



## Coaching a Team

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So, you think you want to coach a team? What do you need to know? Where do you go to find that information? This document can help. Read on!

### 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.
- i. Coaching is a learning process, and *FIRST* is not school. It's not only for the kids, but for the adults, too. Adults need to be comfortable with not having all the answers. Let your kids see you enjoy finding the answers and learning!

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## 2. Things to keep in mind regarding team management.

- a. No two teams will be alike – no cookie cutter teams in FLL! Every team will develop its own personality.
- b. What works well for one team may not work well for another.
- c. Many factors will influence how you manage your team.
  - i. Size of the team – there is a major difference between a team with 6 members and a team with 3 members (4-6 ideal size).
  - ii. Ages of team members – does your team have mixed ages or are all the team members the same age? A young team? An older team?
  - iii. Boys vs. Girls vs. Boys and Girls
  - iv. New members vs. Veteran Members vs. Mixed Members
  - v. Combine all of these factors and throw in multiple personality types and WOW – it gets interesting!
- d. Managing the Administrative aspect
  - i. Important to track and maintain the team’s schedule of milestone events – the season will fly by so be sure you don’t miss any key dates.
  - ii. This can be done by the coach or the coach can designate a parent, assistant, etc.
- e. Pay attention to schedules and deadlines - fill out forms before the District Meet
- f. Read the rules, re-read the rules, have the kids read the rules and keep up to date with changes
- g. Know that if it isn’t prohibited it is allowed
- h. Ask questions about what already exists to do similar tasks that could be adapted to this specific task (iterative improvements and repurposing are good engineering practices).

## 3. Basic Meeting 101 – What will your first meeting look like?

- a. It is helpful to touch base with parent before the season starts.
- b. The purpose will be to give the team and parents an overview of Southern Maine Gearbots, Jr.FLL, and the Challenge and reinforce their commitment to the team.
  - i. What is Southern Maine Gearbots, what is Jr.FLL
  - ii. What are the FLL Core Values
  - iii. Basic schedule of the season
  - iv. Overview of the different components – Challenge, Project, Core Values
  - v. Importance of teamwork
  - vi. Explain some of the roles and responsibilities that the parents will be taking
  - vii. Remind everyone that the two most important things are to HAVE FUN and THE KIDS DO THE WORK!

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## 4. **Involve Parents** – don't be afraid to ask the parents for help. With a large team, a new team, a younger team, any team it is going to take a village to raise the team!

Parents can:

- a. Provide snacks
- b. Handle communications with the team
- c. Make photocopies
- d. Help at meetings
- e. Carpool to meetings or field trips
- f. Help set up speakers or field trips
- g. Act as a panel of judges before a competition. Have the team perform their presentation and the parents can ask questions.
- h. Help the day of the competition – many hands are good!

## 5. **Orchestrating work among team members**

- a. To begin the season it is important that every team member has a basic understanding of the Challenge topic, model, and Show Me poster.
- b. Have the team members verbalize what is meant by working as a team and what is meant by Gracious Professionalism.
- c. As the season progresses members may begin to spend more time specializing in specific roles.
- d. There is no right way, but what is necessary is that every team member understands their roles and responsibilities.
- e. Be sure that more than one person is knowledgeable about a specific task.
- f. To save meeting time, members can do some research or activities at home and bring in their findings.
- g. You can split the team into two workgroups for some meetings. This can be a very efficient use of time.
- h. It may be part of "core values" but it's important to remember that everyone – everyone – is a volunteer so the more they can do to help make things go smoother the better. Don't be the difficult coach/parent that is used as the example during training.
- i. Constantly ask the team questions. Your role is to facilitate and encourage the process, not the content. By asking questions you will push their thinking and problem solving, especially at times when they get "stuck" or frustrated.
- j. If you think something could be done better, be prepared to volunteer to do the work

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### **6. Brainstorming – a great way to engage the entire team and make decisions.**

- a. Have someone write down all of the ideas during the Brainstorming session.
- b. Remind the team that during a brainstorming session all ideas are good ideas. There are no stupid ideas.
- c. Crazy ideas are good as well; you never know where one may lead.
- d. Remind them that everyone listens when a team member is talking. All ideas deserve respect.
- e. Go around the table and have each person give one or two ideas. Continue to go around for as long as necessary – this is a good way to include the quiet ones and limit the verbal ones.
- f. This is a good way to handle the difficult member as it helps them realize that everyone's ideas are just as important as theirs.
- g. Brainstorming can be used for LOTS!!
  - i. Team name
  - ii. Shirt design
  - iii. Project topic
  - iv. Model design
  - v. Presentation format
  - vi. Etc.

### **7. Voting and/or Consensus** – One way to allow the entire team to make the decision is for them to vote. It is important for the team to make the decisions since the focus of FLL is on the kids! Some teams may not officially vote, but work on getting consensus among the team members.