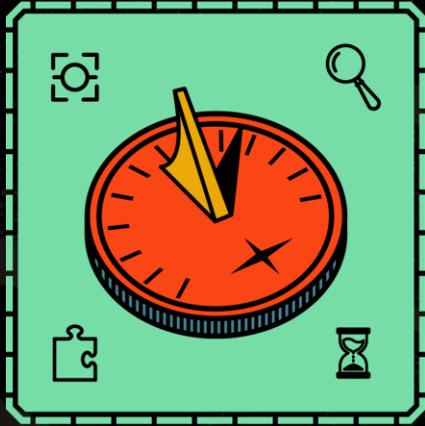


# FIRST Core Values



If your team hasn't already talked about your goals for the DECODE Season, take some time this week to think about how your season goals will help build towards your life goals!

- **Discovery:** *We explore new skills and ideas.*
- **Innovation:** *We use creativity and persistence to solve problems.*
- **Impact:** *We apply what we learn to improve our world.*
- **Inclusion:** *We respect each other and embrace our differences.*
- **Teamwork:** *We are stronger when we work together.*
- **Fun:** *We enjoy and celebrate what we do!*

# DECODE™

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**New Mexico**

**General Season Information**

**Jim Jackson, NM FTC Program Delivery Partner**

**[jjackson@firstpartners.org](mailto:jjackson@firstpartners.org) or [nmftcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:nmftcinfo@gmail.com)**

## Key Season Dates

- **September 22:** Team Q&A Opens
- **November 15:** Payment Due for \$125 New Mexico event fee
  - Covers all NM events including NM Regional Championship
  - Does not cover other region's events, Premier Events or World Championship
- **November 17:** Total of registered teams in NM helps set **FIRST** Championship Allocations
- **December 12-13:** Albuquerque Qualifier at La Academia de Esperanza Charter School
- **January 16-17:** Alamogordo Qualifier at Alamogordo High School
- **February 20-21:** New Mexico **FTC** Championship at Menaul School in Albuquerque
- **April 29 - May 2:** **FIRST** Championship
- **May 2:** Storefront closes, last day to use restricted grants

# ***FIRST* Senior Mentor**

What do ***FIRST*** Senior Mentors do?

- Raise awareness about all ***FIRST*** programs and events in their local community
- Support coaches, mentors, and volunteers
- Provide technical and non-technical support to ***FIRST*** teams
- Recruit rookie teams
- Help strengthen existing teams and enable year-to-year growth

**Please Welcome Morgan Kangas as New Mexico's new *FIRST* Senior Mentor!**

## ***NM Event Registration***

**Will be done thru the New Mexico FTC website at: <https://nmftc.org/>**

- We will be resetting all user accounts on the NM FTC website, so Lead Coach 1 or 2 will create a new account for the team
- There will be a new Consent & Release for NM FTC / Land of Enchantment Robotics
- Separate Opt-in for SMS Text Messaging mainly related to events
- I will send out notifications by email when ready.

**Communications will be by email from**

- [postmaster@nmftc.org](mailto:postmaster@nmftc.org) (Primary)
- [nmftcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:nmftcinfo@gmail.com)
- [jjackson@firstpartners.org](mailto:jjackson@firstpartners.org)
- Please whitelist these in your email spam filters!
- All messages are also posted on the blog at: <https://nmftc.org/blog/>
  - If you think you are not seeing emails, check this blog!

# ***Student Enrollment***

## **Express Enrollment (US & Canada)**

Youth registration for the 2025–2026 season is now open through the Express Enrollment application in the *FIRST* Dashboard. This quick process allows parents/guardians to register youth participants in just a few steps from any device.

**This really needs to be done online this year!**

# FTC Preview Event Opportunity (*FIRST* in TX)

## What is the FTC Preview Event?

- The Preview Event is an early-season “Week 0” scrimmage that serves as both a competition and a hands-on training opportunity for volunteers. It creates a live qualifier-style environment to test updated procedures, validate event systems, and help prepare volunteers and teams for the official season.

## Event Snapshot

- **Dates & Location:** October 17–19, 2025 – Marcus High School, Flower Mound, TX
- **Teams:** 24–35 FTC teams from Texas and neighboring states
- **Theme:** Halloween 🎃 – with decorations and optional costumes for teams & volunteers
- **Schedule (tentative):**
  - **Saturday, Oct 18:** Full scrimmage competition with judging, qualification matches, alliance selection, playoffs, and awards
  - **Sunday, Oct 19:** Targeted training opportunities for Judges and Inspectors

*If volunteers or teams are interested in this, please see or contact me.*



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# General Season Information

## Key Season Dates

- **September 22:** Team Q&A Opens
- **October 27:** Earliest date for official events (League Meets, League Tournaments, or Qualifying Tournaments)
  - Your local season timeline may start later
- **November 17:** Total of registered teams per region helps set *FIRST* Championship Allocations
- **March 15:** