and/or request other assistance from FIRST Senior Mentors. All correspondence and inquiries should be addressed to FIRSTseniormentors@usFIRST.org.

1. What does it mean to be an FLL team Mentor?

- a. Someone who works with the team in her/his area of expertise
- b. Guides team and helps them to find the answers to their questions
- c. Mentors can help for one meeting, a group of meetings while the team works on a particular aspect of the challenge or at all meetings over the whole season
- d. Most Mentors have knowledge/skills that the team needs that the coach may not be as knowledgeable about
- e. Mentors are also professional role models, sharing with the team members what their jobs entail and how they prepared for the work they do
- e. Mentors often have the opportunity to work with team members one-on-one or in smaller groups which allows for very personal interaction with young people
- f. Parents are often called upon to be Mentors because of a skill or expertise they have
- g. The most important qualities for a Mentor is someone who enjoys working with young people and wants them to succeed

2. What does a mentor do?

- a. HAS FUN!
- b. Practices the FLL Core Values and Gracious Professionalism
- c. Helps the team achieve their goals – by sharing their expertise!
- d. Facilitates and guides the learning of the team members
- e. Encourages the team's/member's process of problem solving and decision making
- f. Asks questions to encourage the team's thinking and problem solving "What are you trying to do", "Is there another way you can do that", "Is there anything you can change", "Have you asked your team members", etc'
- g. Assists the team is assessing their progress and time line. Lets the team decide where they stand/what needs to be done.

j. Shares their professional experience and their education in preparation for their work including high school course/activities

3. FLL Core Values and Gracious Professionalism - in the FLL coach's handbook – p. i and on the *FIRST* LEGO League website. Be sure you reinforce the team's understanding of the FLL Core Values as well as Gracious Professionalism and remind them by the example that you set.

- a. It is about the team – the kids do the work!
- b. Spirit of teamwork – learning to work as a team.
- c. Spirit of friendly competition – learn from one another and have fun together.
- d. Respect each other and respect each others' ideas.
- e. Show Gracious Professionalism in everyday lives
- f. The journey is important - what you learn is more important than the awards at the end.
- g. Etc. – see the Coaches' Handbook for more on FLL Values and Gracious Professionalism.

4. Overview of the FLL program – refer to the heart of the FLL program, page 5

a. Robot – Chapter 4, p. 34.

If you are technical mentor – you may be assisting the team with engineering concepts, programming, and/or robot design.

b. The Project – Chapter 5, p. 48, is just as important as the robot. *FIRST* is science and technology, not just technology. If you are a Project related Mentor/Expert the team may need encouragement at first, but they are also likely to surprise you with their research, solution and ideas on how to share what they learned.

There are three steps to the Project:

1. Research the topic and identify a problem as defined by the assignment posted at kickoff;
2. Create an innovative solution;
3. Share your research, problem and solution with their community. The team defines their 'community' and who and how they share their research and solution.

5. Group Management

- a. Mentors do have to be aware of and help regulate team dynamics and behavior.
- b. If a dispute arises, help the team resolve it and then re-focus on the task at hand.
- c. Acknowledge all team members, get everyone to contribute and participate
- d. Provide positive feedback and encouraging responses

6. You will always wish you had more time, but so does every other mentor and team!!

a. Team meeting frequency and times – vary from team to team. Many teams find meeting two times a week for 1 ½ - 2 hours works well. They may be able to adjust their meeting schedule to when you, their mentor is available; but if they can't, please support them as much as you can given everyone's schedule limitations. Mentoring can also be done via email and phone calls.

b. Breakdown of meetings – plan with the coach ahead of time what the team needs to accomplish and how this will be done:

- i. For example, perhaps you'll work with part of the team on the robot while the coach works with the other part of the team on the Project.
- ii. Most meetings will start and end with the entire team doing something together. Think about how you can contribute to this time ie. Sharing a story from your professional experience.
- iii. Is there a field trip you can lead that will add to the work you are doing with the team?

- c. Remember KISS – This is a *FIRST* phrase “Keep it Simple Silly”. Don’t feel like the robot design, programming, research project, or teamwork activities have to be complex – simple can be great!!
- d. HAVE FUN – team work is important. And team spirit can really help build a team. Take time to have fun with the team and the rest will follow.

7. Who can you go to for help?

- a. Talk to your team’s coach, they can be a source of help, plus regular communication with all of the adults supporting the team is important to the team’s experience
- b. Reach out to other team mentors in your area. *FIRST* is like a family, and they will be happy to share their experiences and answer questions.
- c. Forum – on the FLL website. This is an “unofficial” place where coaches and mentors give feedback and ideas on the robot, project, teamwork, tournaments, etc. This is very good for getting ideas, suggestions, and encouragement from other mentors.
- d. *FIRST* Senior Mentors FIRSTseniormentors@usFIRST.org

8. Question/Comments

9. Review of basics

- a. HAVE FUN!
- b. Remember it is the journey!!
- c. Remember it is about the kids!!