



VOLUNTEERS

HANDBOOK

Updated 07.2025

WELCOME LETTER

On behalf of everyone here at *FIRST*®, I want to thank you for generously giving your time as a volunteer. We are proud to be supported by a strong network of volunteers, sponsors, educational institutions, professional organizations, teachers, individual donors, parents/guardians and many others. Without the support of people like you, *FIRST* could not make the impact that it does. No matter how much time you're able to offer, there is a volunteer role suited to your unique talents and interest, and you will make important contributions towards furthering [our mission](#).

When you provide your time and talents as a *FIRST* volunteer, your contributions have amazing ripple effects. As a volunteer you give more students access to STEM programs and hands-on education experiences. Your efforts help prepare students to solve problems, build a wide variety of critical skills, and adopt a life-long love of learning.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

We hope that your experience as a *FIRST* volunteer allows you to be energized about giving back to your community, feel fulfilled by the impact you're making in students' lives, and – most of all -- have FUN! Thank you for helping us build a better future for kids everywhere. We couldn't do it with your support.

Chris Moore, CEO, *FIRST*

WELCOME TO THE *FIRST*® VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

HELPING TO CHANGE LIVES, CHANGE OUR CULTURE, AND CHANGE THE FUTURE.

Welcome to the *FIRST*® volunteer community! As a *FIRST* volunteer, you are part of a global community supporting *FIRST* youth in developing their skills and building tomorrow. Together, we're inspiring the next generation of innovators and technology leaders and impacting over 655,000 youth around the world each year. Whatever your expertise, *FIRST* has a volunteer opportunity for you. Whether you have a few weekend hours, the desire to mentor a team for a season, or want to work behind the scenes to help *FIRST* grow, opportunities abound for people who want to give back – helping to change lives, change our culture, and change the future.

In this handbook, you will find the materials you need to start and enjoy your journey as a *FIRST* volunteer. This includes information about our organization, the resources you need to join our community and select the right role for you, your rights, responsibilities, and requirements as a volunteer, instructions on where to access training, resources, and support for your role, and important policies.



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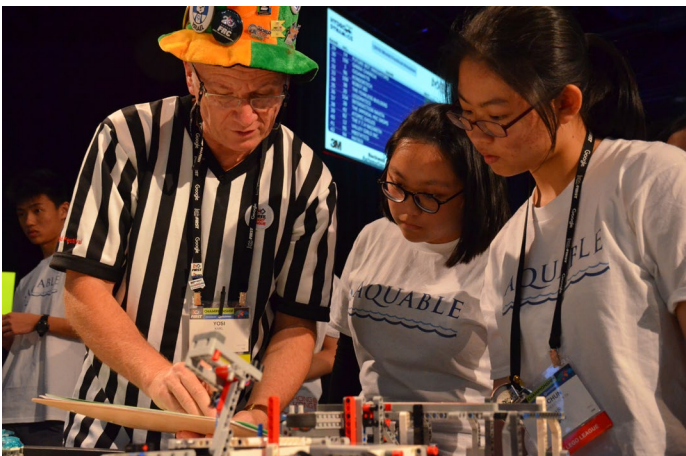
1. ABOUT *FIRST*

FIRST is the world's leading youth-serving nonprofit advancing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education, preparing young people for the future through a suite of life-changing youth robotics programs that build skills, confidence, and resilience. Thrilling robotics competitions from *FIRST* leave students with a sense of accomplishment and the understanding that they can do anything with their collective skills, leadership, and confidence, and that their experience will positively impact their future and take them further than any other sport can. Whether it is finding their people or finding their path, students gain the skills and confidence to forge ahead and build their future with *FIRST*.

FIRST is a nonprofit, volunteer-driven and operated organization, and as such promotes a culture of

FIRST is more than robots. The robots are a vehicle for students to learn important life skills. Kids often come in not knowing what to expect - of the program nor of themselves. They leave, even after the FIRST season, with a vision, with confidence, and with a sense that they can create their own future."

- DEAN KAMEN



1.1 MISSION OF *FIRST*

The mission of *FIRST* is to provide life-changing robotics programs that give young people the skills, confidence, and resilience to build a better world.

1.2 FIRST CORE VALUES

The *FIRST* Core Values are fundamental to *FIRST* and unique to its programs. They emphasize friendly sportsmanship, respect for the contributions of others, teamwork, learning, and community involvement and are part of our commitment to fostering cultivating, and preserving a culture of unity.



1.3 GRACIOUS PROFESSIONALISM® AND DR. WOODIE FLOWERS

[Gracious Professionalism](#) is part of the ethos of *FIRST*. It's a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.

Through *Gracious Professionalism*, fierce competition and mutual gain coexist. Participants compete intensely while treating each other with respect and empathy. There is no trash talking, nor disingenuous platitudes. Knowledge, competition, and empathy are comfortably blended.

The term was coined by Dr. [Woodie Flowers](#), (1943 - 2019) Executive Advisory Board Chair Emeritus & Distinguished Advisor.

At *FIRST*, volunteers use *Gracious Professionalism* in all interactions. One way to model *Gracious Professionalism* as a volunteer is to always treat everyone with respect, even if you disagree. If you have a conflict, set aside some time and space to hear each other out and come to a resolution privately.

[Coopertition](#) fosters innovation by promoting unqualified kindness and respect in the face of intense competition.

At *FIRST*, *Coopertition* means that teams help and cooperate with each other, even as they compete. It's about learning from teammates, teaching others, collaborating with mentors, managing and being managed. *Coopertition* embodies the spirit of competing while assisting and enabling others whenever possible.

1.4 FIRST CODE OF CONDUCT

The *FIRST* mission is to inspire a generation of science and technology leaders who are both gracious and professional. This *FIRST* [Code of Conduct](#) lists some of the basic behavior mentors, coaches, volunteers, team members, affiliate partners, contractors, staff, and other participants should adhere to while participating in *FIRST* activities.

