



FIRST® LEGO® League Jr. Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in FIRST® LEGO® League Jr. 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 Jr.?

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 Jr. is the program for elementary school students, ages 6-10.

How is *FIRST* LEGO League Jr. 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. As the Affiliate Partner Organization, UI Extension 4-H Youth Development oversees the program and provides 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 preschooler/kindergartener who loves LEGO. Can they participate in *FIRST* LEGO League Jr.?

In Idaho, we have on occasion allowed 5 year olds to participate in *FIRST* LEGO League Jr at the team/coach's discretion, **AND** provided they are enrolled in an accredited Kindergarten program during the school year. Please be aware that having a 5 year old on a team will require quite a bit of involvement from parents and coaches because the program as a whole is more than just LEGO. Teams are expected to learn about a challenge theme and work together to create a team poster and "Show Me Model" related to what they've discovered. Completing these tasks does require some reading and writing skills (each team member keeps an engineering notebook throughout the season, and the youth are expected to do the work), and while the program is an excellent way to make learning fun, it can also be frustrating for both youth and coaches/parents when the team members just want to play with the LEGO. We do not permit any youth under the age of 5 to participate.

How do I get my child on a team?

Due to the popularity of *FIRST* LEGO League Jr. and the limit of 6 youth members per team, it can be difficult to find a team that has an opening for a new member. 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 Jr. team requires commitment from both team members and parents. Teams expect their members to be present and ready to work on the project at every meeting. They may ask parents to help facilitate team meetings, work on team fundraising, provide team snacks, and/or serve as chaperones for team field trips and the Expo.

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. There are also a few schools, libraries, churches, and out-of-school time programs who run open teams that form at the beginning of each season. You might want to ask the organizations in which your child is already involved – if they don't have a team, they might be interested in helping start one!

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

The only way to be 100% sure your child is able to participate in the upcoming season is to form a new team. The first step is to find similarly interested youth and their parents who will commit to seeing the program through. The *FIRST* LEGO League Jr. season in Idaho runs from August 1st through the end of the school year, with most teams meeting once a week for 12 weeks prior to their local Expo. Start by the parents of your child's friends. 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 2-6 youth team members.

Each team is required to have two adult (age 18+) coaches. No technical expertise is required: Coaches are there to facilitate and encourage the team's learning process, and to keep the team on track, not to demonstrate building or programming step by

step. In addition to the UI Extension 4-H Robotics office, which you are welcome to call or email any time for help, we provide regular e-newsletters, educational webinars and online open Q&A sessions, and we can often help connect rookie teams with more experienced teams who are willing to mentor them through the first season.

Once I find others who are willing to commit, how do I start the team?

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 WeDo 2.0 kit, and pay via credit card, purchase order, or check. If you have any questions, please call 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 \$600-\$1,000 for their first year of competition. This includes investment in the WeDo 2.0 Robotics kit and a tablet or laptop computer for programming the WeDo. In subsequent years, participation costs drop significantly, to around \$150-250 per team. Please see the *FIRST* LEGO League Jr. Team Sample Budget for more information. All *FIRST* teams are encouraged to seek local sponsors to help cover team costs.

I don't know anything about technology/don't have time to be a coach. Can you find a coach for my team?

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 to all the teams across Idaho. 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 local people who team parents/guardians know and trust. That's why we require a youth protection background check for all adult coaches and mentors working with teams.

Once you have gathered a group of interested parents, we suggest you all read through the information at <https://www.firstinspires.org/robotics/flljr/start-a-team>, and then discuss who among you might take on what roles for the team. It's fine for a team to have more than 2 coaches and mentors, and if the work is shared by all involved, it's more fun for everyone!

When and where are the Expos?

Expos may be held anytime from December through the end of the school year. For the most part, Expos are held in the Spring, after the conclusion of the *FIRST* LEGO League season. Please subscribe to our email newsletter (you will be automatically subscribed after registering your team) or check our online events calendar located at <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/4h/programs/robotics/calendar> to see events posted as they are finalized.

Do we have to attend an Expo?

No. While the *FIRST* LEGO League Jr. program has been growing exponentially the past couple of years in Idaho, there are still some areas in which team density is too low to hold an official Expo. If you are in one of these more remote locations, please contact our office for help in planning your own end-of-season team celebration, complete with a web-based team interview, and end-of-season certificates and season pins for each team member, just like they would have received at the Expo.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions?



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