



Questions to Consider When Choosing Your *FIRST* Event(s)

Introduction:

- As *FIRST* programs continue to grow, there are many decisions to be made about which official events your teams participate in. *For more information about events and Calendar of Deadlines visit the appropriate FIRST program section at www.usfirst.org* Check out Tips for Travel from NEMO in the resources section of www.firstnemo.org
- **FRC** (*FIRST* Robotics Competition) In 2008, 41 Regional events and 1 Championship are scheduled. *FIRST* posts the FRC Regional schedule in mid-September. The FRC season runs Jan-April.
- **FLL** (*FIRST* LEGO League) In 2007, 60+ Championships and 1 World Festival are scheduled. *FIRST* releases the FLL event schedule in Oct. The FLL season usually runs Sept.-Jan.
- **FTC** (*FIRST* Tech Challenge) For 2007-2008, 28 Championship Tournaments and one World Championship are scheduled. The FTC schedule runs Sept-March.
- **JFLL** (Junior *FIRST* LEGO League). *FIRST* releases the local JFLL Expo event schedule in Oct. The JFLL season usually runs Sept.-Jan.

Questions to consider:

- Will your FTC or FRC event conflict with FLL, FTC, or FRC events your team is already committed to attending as mentors, volunteers or hosts? **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- Do some events fall during your school's vacation, mandatory state testing or the SAT/ACT schedule? Do the events conflict with popular extra-curricular schedules like the big annual band trip? Do any of the events fall during holiday seasons? Are there any restrictions on traveling during religious holidays? Are there objections to being away from family during holidays? Also teams need to be aware of dietary considerations for their team members as they relate to the religious holidays. **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- Which teams will be attending the event? This may impact your chances to win awards. Winning awards may generate press coverage, school acceptance and sponsors. **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- Does your team want to try a new event, or do they enjoy seeing the same teams at the same events? Which events are your "friend" teams going to? Do you have a "mentor" or "mentee" team you want to be with? **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- Are there neighboring teams that want to share travel arrangements, with you? HINT: Find out if there are any teams local to the event that may be able to help with housing. **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- How popular is the event? Does it fill up quickly? Do you need to register right away to ensure a place, or are there always open slots that you can get at the last minute? Some smaller FRC Regionals fill the day registration opens. **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- Is your team allowed to travel by car, bus, 15-passenger van, train, or plane? Do your school system rules require a 'professional driver'? Can a parent/booster club rent a 15 passenger van or drive students in their personal vehicles? **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- Is there a big difference in cost for flying? Once you get on an airplane, the difference between going 800 miles and 2500 miles might not be as great as you would think, especially if you live near an airline hub. If you are flying, will the airline let you check your tools or do you need to pay for shipping them? **FRC/FTC**
- Do you need to leave the night before (another night's hotel stay) or can you leave early that morning? Does the distance to the event add extra travel days which would make it more difficult for chaperones to have the time off? Does your school board allow you to travel "out of country" or even "out of state?" Will you need passports with those deadlines, costs, and requirements?

Many school systems need at least 60 days to allow for permission to travel out of state.

FRC/FLL/FTC

- Is the event being held in an expensive city? Will you be combining the trip to the event with another visit? For example, does your team want to combine a trip to one of the mid-Atlantic events with a trip to the nation's Capital? This could help "sell" the trip to the school administration. Is there a fund specifically designated for traveling to a certain site or for the championship? **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- What is available for transportation at the event? If you are flying in to an event, how far is the hotel from the venue? Is it within walking distance? (less than 1 mile, less than 2 miles?) Are all attendees (parents/mentors) in good enough shape to walk the 1-2 miles? Anybody in a wheel chair? Do you need to hire a bus at the event? Is the bus going to be "yours" for the weekend or is the bus company going to send it only when needed? Is there a hotel shuttle available? **FRC/FLL/FTC**
- How many tournament events will you attend given your budget? When are registration fees due? Will you have raised enough funds in time to register for multiple events? Buses, planes and hotels will need at least a deposit many weeks before the event. Would your FRC team rather attend a second event or do they want to attend the Championship if spaces open or if they qualify to attend? Small tournament events give you a better chance of being in the finals and may have more matches; larger ones give you a better chance to see more robots and meet more teams **FRC/FLL**
- How many events will you attend given your budget and given the restrictions in your state?
- Does your sponsor host a regional that you must attend? FRC NASA grant teams often have to attend a specific NASA-sponsored Regional or at least a NASA-sponsored event. Visit <http://robotics.nasa.gov/events/first.php> to see NASA-sponsored events. Teams may choose to attend an event which is hosted by their sponsor as a courtesy. **FRC**
- Does it matter to your team if there is a team social? Many tournament events do not have them. **FRC/FTC**
- Does it matter to your team where in the season the tournament event appears? Tournament events occurring at the beginning of the competition schedule often test the waters from the *FIRST* fields to the actual game strategies. End-of-schedule tournament events do not allow much time for extra fundraising if you qualify for Championships. If an FRC team attends Back-to-Back regionals, can the students miss classes two weeks in a row? If an FRC team attends Back-to-Back regionals, can the adults miss work two weeks in a row? If an FRC team attends Back-to-Back regionals, can the team afford the extra expedited shipping fee (may be \$500+)? **FRC/FTC**
- Weather. If you are in a warm climate, does your team need to buy extra clothes to visit a colder climate? Will your school allow you to attend a competition if school is cancelled due to inclement weather? Can you purchase travel insurance to protect against travel cancellations due to inclement weather? **FRC/FLL/FTC**

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