- Exhibit *Gracious Professionalism* at all times.
- Ensure the safety of all participants in *FIRST* activities.
- Not engage in any form of bullying, harassment, use of profane or insulting language, or any actual or threatened violence.
- Adhere to all *FIRST* Youth Protection Program (YPP) policies.
- Report any unsafe behavior to event or local *FIRST* leadership.

Persons who do not comply with this Code of Conduct may be barred from participating in *FIRST* activities.

1.5 NOTABLE MOMENTS IN FIRST HISTORY

Founded by renowned inventor Dean Kamen in 1989, *FIRST* has reached more than 2.5 million youth participants in more than 100 countries over the past three decades.

- **1951** Dean Kamen is born.
- **1956** Dean creates his first invention – a bed-making machine.
- **1989** *FIRST* is incorporated.
- **1992** 28 *FIRST*® Robotics Competition teams meet in a high-school gym for the inaugural *FIRST* event.
- **1995–2002** EPCOT hosts *FIRST* Championship.
- **1996** Inaugural *FIRST* scholarship made available by Worcester Polytechnic Institute.
- **1998** *FIRST* and LEGO® join forces to launch junior robotics program with 200 teams in the pilot.
- **2004** *FIRST*® LEGO® League Jr. launches for children ages 6 to 10.
- **2004–2010** Georgia Dome hosts *FIRST* Championship.
- **2005** *FIRST*® Tech Challenge is introduced as pilot to provide a more accessible *FIRST* experience.
- **2007** U.S. President George W. Bush honors *FIRST* teams at the White House.
- **2011** *FIRST* Championship moves to St. Louis. Inaugural *FIRST*® LEGO® League Global Innovation Award Ceremony, presented by XPRIZE, held at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
- **2012** Global Music Artist, Entrepreneur, and Philanthropist will.i.am honors *FIRST* as part of the Super Bowl halftime show. The technology he wore on field was created by a *FIRST* Alum.
- **2013** *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams kick off the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade®.
- **2017** A dual *FIRST* Championship structure is scheduled.

1.6 FIRST PROGRAMS

FIRST offers a suite of robotics programs for PreK – 12 (ages 4 – 18). Each program can be facilitated in school or after-school, and students can join at any level.



1.6.1 FIRST® LEGO® LEAGUE

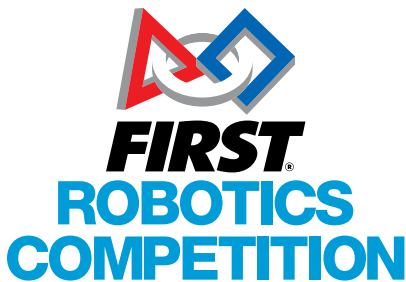
[FIRST® LEGO® League](#): Grades PreK – 8 (ages 4 – 16; age varies by region) introduces STEM to children through fun, exciting hands-on learning. Participants gain real-world problem-solving experiences through a guided, global robotics program, helping today's students, families and educators build a better future together. FIRST LEGO League's three divisions inspire youth to experiment and grow their critical thinking, coding, and design skills and showcase what they learned.

- FIRST® LEGO® League Discover (ages 4 – 6)
- FIRST® LEGO® League Explore (ages 6 – 10)
- FIRST® LEGO® League Challenge (ages 9 – 16)



1.6.2 FIRST® TECH CHALLENGE

[FIRST® Tech Challenge](#) teams (grades 7 – 12; ages 12 – 18) work together with their mentors to design, build, and program a robot to play a themed competition challenge by brainstorming innovative ideas, exploring advanced engineering concepts, and developing career-ready practices.



1.6.3 FIRST® ROBOTICS COMPETITION

[FIRST® Robotics Competition](#) (grades 9 – 12; ages 14 – 18) combines the excitement of sport with the rigors of science and technology. Teams of students are challenged to design, build, and program industrial-size robots and compete for awards, while they also create a team identity, raise funds, hone teamwork skills, and advance respect and appreciation for STEM within the local community.

2. VOLUNTEERING WITH *FIRST*

Volunteers make up 99% of the *FIRST* workforce. You'll be inspired when you join our community and feel the energy and excitement that our programs bring to students and adults alike. When you say, "Yes, I want to help!", you're also helping our non-profit organization achieve its mission of changing the world – one student at a time.

2.1 VOLUNTEER IMPACT

Your impact as a *FIRST* volunteer is significant. *FIRST* teams, competitions, and events are organized and operated by volunteers, including employees of corporate sponsors, teachers, parents, community leaders, *FIRST* alumni, and friends. Volunteers share their skills and knowledge with students while helping expose students to real-world careers and connect them to their work in *FIRST*. In return, volunteers nurture and grow their own skill sets and engage more meaningfully in their careers and in their communities.

Evidence from the *FIRST* Longitudinal Study, conducted via a multi-year partnership with Brandeis University, demonstrates that *FIRST* is meeting our mission and goals to increase the number of young people interested in STEM – and *FIRST* alumni's interest extends beyond their participation in the program to their educational and career choices. In addition to gains in STEM outcomes, *FIRST* participants develop skills in teamwork, problem solving, and communication, preparing them for success in school and the workforce, no matter what path they take.

FIRST Alumni

By their fourth year of college, *FIRST* alumni are more likely to be majoring in STEM fields than comparison group peers.



DECLARE A MAJOR IN STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH)

FIRST ALUMNI

81%

COMPARISON GROUP

64%

DECLARE A MAJOR IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE

FIRST ALUMNI

59%

COMPARISON GROUP

24%

Women in FIRST

Young women in *FIRST* have significant gains in all STEM areas including STEM interest, career interest, activity, knowledge, and identity compared to young women in the comparison group.

DECLARE A MAJOR IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE

FEMALE FIRST ALUMNI

48%

FEMALE COMPARISON GROUP

16%

MORE LIKELY TO TAKE COURSES IN ENGINEERING OR COMPUTER SCIENCE

3.5x

Computer Science

2.5x

Engineering



*x = times as likely

Benefits of FIRST

FIRST students are two times more likely to show an increase in STEM-related attitudes and interests than comparison group students.

