

FIRST® LEGO® League Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in FIRST® LEGO® League. We have developed this FAQ sheet to help teachers, parents, and community members better understand the program and how to get involved.

WHAT IS FIRST and FIRST LEGO League?

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) provides innovative, engaging, mentor-based programs designed to inspire young people (grades 1-12) to be science and technology leaders and innovators. The programs not only build science, engineering and technology skills and interest, they also help to foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership. There are four *FIRST* programs in total. *FIRST* LEGO League is the program for upper elementary and middle school students, ages 9-14.

How is FIRST LEGO League Structured/Organized on a local level?

FIRST partners with regional organizations to make their programs available to youth worldwide. In Idaho, the University of Idaho's Extension 4-H Youth Development program is the Affiliate Partner Organization for *FIRST* LEGO League Jr., *FIRST* LEGO League, and *FIRST* Tech Challenge. Our role as the Affiliate Partner Organization is to oversee the program and provide support for teams throughout the state. We are your primary point of contact for these programs, so if in doubt, call us!

My child is a gifted 7/8 year old who loves LEGO. Can they participate in FIRST LEGO League?

FIRST LEGO League is intended for youth ages 9-14. While there are certainly youth who exhibit exceptional building and technology skills before age 9, the ability to handle the pressures of competition and the emotional maturity required to work collaboratively and effectively as a member of a team are typically not yet developed in younger students. Therefore, we strongly recommend that any youth under the age of 9 participate in *FIRST* LEGO League Jr., designed for ages 6-10.

How do I get my child on a team?

It is difficult to join an existing team. The majority of Idaho teams are private, neighborhood-based teams, so if you don't know someone already on the team, it can be difficult to join. If you are able to locate a team that is accepting new members, please be aware that being a part of a *FIRST* LEGO League team requires a good deal of commitment from both team members and parents. In general, teams expect their members to be present and ready to contribute at every meeting. They may expect team members to do 'homework' between meetings and for parents to help with team supplies/snacks, fundraising, etc.

Due to child protection and internet privacy regulations, University of Idaho 4-H Youth Development cannot disclose contact information for existing teams and coaches. With your permission, we can give your name and email address to our existing coaches and ask them to contact you directly if they have an opening (no guarantees). There are also a few schools, libraries, and out-of-school time programs (scout groups, church youth groups, Boys & Girls Clubs, etc.) who run open teams that form at the beginning of each season.

How can I guarantee my child will be able to participate this season?

The only way to be 100% sure your child participates in *FIRST* LEGO League is to start a new team. The first step is to find similarly interested youth and their parents who will commit to seeing the program through. Start asking your child's friends and their parents. Check with your neighborhood association, homeschool group, scout troop, church, or any other organizations, clubs or sports teams with which your family is involved to see if there is interest in forming a robotics team. Teams can have anywhere from 2-10 youth team members.

OK, I've found enough friends for a team. What else do I need?

Each team is required to have two adult (age 18+) coaches. Parents, grandparents, teachers, and business professionals are all excellent choices for the role of coach. Coaches should have the desire to explore learning alongside their team, good communication skills, organizational skills and the ability to prioritize tasks. A coach's job is not to solve problems for the team, it's to help them discover a solution on their own. Coaches handle administrative tasks like deciding where and when to meet, organizing snacks, team costumes, etc. That said, a coach should also have the curiosity and willingness to learn basic robot design and programming right along with the team so that they can help team members troubleshoot problems. The Team

Meeting Guide, included with your *FIRST* team registration, contains a lot of helpful information to assist you in keeping your team on schedule for the season and guiding them through the process. In addition our office provides regular e-mail newsletters, online resources, and of course, you are welcome to call or email us anytime with your questions!

Please Note: Next to being asked to put a child on a team, a request to recruit/provide a coach for a new team is one of the most frequent requests to our office. Neither *FIRST* nor 4-H are set up to build teams in this way for two chief reasons: logistics and youth protection. It would be nearly impossible for us to provide coaches for teams in a way that was fair and equitable to all youth across the region. In addition, coaches spend a lot of time with the youth on their teams, and we want to make sure that the adults in those roles are people who team parents/guardians trust. That's why we require a youth protection background check for all adult coaches and mentors working with teams.

OK, I've found my team members and coaches – what's next?

The next step is to register the team with *FIRST*. This is done online through the *FIRST* website at www.firstinspires.org. Create a user account by clicking the Sign Up link at the top right of the homepage and filling out the online form. Please use an email address you will check regularly during the season, as this is the contact information our office will receive for you, and email is our primary means of communication. Once you have a user account, you can log in to view the Dashboard where you can complete the team registration process, order your team's LEGO Mindstorms EV3 kit, and pay via credit card, purchase order, or check. If you have any trouble with the registration process, please contact the UI Extension 4-H Robotics office for help.

What kind of equipment will our team need and how much will it cost?

UI Extension 4-H Robotics estimates a rookie team will spend between \$1,900 - \$2,100 for their first year of competition. This includes investment in the EV3 Robotics kit, computer for coding the robot, and materials to build a practice table, all of which are reusable year-to-year. In subsequent seasons, team costs drop significantly, to around \$700 - \$900 per team. Please see the *FIRST* LEGO League Team Sample Budget for more information. All *FIRST* teams are welcome and encouraged to seek local sponsors to help cover team costs. There is also a very limited amount of funding available each year to help qualified teams get started. Please contact our office for more information on these opportunities.

When and where are the qualifying tournaments?

Tournament dates and venues are finalized in October of each year. In general, the qualifying tournaments are held the first three weekends in December in locations throughout the State, and State Championships are held mid-to-late January, one in the northern part of Idaho and one in the south. Please contact our office or check our Events Calendar at <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/4h/programs/robotics/calendar> to see event dates posted as they are finalized.

My team can't accomplish all the missions. Should we skip the Qualifying Tournament to avoid disappointment?

Absolutely not! While Qualifying Tournaments are a competition, they are also a celebration of each team's perseverance and hard work to meet the season's challenge. The majority of the awards given at a *FIRST* LEGO League Qualifying Tournament are based on how your team performs in the judging rooms and have almost nothing to do with the robot game. In addition, rookie teams can learn a lot from other teams by attending their local tournament.

One of the keys to the *FIRST* LEGO League robot game is consistency. If your rookie team can accomplish even one or two missions on the game field with high consistency, they're going to do just fine at the competition! It's very rare, even for experienced teams, to be able to accomplish all the missions on the field, especially at the Qualifying Tournament level. Remember: teamwork, learning and working with the engineering design process, and most of all, having FUN are just as important as winning an award.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions?



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