

Where do I start? Coach Orientation

1. What does a coach do?

- a. HAS FUN!
- b. Practices the Coaches' Promise – p. i of the Coaches' Handbook.
- c. Helps the team set realistic goals – do this up front. Review your goals during the season. This is a journey and you should assess it as you go. Celebrate your success as the season progresses.
- d. Facilitates the meetings – keeps things on track (especially with younger teams or rookie teams).
- e. Encourages the process – the content will come from the team.
Example: Brainstorming – you can teach them a successful method to brainstorm, but they will provide the content.
- f. Ask questions to encourage the team's thinking and problem solving. "What are you trying to do?" "Is there anything that you can change?" "Can you think of another way to solve the problem?"
- g. Help the team monitor their progress and remind them of the important dates/time lines (especially with younger or rookie teams).
- h. Administrative responsibilities such as tournament registration.

2. FLL Core Values and Gracious Professionalism – Very Important

- a. Outlined in the Coaches Handbook (inside front cover and p. 3-4). Be sure the team understands the FLL Core Values as well as Gracious Professionalism. Review during the season.
 - i. It is about the team – the kids do the work.
 - ii. Spirit of teamwork – learning to work as a team.
 - iii. Spirit of friendly competition – cheer other teams on, learn from one another and have fun together.
 - iv. Respect each other and each others ideas and contributions.
 - v. The journey is important – what you discover is more important than what you win.
 - vi. Etc. – See the Coaches Handbook for more on Core Values and Gracious Professionalism.

3. Overview of the FLL Challenge

- a. Based on real world problems facing scientists and engineers.
- b. The Robot Game – Chapter 4 in the Coaches' Handbook
- c. The Project – Chapter 5 in the Coaches' Handbook
 - i. Identify a real world problem
 - ii. Create an innovative solution
 - iii. Share your research and solution

4. FLL Schedule

- a. Late July/August – Field Setup Kits begin to ship.
The team can put together the mission pieces. Build your FLL table.
- b. August – Coaches – read the FLL Coaches' Handbook and review with your team the Project DVD and *FIRST* DVD. Teams can begin to learn about the "Food Factor" theme, robot design, programming, teamwork, etc.
- c. September 2nd – 12 pm ET - The challenge is announced. Reference materials will also be available.

- d. September/October - Tournament details posted on the FLL website and possibly your region's website. Tournament dates vary from state to state. Be sure to watch for this information as registering with FLL initially is not the same as registering for a tournament. No matter what **DO PARTICIPATE IN A TOURNAMENT!**
- e. November – February –Local events, qualifiers and championship tournaments.
- f. Sample week by week milestones – p. 89 of the Coaches' Handbook.

5. Materials that Coaches/Teams Receive

- a. Coaches' Handbook – Read early, read often!
- b. Project DVD and *FIRST* Compilation DVD
- c. Field Setup Kit and building instructions

6. Team Building – Looking ahead - why important/some reminders

- a. Team members need to get to know one another. This is especially important with new teams or existing teams that add new members.
- b. Team members need to feel comfortable with each other so they are willing to share ideas with each other.
- c. It is important to get the team communicating in a relaxed atmosphere at first.
- d. Goal – all members should feel part of the team and feel that their ideas will be listened to and respected.
- e. FLL Core Values and Gracious Professionalism should be emphasized throughout the season.
- f. **HAVE FUN** – one of the most important things to team building.
- g. Team building is an ongoing process – it won't happen in one or two meetings.
- h. Some meetings you will feel like you have taken two steps forward and one step backward (or vice versa). Remind them that this is part of learning to be a team. They need to solve problems when there are differing opinions. This is an important step for the team to learn.

7. Team Building Activities – can really vary!

- a. Structured team building activities such as ice breakers and/or games. Get ideas from books from the library, the internet, or other activities you have done with school groups, Scouts, etc.
- b. Fun structured activities such as bowling, laser tag, etc.
- c. Non-Structured activities. Fifteen minutes of Frisbee, tag, or soccer during every meeting can go a long way! Each meeting it is important to provide a chance for them to have fun in a relaxed way.
- d. Team Spirit type activities during a meeting:
 - i. Picking a team name
 - ii. Designing a team shirt
 - iii. Writing a team cheer
 - iv. Making a team banner
 - v. Building a team mascot
 - vi. Making small trading items for the tournaments
 - vii. An activity where they write down a strength about each team member. Makes them realized that everyone is a valuable member.

8. Resources

- a. *FIRST* LEGO League Coaches' Handbook
- b. Project DVD and *FIRST* Compilation DVD
- c. *FIRST* website www.usfirst.org
- d. *FIRST* NEMO (Non-engineering Mentor Organization) www.firstnemo.org
- e. FLL Partner/website for your region of North America
- f. FLL Forum – place to talk with other coaches “unofficial”.
- g. Email FLL at *FIRST* flteams@usfirst.org
- h. Other resources on p. 102 of the Coaches' Handbook
- i. Q & A on the FLL website – the official word.
- j. Other coaches – *FIRST* is like a family and most coaches will be happy to share their experiences and answer questions.

9. Review the basics

- a. HAVE FUN!
- b. Review the goals during the season and celebrate as you go.
- c. Remember it is the journey.
- d. Remember it is about the kids.
- e. Remember all the life-long skills they are learning: self confidence, brainstorming, planning, listening, time management, presentation skills, being part of a team, making a difference in their community, and doing the best possible job with limited time and limited resources.

10. Questions and Answers

11. **To End:** Have fun, remember it is the kids doing the work, remember it is the journey and to go a competition even if you don't think you are ready – you'll be glad you did!