Positive impacts are evident for all *FIRST* students regardless of race, gender, income, or community type.



FIRST STUDENTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO SHOW GAINS IN STEM OUTCOMES THAN COMPARISON STUDENTS

2x

STEM Interest
STEM Career Interest
STEM Knowledge

STEM Activity
STEM Identity

All differences statistically significant, $p \leq .05$
Sources: *FIRST* Longitudinal Study: 2022 Survey Results ([108-Month Follow-Up](#)).
Brandeis University. February, 2023.

2.2 HOW YOU CAN HELP

Event Volunteers: *FIRST* hosts thousands of events around the globe annually. These events are made possible through the support of event volunteers who work alongside others who are passionate about the mission of *FIRST* to run seasonal events at the local, regional, and even international levels.

No matter your availability and the level you want to be involved in, there is a role for you, from safety attendees to judges, and emcees to referees. Some roles require minimal time commitment with succinct day-of preparation. Other roles require pre-event training and longer participation on event days. Technical and non-technical event volunteer roles are available to support *FIRST* programs.

Coaches & Mentors: As a coach or mentor of a *FIRST* team, you help inspire and empower students to be innovators. You're working side by side with *FIRST* participants to build their leadership and problem-solving skills and, more importantly, their sense of belonging and self-confidence. Your contribution to the success of *FIRST* programs is immeasurable.

Our coaches and mentors are people from all backgrounds and disciplines who share their knowledge, whether it is technical or non-technical. They support the team with subject matter expertise on an as needed basis including assisting the team with topics such as programming questions, building skills, scholarships, business management, marketing, or fundraising. Coaches and mentors are also role models and advisers who help foster *Gracious Professionalism*[®] and *FIRST* Core Values in our students.

2.3 BECOMING A *FIRST* EVENT VOLUNTEER

There are 250,000 people like you around the world working to support the next generation. Whether you have a few hours, a day, or a weekend to help, or whether you have technical or non-technical ability, there is an event volunteer role suited to your schedule and unique interest.

The following links give a general description of most event volunteer positions by program:

- [FIRST LEGO League Explore](#)
- [FIRST LEGO League Challenge](#)
- [FIRST Tech Challenge](#)
- [FIRST Robotics Competition](#)

2.3.1 HOW TO SIGN UP TO BECOME A FIRST EVENT VOLUNTEER

Volunteers need to create a [Dashboard](#) account and apply for volunteer roles at an event near you to become a *FIRST* event volunteer. Those in the US and Canada will also need to complete a free background screening (18 years old or older).

Volunteers can select what roles you are interested in, update your profile information, and send any additional application comments to the volunteer coordinator as part of the volunteer application. If selected, you will be assigned a volunteer role based on your preferences. Once you are assigned, you will receive communications about your role from the volunteer coordinator.

In addition to applying for even roles, volunteers can utilize the [Dashboard](#) to apply to see their volunteer assignments and to receive communications from volunteer coordinators and Program Delivery Partners.

2.3.2 CONTACT YOUR LOCAL *FIRST* PARTNER

Once you apply online, you may also want to contact the local *FIRST* partners in your area to be proactive, introduce yourself, and let them know of your interest. You can search for them [here on our website](#). You can also directly message the volunteer coordinator through the [Dashboard](#). Refer to this help article on [how to message your volunteer coordinator](#).



2.3.3 LOGGING YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS

You may want to log your volunteer hours after the event if you are volunteering for school credit, for your employer, or for other reasons. Event volunteer hours can only be logged:

- If you were assigned and notified of an event volunteer role;
- During the current season.

Be proactive and log your hours immediately following your event. Please note: at this time team roles like Lead Coaches, Mentors, Youth Mentors, Team Volunteers, and Team Administrators cannot log hours on the *FIRST* Dashboard.

2.4 BECOMING A *FIRST* COACH OR MENTOR

As a coach or mentor of a *FIRST* team, you help inspire and empower students to be innovators. You're working side by side with *FIRST* participants to build their leadership and problem-solving skills and, more importantly, their sense of belonging and self-confidence. You'll also get the opportunity to give back to your community, build your own professional skills, and be inspired by youth participants. Each *FIRST* program offers unique opportunities for you to get involved in technical or non-technical roles. Learn more about coach/mentor requirements, starting or connecting with a team, and additional resources by reviewing the [Coach Mentor Checklist](#).

2.4.1 HOW TO START A TEAM

***FIRST* LEGO LEAGUE:**

- [How to Start a *FIRST* LEGO League Team](#)
- [Watch *FIRST* LEGO League Coach Quick Tips](#)

***FIRST* TECH CHALLENGE:**

- [How to Start a *FIRST* Tech Challenge Team](#)
-

***FIRST* ROBOTICS COMPETITION:**

- [Guide to Running a *FIRST* Robotics Competition Team](#)

2.4.2 HOW TO CONNECT TO AN EXISTING TEAM

To become connected with a specific team, a Lead Coach must send an invitation to you. Invitations can be sent for the Lead Coach 2, Mentor, Team Volunteer, and Team Administrator roles. These are the steps the Lead Coach should follow:

1. Login to your [FIRST account](#).
2. Click your team's name to display its information.
3. Under the "Team Roster/Contacts" column, click the blue "Contact Options" button and select "Manage Contacts" from the drop-down menu.
4. At the top of the "Team Contacts/Roster" page click the blue "Invite Contacts" page.
5. Under "Contact Type" select the role (e.g. Lead Coach 2, Mentor, Team Volunteer, Team Administrator).
6. Enter the contact's name and email address.
7. Click the box to the left of "I'm not a robot" and wait for the green arrow to confirm completion.
8. Select the blue "Send Invitation" button.

