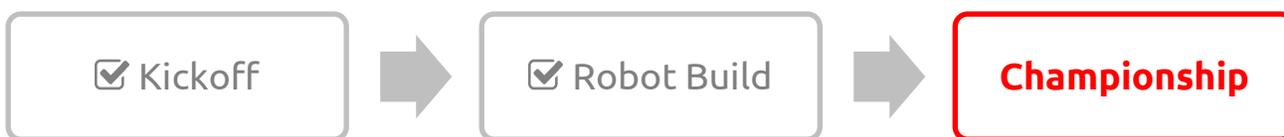




## Introduction



The eight-week Unified Robotics season culminates in an inter-school competition that pits multiple student-designed robots against one another. Of all events, this championship holds the largest potential for impact and, as such, requires weeks of meticulous planning.

Although dedicating such time to the planning and hosting of a multi-school championship may at first appear overwhelming, it is quite manageable with proper organization and support. In the following section, the planning necessary to host a championship will be detailed and explained.

## Step 1: Pre-Planning

In planning the event, it is essential that your team allocate proper time to the organization, funding and advertising of the event. "Do we have ideas as to which venues would be appropriate for such an event?" "What is the best way to get the word out?" These are just a few examples of the types of questions that a team hosting the championship would typically ask.

Planning the event is best to not be reserved for the second half of the season. In fact, if possible, begin outlining the championship as soon as you can. A few weeks before the kickoff, write down a clear, list of what exactly will be necessary to host a large-scale event. After the kickoff, begin working on more exact calculations regarding how many teams will be participating. In addition, if applicable, reflect on the challenges of hosting the kickoff and develop solutions.

Another important portion of this preliminary stage is deciding upon a timetable. A few weeks before the kickoff, a tentative timetable should be developed. Of course, some dates, like the championship, are dependent upon venue reservations; however, developing a timetable makes the definitive selection of dates far easier.

For example, below is a simplistic timetable of the Unified Robotics season in Washington:

<b>Kickoff</b>	September 19
<b>Robot Building Meetings</b>	6 Weeks
<b>Championship Prep Period</b>	2 Weeks
<b>Championship</b>	November 12

As demonstrated above, one's simplistic timetable need not include dozens of dates; its purpose is to serve as the rudimentary guide in those first few weeks of pre-kickoff planning.

After the kickoff, however, timetables must become simultaneously more definite and detailed, More specifically, increased focus must be placed upon the championship and its venue, which brings us to the next stage: selecting a venue.

## Step 2: Selecting a Venue

Although being completely sure of a program's interest during a pilot year rarely occurs, the kickoff should serve as a sufficient indicator of reliable interest. As a side note, if you have an idea of interest and committed teams before the kickoff, reserve a venue and select a date at the onset of the season. Venue selection should occur as early as realistically possible! Nonetheless, as soon as confirmation of interest arrives, begin researching venues. When considering that a typical Unified Robotics championship includes an introduction, tournament, and awards ceremony, the venue should be large enough to host a crowd of cheering spectators. It should have sufficient space for multiple arena boards whilst the other should ideally have seating and some sort of stage/room in front of the seating.

Our pilot season championship was held at the high school, although we invited community members and press to attend as spectators. If your championship will be composed only of teams from within your school, we suggest reserving a school assembly time for this. Allowing the full student body to participate in cheering will not only be special for others to learn about Unified Robotics and see what true inclusion looks like, it will be a very special experience for your partner students who likely haven't had a gymnasium full of their peers cheering them on.

In regards to other tips for researching venues, make sure that the venue allows for breathing room; it is possible that more guests, volunteers, and participants than expected will ultimately express an interest in attending.

As a final note, keep funding in mind while selecting the venue. Always make a formal request for a cost-free donation of the space. If this isn't possible, go to your school's ASB officers and booster club to request funding assistance.

## Step 3: Event Details

After selecting and confirming a suitable venue, begin considering the details of the championship.

- At what time will the championship begin?
- How long will each section of the championship last?
- In what layout will field(s) be set-up?
- Who will serve as judges?
- Is it important to you that guests sign-in?

The first question(s) answered usually regard schedule. As such, one should begin by developing a schedule for the day. If you are hosting a multi-school, or state championship, we recommend to allow for 4-6 hours, depending on the number of teams participating. If your championship is only your school's teams, the event can take place within an hour assembly, or 2 hours in the afternoon/evening. If you are hosting a city or state-wide event, make sure to factor in the two or so hours before the event during which volunteers set up.

After a schedule is determined, begin to consider the question of arrangement. If possible, print a diagram of the venue online and create a scale. Then, determine how the different fields, table, and A/V equipment will need to be arranged to preserve space.

You may want to also develop a protocol for identifying guests. Plan to create a guest list and name tags for each guest and participant. To differentiate between participants, guests, judges and volunteers, consider creating t-shirts for both the judges and the volunteers. Teams will likely independently develop plans for how to identify themselves (ex: team costumes).

Finally, invite judges to participate in the event. About one month before the event, begin emailing benefactors, district officials, teachers, mentors, FIRST staff/volunteers, and tech industry executives that would be willing to judge the event. Make sure that you provide them with a set of rules for judging at a Unified Robotics championship and plenty of time to absorb said rules.

During most typical Unified championships, judges present awards in a closing ceremony. As such, your team must decide upon which awards will be presented by the judges. It's recommended that you create a sufficient mix of performance, creativity, and character based awards that provide opportunity for a diverse range of teams to be recognized. For example, during the 2016 Washington Championship, awards types ranged from "first place" to "most creative design." Keep in mind, however, that your team has complete autonomy in creating new award types. Your awards need not match up exactly with the Washington Unified Robotics league's awards.

For an additional, but not necessary, aspect of the championship, consider the idea of having booths in the surrounding area. Contact teams with Unified Robotics mentorship programs and ask if they'd be interested in providing information about their *FIRST* team at the event.

## **Step 4: Invitations**

At this point, the time for sending out invitations to both teams and guests arrives. In addition, if necessary, additional volunteers should be secured. Three weeks before the championship begin drafting and sending out invitations. The types of invitations will vary. Try to avoid sending the same type of invitation to each recipient. For example, teams will not receive the same invitations as benefactors of the programs, press, or special guests.

Optional: Once guests have responded to invitations, draft a guest list. This will be used when creating name tags and checking guests in. At this point, you will also need to consider where the check-in table will be within the venue.

## Step 5: Spread the Word

In addition to sending invitations, one should also promote the event through posters, blog posts, social media updates, **press releases**, videos, and emailed letters to parents. The event can even be advertised during day-to-day conversation! Gather students skilled in creating the above products and get to work! Advertising should span for the two weeks prior to the event, although-for the sake of time-the sending of some press releases should coincide with the drafting of invitations. Make sure to be enthusiastic whilst also respecting your target audience. It is important that the audience be neither overwhelmed nor unaffected by the advertising.

Remember, as mentioned in Step Four, volunteers must be secured. Make sure to have an adequate supply of volunteers to allocate to tasks like signing guests in or setting up. Referees, an emcee, and other specialty volunteers must be secured in advance as well. Make sure to either have a training day for referees/the emcee or an instructional packet available for their reading.

If possible, delegate these tasks to other participating schools. As you approach Step Five, begin sending out emails asking for support from other schools within the league.

## Step 6: The Day Arrives

The day has arrived! Try to meet at the venue at least 2 hours before the event actually starts. Provide yourself with ample time to direct towards touching base, giving instructions, setting up and, hopefully, taking a calming breath before the event begins. Ensure that all volunteers possess tasks and an awareness of the schedule. In order to ensure that time exists for any additional instruction, both the emcee and the referees should arrive thirty to sixty minutes early.

Referees should be given ample time to understand the rules and recognize when any penalties apply. This may involve an informational webinar a few days prior to the event. During that time, game rules, event schedule, and instructions should be clearly delivered to prevent confusion and inconsistencies at the event.

Judges should be asked to arrive around 30 minutes early. It is recommended that instructional pamphlets be provided to each judge as they arrive. Having instructional pamphlets will reduce confusion and face-to-face instructional time. In addition, those with booths should arrive about 1.5 hours before the event starts; enforcing this time-frame will provide them with time to prepare their presentations. As the regular guests begin to arrive, direct them towards some semblance of a sign-in booth.

## Step 7: During the Event

During the event, volunteers tasked with maintaining the structure and schedule of the event should be scattered around the main competition room. Select others to interview and photograph guests. If the correct equipment can be acquired, conduct video-recorded interviews for potential promotional videos. Remember the championship will continue to have an effect after the 12th of November if documented properly.

If your venue has a designated area for the award and closing ceremonies, after the competition, attempt to transfer competitors and guest towards the second room or theatre. Position guides along the pathway to ensure that no guests find themselves lost. Once judges have made their decisions, organize all awards. All presenters should be gathered twenty minutes before the ceremony begins.

During the ceremony, the judges will typically assemble themselves in a horizontal row upstage. From this position, each judge will read the description of and present an award. Be sure to have these award descriptions finished and available by the day of the tournament. When a team comes onto the stage to accept an award, participants follow the style of walking down the row of judges and receiving high fives along with their awards.

## Step 8: After the Event

In the weeks following the championship, continue to release press-releases and organize photos/videos/interviews. Write around 2-3 reflective blog posts, with at least one post being uploaded each week for the rest of the month. Post about the event on the official team twitter and ask members of the program to do the same on their own personal accounts.

## Step 9: Relax!

Relax...before beginning to plan for the next season!