Once the Lead Coach has sent the invitation, please follow these steps to accept the invitation:

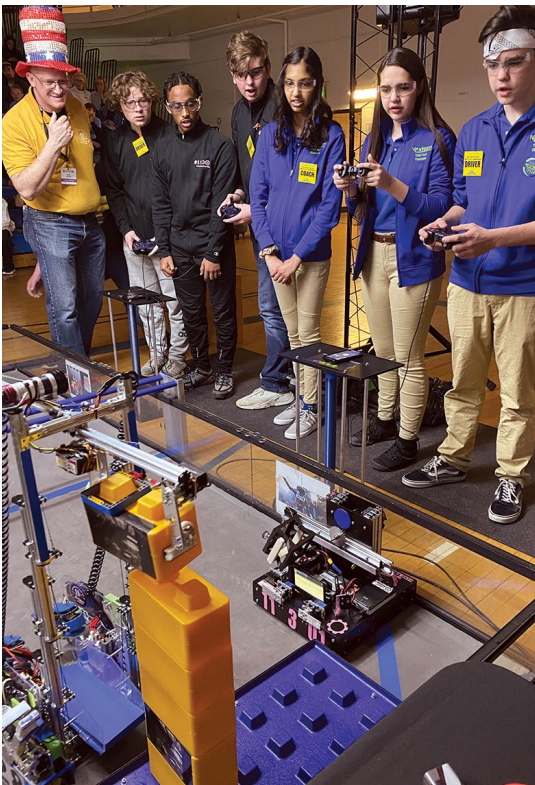
1. Log into your account at www.firstinspires.org
2. Once on your Dashboard, click the three-person icon to the left of your name
3. Locate the invitation and click the blue "Accept" button.

Please note, for adding Youth Mentors ages 13-17, the Lead Coach or Mentor would follow the steps as if they were inviting parents. Instead of selecting "Parent/Guardian" as the contact type, select "Youth Mentor."

3. BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING AND RECOGNITION FOR FIRST VOLUNTEERS

3.1 BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

FIRST is a community of people who are passionate and dedicated to contributing to something big. Volunteers at *FIRST* are not just passionate about robotics and STEM education but also about equipping students with life skills such as [Coopertition](#) and [Gracious Professionalism](#). For many of our volunteers, the value of their experience is more than the feeling of giving back to their community; volunteering leaves a deep, personal impact on their life. As a volunteer at *FIRST* you will make new, long-lasting friendships, relationships, and connections. You will feel rewarded from sharing your knowledge with students and seeing them use that knowledge to enhance their own skills. You might just find yourself having fun and learning something new!



“Volunteering with FIRST for the past ten years has been the best choice I’ve made in my career as a teacher. I love how FIRST fosters community relationships and builds connections between organizations, schools, clubs, and businesses.”

- Liz Colton, volunteer

“If I’m able to help give them a better life experience or a better event experience from my volunteering and mentoring, I get a lot of pride and a lot of fulfillment out of that.”

- Matthew Malinak, volunteer

“Volunteering at FIRST is exciting and exhilarating and a way to give back to my community in a way that makes me feel full.”

- Kari Karwedsky, volunteer

“Whether it’s mentoring with teams or volunteering at events, I still continue to grow in different ways; whether it be learning to be a stronger leader, a more inclusive leader, growing my self-confidence or learning different methods of communication.”

- Kristen Zeuge, volunteer

3.2 VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

At *FIRST*, Volunteers inspire and empower more than 655,000 students from 106 countries to become innovators, problem solvers, and better global citizens. While nothing we can offer will equate with what you give to our students, please take advantage of some of our recognition items.

- Be sure to grab each season's digital swag! With wallpapers, social media covers, and electronic badges, you will be virtually outfitted as a *FIRST* volunteer. These are refreshed annually and available each season on our [website](#).
- Pick up [a *FIRST* Volunteer Year of Service pin or a *FIRST* Coach Mentor pin](#) for you or a friend!
- Snag digital versions of the [FIRST Volunteer Year of Service pins](#) and [FIRST Coach Mentor pins](#). Add them to your online profiles or email signature!
- At participating events, pick up a volunteer passport and get your passport stamped as a cherished record of your time spent volunteering with *FIRST*!
- Coaches and mentors can download a *FIRST* Coach Mentor Certificate of Appreciation from their [FIRST Dashboard](#) by following these [instructions](#).

4. SUPPORT FOR *FIRST* VOLUNTEERS

There is a large network of passionate, friendly, and talented people available to guide all *FIRST* volunteers through their volunteer journey. As a *FIRST* volunteer, you will have access to resources from staff at *FIRST* Headquarters and resources, communication, and support on the local level from program delivery partners and volunteer coordinators. There is also specialized Youth Protection Program Staff at *FIRST* Headquarters available for assistance.

4.1 VOLUNTEER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The *FIRST* Volunteer Resources Department, located at *FIRST* Headquarters, focuses on recruitment, training, communication, and recognition of volunteers to create a positive volunteer experience. [Resources](#), like this handbook, are created by the Volunteer Resources Department to share directly with volunteers and with our program delivery partners. We encourage you to share feedback with us on our resources and how we can improve them.

Volunteer Resources Department | (800) 871-8326 | volunteer@firstinspires.org

4.1.1 COMMUNICATION

It's important to us that volunteers have the resources they need to serve and feel supported. On a quarterly basis, *FIRST* HQ sends out a newsletter with updates and news for all volunteers. [Register here](#) to get on the volunteer newsletter list.

4.1.2 GENERAL VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

The Volunteer Resources Department provides [cross-program resources](#) for mentors, coaches, and event volunteers. Whether you are new to volunteering or returning, these are important resources that you can readily access online. They cover many aspects of volunteering with *FIRST* including registering to become a volunteer, a deeper dive into using the different features of the Volunteer Registration system, how to complete your Youth Protection screening process, mentoring and coaching resources, information about the mission, vision, and Core Values of *FIRST*, and all the things you wanted to know about being a *FIRST* volunteer.

Event volunteers will receive program specific resources and trainings dependent on your role and program from your volunteer coordinator after being assigned to an event.

4.1.3 VOLUNTEER CHECKLISTS

As a *FIRST* volunteer, there is a lot to know about how to get started volunteering with *FIRST* and how to prepare yourself to be an effective *FIRST* volunteer. "You don't know what you don't know." Research has proven that checklists can help improve processes and eliminate mistakes. Please use these checklists to help guide you through your journey as a *FIRST* volunteer.

- [Event Volunteer Checklist](#)
- [Coach Mentor Checklist](#)

4.2 PROGRAM DELIVERY PARTNERS

FIRST programs are operated locally within an ecosystem that supports the *FIRST* mission and includes sponsors, partners, alumni, mentors, volunteers, business and civic leaders, educators, parents, and students. Leading these local *FIRST* ecosystems are program delivery organizations that partner with *FIRST* to operate *FIRST* programs in each community.

Program delivery partners, appointed by the program delivery organizations, provide overall leadership for *FIRST* programs and work collaboratively to create and maintain volunteer-driven and self-sustaining programs and grow *FIRST* programs in a community. *FIRST* program delivery partners are your local program contacts, and they manage the events in your area. You can search for your [local program delivery partners on our website](#).

4.3 VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

Most volunteer coordinators are key volunteers and others are paid staff of a local partner organization. Volunteer coordinators work with program delivery partners and are responsible for recruiting, assigning, and managing volunteers at their *FIRST* event. Your local volunteer coordinator will be your main point of contact when volunteering at events. As a leadership volunteer position, there is a significant level of responsibility for volunteer coordinators. You can message the volunteer coordinator in your area through the [FIRST Dashboard](#) after applying for an event.

4.4 YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM

The purpose of the *FIRST* [Youth Protection Program](#) is to provide coaches, mentors, event volunteers, employees, Program Delivery Partners, team members, parents, guardians of team members, and others working with *FIRST* programs with information, guidelines, and procedures to create safe environments for *FIRST* participants. The *FIRST* Youth Protection Program sets baseline standards for all *FIRST* activities. All adults working in *FIRST* programs must be knowledgeable of, and adhere to, the standards set by the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program, as well as those set by the school or organization hosting their team.

Our Commitment to Protecting Youth:

- *FIRST* is dedicated to fostering a safe and inclusive space where young people can explore STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) interests and develop valuable life skills.
- We establish rigorous policies and practices to promote the safety and security of all participants, including students, mentors, volunteers, and staff.
- The *FIRST* Youth Protection Program (YPP) sets youth safeguarding standards for all *FIRST* activities. Adults working in *FIRST* programs must be knowledgeable of the standards established by YPP, as well as those stipulated by the school or organization hosting their team.
- *FIRST* requires all U.S. and Canadian teams comply with youth protection policies and expects these standards to be applied internationally in accordance with local laws and regulations.
- Anyone participating in *FIRST* activities must adhere to our youth protection policies and know how to [report a concern](#) to *FIRST* Youth Protection.
- *FIRST* teams should take time to make sure all team members, adults, and youth, understand their role in fostering a safe environment.
- Everyone participating in *FIRST* programs – adults and youth – has a key role to play in helping spread awareness about the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program.

Key Messages for Youth:

- Every young person participating in *FIRST* should be able to do so in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment. If you experience behavior that makes you uncomfortable, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, we encourage you to tell a trusted adult.
- There are many ways you can report a concern. You can tell a trusted mentor or coach, an event volunteer, your local *FIRST* leadership, or contact *FIRST* Youth Protection using our [Report a Concern portal](#) at www.firstinspires.org/report. The important thing is: **If you see something, say something.**
- If you report a concern to Youth Protection, we will make sure your concern is addressed and will take appropriate action to ensure your safety. We expressly prohibit any form of retaliation for making a report to us.
- Your voice matters, and we're here to listen. Your courage in speaking up makes a difference.

5. FIRST VOLUNTEER RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND REQUIREMENTS

Volunteers are the most valuable asset of *FIRST*. Your selfless contribution of time and resources is instrumental in carrying out our mission of inspiring the next generation of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics leaders and innovators. The foundation of the relationship between *FIRST* and our volunteers is respect.

5.1 IT IS YOUR RIGHT TO:

- Be treated with *Gracious Professionalism*. *Gracious Professionalism* is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community.
- Feel valued and recognized for your volunteerism. *FIRST* recognizes the significant efforts that volunteers contribute. The time that you donate not only helps *FIRST* succeed but also builds the *FIRST* community.
- Understand your role. *FIRST* will inform you about what is expected of you, your schedule, any meals you will be provided, any changes to program or policy, and who to contact should you need help.
- Expect a safe environment. *FIRST* strives to create and maintain a safe environment for all volunteers and participants and will always factor safety into program planning.
- Receive fair treatment and inclusion. All volunteers will be treated with respect and dignity in an inclusive environment. *FIRST* does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, status as a veteran who served in the military, religion, sexuality, gender, gender identity, or gender expression in its programs and activities.
- Request and receive reasonable accommodations to successfully complete your volunteer role when possible.
- Reevaluate your time commitment. *FIRST* appreciates our volunteers and understands that volunteers experience life situations that may affect their commitment.
- Communicate with your volunteer coordinator or your local *FIRST* leadership about:
 - Concerns or limitations that are affecting your volunteer role.
 - Any mistreatment towards you or others. You may be required to [report your concerns here](#).

Contact *FIRST* Headquarters directly if you feel that you are being treated improperly and attempts to resolve issues and conflicts at the local level are not successful. Volunteers can call (800) 871-8326 or email: volunteer@firstinspires.org.

5.2 IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Treat others with *Gracious Professionalism*.
- Follow the schedule and the role description provided for your position.
- Have another responsible adult watch any children in your care- you are not allowed to volunteer while taking care of a child.
- Contact your local *FIRST* leadership if there are any issues.
- Respect others. Treat them with fairness and kindness.
- Be inclusive and follow the [non-discrimination policy](#) of *FIRST*.
- Follow safety rules and ensure safety of others.
- Adhere to all [FIRST Youth Protection Program \(YPP\) policies](#).
- Adhere to the [FIRST Code of Conduct](#).
- Complete the required training/certifications for your role.
- Complete the [Consent and Release Form](#) each season in the *FIRST* Dashboard.
- Complete the [Youth Protection Screening](#) in the United States and Canada and accept the season Youth Protection Requirement on the Dashboard.
- Have FUN!

5.3 WHAT EVENT VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM *FIRST*:

FIRST is a volunteer-driven organization and our success depends on you. *FIRST* has many different event volunteer opportunities to offer. Each opportunity offers a variety of exciting experiences. Here are the expectations you can have as a *FIRST* event volunteer.

Communication – Communications will occur through volunteer coordinators, who will be available to answer all your questions prior to and during the event. Once registered as a volunteer, communications may also be sent from your local program delivery partner and [FIRST Headquarters](#).

Training – You will receive training specific to the event volunteer roles you applied for or were assigned and will be notified as to what those are. There are other general training courses available for volunteers in *FIRST* Training.

Volunteer Lounge with Food – Generally, at a full-day or multi-day *FIRST* event, a volunteer lounge with food and refreshments away from the crowd will be supplied to show our appreciation for your time and to help re-energize you.

Volunteer T-Shirt and Name Badge – Depending on the program and event, you may be given a t-shirt and name badge. These appoint you as a *FIRST* volunteer for the event. These items will grant you access to the areas you will need to access to complete your volunteer role and are also your ticket to the volunteer lounge for food and refreshments throughout the day if a volunteer lounge is provided.

General Volunteer Resources – Looking for instructions, descriptions, policies, and forms to ease you into your volunteer experience and guide you throughout? Our [general volunteer resources webpage](#) has several documents to help support *FIRST* volunteers in their volunteer journey.

5.4 WHAT MENTORS CAN EXPECT FROM *FIRST*:

FIRST creates powerful mentorship relationships between young people and adult coaches and mentors. Here are the expectation you can have as a coach or mentor.

Communication – Communications will occur through your Program Delivery Partners and through *FIRST* HQ team blasts to keep you up-to-date on all things happening for teams.

Training – *FIRST* provides Mentor Ready and other training on our *FIRST* Training platform, accessible through the [Dashboard](#). Programs provide game manuals filled with each season's specific game rules and information.

General Volunteer Resources – Looking for instructions, descriptions, policies, and forms to ease you into your volunteer experience and guide you throughout? Our [general volunteer resources webpage](#) has several documents to help support *FIRST* volunteers in their volunteer journey.

5.5 MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENT

13 years old – the minimum age requirement for a *FIRST* volunteer.

- The Program Delivery Partner reserves the right to increase the volunteer age limit for their region at their discretion.
- The minimum volunteer age cannot be decreased from the age of 13.
- The *FIRST* Consent and Release Form is required to be signed by a parent or guardian in the Volunteer Registration system for any volunteer under age 18 in order for the minor to volunteer.

15 years old – the minimum age requirement for a *FIRST* volunteer at *FIRST* Championship.

- The minimum volunteer age cannot be decreased from the age of 15 for Championship.
- The *FIRST* Consent and Release Form is required to be signed by a parent or guardian in the Volunteer Registration system for any volunteer under age 18 in order for the minor to volunteer.
- Individuals under the age of 15 can be accepted as walk-on volunteers at *FIRST* Championship if their parent or guardian signs their Walk-On Volunteer Form and Consent and Release form.

18 years old – Volunteers 18 or older must complete the Youth Protection Policy for the season, and sign the *FIRST* Consent and Release Form.

- You must have another responsible adult watch any children in your care as you are not allowed to volunteer while taking care of a child.

5.6 YOUTH PROTECTION SCREENING REQUIREMENT

FIRST requires all U.S. and Canadian teams comply with youth protection policies and expects these standards to be applied internationally in accordance with local laws and regulations.

The *FIRST* Youth Protection Program requires all event volunteers that are 18 years or older to be screened for *FIRST* events. All *FIRST* teams cross-program are required to have two screened lead coaches/mentors for the entire season. These should be the two individuals who direct a team's day-to-day activities. It is recommended that one be at least 25 years old. *FIRST* encourages veteran team members to serve as Youth Mentors to teams with younger participants. To minimize safety risks, teams with Youth Mentors are still required to have two adult lead coaches/mentors that are 18 or older.

In the US and Canada, Lead mentors/coaches who interact with youth participants must undergo thorough background checks every four years and receive training on youth protection best practices. Youth Protection training is available through the *FIRST* Dashboard and on the YPP webpage www.firstinspires.org/ypp.

Here is more information about the Youth Protection screening/clearance process and what to expect:

- [U.S. Screening Process Step by Step](#)
- [Canadian Screening Process - Sterling Backcheck EConsent User Guide](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Please visit the [FIRST Youth Protection Program webpage](#) for up-to-date materials including the [FIRST Youth Protection Guide](#) and more information about the Youth Protection screening/clearance process and what to expect.

6. TRAINING FOR *FIRST* EVENT VOLUNTEERS AND MENTORS

FIRST provides its volunteers with the training necessary to fulfil the duties of our varied volunteer roles.

If you have been assigned a team or event volunteer role that requires online training, you will receive more information from the *FIRST* Dashboard and from your volunteer coordinator. Online training is delivered to all *FIRST* volunteers through *FIRST* Training, our online training platform.

6.1 CROSS-PROGRAM TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS IN ANY ROLE

FIRST Volunteers are welcome to take any training available to them in *FIRST* Training. You can access *FIRST* Training through the *FIRST* Dashboard by selecting the 'FIRST Training' button. Volunteers can enroll in and complete training they are interested in by searching the course catalog. Featured training includes:

- **STEM for Everyone** – In 2017, *FIRST* collaborated with NAPE to develop training for coaches, mentors, volunteers, partners and other key stakeholders who work directly with students and are committed to creating a sense of belonging for students on teams. Through engaging and reflective activities on our interactions with students, these modules will equip us with specific strategies to support community outreach, student participation, motivation, engagement, and success.
- **Volunteer Ready Training Pathway** – This introductory training is intended to create an aligned onboarding experience for all event volunteers ensuring they feel prepared and meet safety requirements. The Volunteer Ready training pathway consists of two training: Welcome to *FIRST* and Youth Protection Training.
- **Welcome to *FIRST*** – This training is designed for volunteers, coaches, mentors, and anyone who would like to learn about the mission of *FIRST*, our ethos and community, and how to get involved.
- **Youth Protection Training** - This training is designed for coaches, mentors, volunteers, parents, guardians, and anyone who engages with our programs to equip volunteers, coaches, and mentors with the knowledge and tools to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all participants in *FIRST* programs. Through real-world scenarios, compliance guidance, and best practices, participants will learn how to recognize, prevent, and respond to misconduct while fostering a culture of safety and well-being. This training aligns with the *FIRST* Youth Protection Program (YPP) policies and reinforces the shared responsibility of maintaining a safe space for all youth participants.

6.2 EVENT VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Some event volunteer roles require pre-event role-specific online training that you must complete before your event to serve in your role. Details about which roles require certification can be found in the specific volunteer role descriptions.

Training may be accessed via the [FIRST Dashboard](#) in the *FIRST* Training platform after you have applied to or been assigned to any event volunteer role, whether or no the role has a required training. When you apply or are assigned to a role with required training, you will be automatically enrolled in that training. If your role does not have required training, you can access *FIRST* Training and self-enroll in training that appeals to you.

Some roles may require more extensive training to be completed before the event via phone call, webinars, or online certification while other roles require training that can be learned at the event itself. Your volunteer coordinator will inform you of these additional requirements.

6.3 CROSS-PROGRAM COACH MENTOR TRAINING

The Mentor Ready Training Pathway is an introductory training is intended to create an aligned onboarding experience for all mentors, ensuring they feel prepared, meet safety requirements, and are ready to lead and inspire their teams. The Mentor Ready training pathway consists of four training: Welcome to *FIRST*, Youth Protection Training, Role of a Mentor, and Data Privacy for Mentors.

- **Welcome to *FIRST*** – This training is designed for volunteers, coaches, mentors, and anyone who would like to learn about the mission of *FIRST*, our ethos and community, and how to get involved.
- **Youth Protection Training** - This training is designed for coaches, mentors, volunteers, parents, guardians, and anyone who engages with our programs to equip volunteers, coaches, and mentors with the knowledge and tools to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all participants in *FIRST* programs. Through real-world scenarios, compliance guidance, and best practices, participants will learn how to recognize, prevent, and respond to misconduct while fostering a culture of safety and well-being. This training aligns with the [FIRST Youth Protection Program \(YPP\) policies](#) and reinforces the shared responsibility of maintaining a safe space for all youth participants.
- **Data Privacy for Mentors** - This training is designed for coaches, mentors, and any adults involved in *FIRST* programs who have access to personal data, informing them how to appropriately handle and protect it.
- **Role of a Mentor** - This training is designed for coaches, mentors, and any adults involved in *FIRST* programs to learn more about the types of mentors, their responsibilities and impact, how they will use the *FIRST* Dashboard, and resources for mentors and teams.

This Mentor Ready Training Pathway is optional for the 2025-2026 season and will be required for coaches and mentors in the 2026-2027 season.

6.3.1 TEAM SAFETY MEETING RESOURCES

These video trainings outline the basic principles of the Youth Protection Program and how you can create a safe environment during team meetings for your students.

- [Team Safety Meeting Video – High School version](#)
- [Team Safety Meeting Video – Middle School version](#)
- [Keeping Kids Safe – for adults working with youth](#)

At the start of the season, Lead Coaches are required to conduct a Safety Meeting. This meeting may be combined with the team's existing start-of-season meeting or be held as a separate meeting. Subject to the Lead Coaches' discretion and judgment, the Safety Meeting may be as brief or extensive as necessary.

[Team Safety Meeting - Youth Protection Program \(YPP\) Segment](#)

Below are resources for ages 6 – 10 that assist in guiding these meetings and include interactive activities for the students.

- [Traffic Light Activity](#)
- [Surprises vs. Secrets Activity](#)
- [Buddy System Activity](#)



7. FIRST VOLUNTEER POLICIES, FORMS, AND INCIDENT REPORTING OPTIONS

7.1 NON-SOLICITATION POLICY

As a *FIRST* volunteer, you may not accept any tips or gifts with monetary value from participants, their families, or friends. We do not want to create an atmosphere where our participants feel obligated to reward *FIRST* volunteers for doing their job.

You may not promote or solicit your own business enterprise, political agenda, or religious beliefs while volunteering with *FIRST*. Solicitation for a private charity is also prohibited.

7.2 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media is a broad term used to describe certain online communications. There are many social media platforms, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Instagram), professional networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn), video sharing (e.g. YouTube), and blogs and microblogging (e.g. X - formally known as Twitter, Tumblr). Volunteers should follow the [FIRST Code of Conduct](#) for online activities just as you would for in-person activities.

Social media can be a powerful tool for sharing the joys and triumphs of participating in *FIRST* programs, but if not used properly, it can be a detriment to having a positive *FIRST* experience for you and others. As such, engage in social media activities wisely. Refrain from sharing information that you feel should not be shared in public, or that might cause undue distress to any *FIRST* participants. This will ensure the *FIRST* community stays true to the commitment of creating environments in which students and volunteers can grow, learn, and have fun with minimal risk of injury or harm.

Social media is a great way to share your team's accomplishments with the *FIRST* community. However, you must obtain the consent of parents before posting any images of students to social media, and, if you are at a school, you must ensure you are in compliance with your district's social media and privacy policies. Many *FIRST* Tech Challenge and *FIRST* Robotics Competition teams appoint students to manage their social media accounts. If students are allowed to control your team's accounts, be sure they are aware of your social media guidelines and be sure a coach or mentor is monitoring their posts regularly.

FIRST recognizes that many volunteers and youth participants use social media strictly on a personal basis, and *FIRST* respects your right to do so. If you use social media for personal purposes, you must not discuss or disclose any confidential or internal information regarding the *FIRST* business operations or *FIRST* employees, volunteers, or students. If you choose to identify yourself as a volunteer of *FIRST* (either in a post, comment, or in your profile), please bear in mind that some readers may view you as a spokesperson for *FIRST*.

7.2 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (CONTINUED)

FIRST reserves the right to remove any social media posts on *FIRST* platforms that are inconsistent with our values or [Code of Conduct](#). If you engage in any *FIRST*-related communications using social media, even if you use a personal account to do so, the following rules apply:

- Social media shall not be used to make any statement that is made or purports to be made on behalf of *FIRST*, except by those who have been expressly authorized to engage in such activities.
- Use of *FIRST* logos on social media sites or in social media posts must comply with the requirements of the [Policy on the Use of *FIRST* Trademarks and Copyrighted Materials](#).
- Information, documents, or data that is confidential or proprietary to *FIRST*, or any *FIRST* employees, shall not be shared or disclosed.
- Photographs or videos depicting any *FIRST* event, employee, volunteer, or youth participant shall not be posted or shared without express consent of the data subject and/or their parent/guardian if a minor.
- Social media shall not be used in any manner that harasses, discriminates against, retaliates against, threatens, bullies, or intimidates any *FIRST* employee, volunteer, or participant. *FIRST* has a diverse community of employees, volunteers, and students with different views and different opinions on matters, and *FIRST* expects that all participants will treat each other respectfully.
- Expectations for in-person team meetings and activities also apply when utilizing social media and other team based online activities. All remote meetings, including the use of virtual break out rooms, should have at least two adults present any time adults are interacting with youth online. You should also consider whether additional adult oversight may be needed to monitor team activities conducted in a virtual environment.
- Do not initiate contact with any students via any *FIRST* platforms, social media, or other electronic means unless it is about a *FIRST*-related project or activity.
- When contacting youth participants about *FIRST* or team related activities, parents, guardians, and other team coaches/mentors should be included on the communications whenever possible/practical.
- If a student communicates with you about personal matters, remember it is your role to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. Either redirect the communication to an appropriate *FIRST* team topic or seek assistance from Youth Protection for help in navigating the situation.

7.3 FIRST STEM FOR EVERYONE™ STATEMENT

FIRST is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of unity. We embrace and celebrate our global community.

Exploring, developing, and implementing strategies to ensure opportunities for any young person who engages in our programs is critical for *FIRST* to fulfill its mission. All young people should have the opportunity to become science and technology leaders who have the skills, confidence and resilience to build a better world.

7.4 NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

FIRST [does not discriminate](#) based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, age, religion/creed, and military/veteran status in its programs and activities.

7.5 CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM

Volunteers are required to electronically sign the *FIRST* Consent & Release Form each season. Volunteers will see a red notification in the upper right corner on their [FIRST Dashboard](#) if they have not yet completed the form and can access this by going to “Acknowledgement Forms” in the drop down menu.

Volunteers under the age of 18 are required to have a parent or guardian sign the Consent & Release Form and can invite a parent to sign electronically through the [FIRST Dashboard](#).

Walk-on volunteers will be required to complete a Walk-On Volunteer Form, which contains the Consent and Release form, onsite at the event.

7.6 CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORM

Some volunteers are required to sign a [Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Statement](#), such as field supervisors, judges, robot inspectors, referees, scorekeeper/field power controllers, team queuers, and safety advisors. A volunteer who has a relationship with a team is not excluded from serving in these positions, but they must disclose any relationship they have with a competing team and agree not to bias any match process and/or results.

Relationships include:

- Alumni of a team
- Menor/coach of a team
- Family member of team member
- Sponsor of a team
- You can also disclose additional team relationships not in the above categories

7.7 MEDICAL INCIDENT ONLINE FORM

All injuries or illnesses that occur at a *FIRST* event must be reported to *FIRST* through the [Medical Incident Form](#) that is available online.

7.8 NON-MEDICAL INCIDENT FORM AND ONLINE NON-MEDICAL REPORTING FORM

Report Concerns

If anyone has concerns about the safety or well-being of a youth participant or observes behavior that goes against *FIRST* policies or Code of Conduct, they should report their concerns immediately. Reports can be made using our reporting portal: www.firstinspires.org/report

All reports made through the reporting form (except medical incidents) are reviewed by *FIRST* Youth Protection staff who ensure each concern is addressed by the appropriate department at *FIRST*. For more details on our youth protection policies and practices, please visit our [Youth Protection Program page](#).

See something, say something

Everyone – youth or adults – involved in *FIRST* has a responsibility to report inappropriate behavior they experience or observe to a trusted adult or *FIRST* Youth Protection. **If you see something, say something.**

Mandatory Reporting

There are laws in the United States and Canada that require individuals working with youth to report known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect.

- U.S.: Find a complete list of USA [State Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Numbers](#) and other contact information on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website.
- Canada: [Provincial And Territorial Assistance](#) in Canada on how to report child maltreatment can be found on the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal.

FIRST will not tolerate any form of retaliation against those that report concerns or those that cooperate in the investigation of reported concerns.



GET STARTED VOLUNTEERING WITH *FIRST*:

- Create your account on the *FIRST* [Dashboard](#).
- Contact your [local FIRST partner](#).

QUESTIONS:

Volunteer Resources Department

Phone: (800) 871-8326 | volunteer@firstinspires.org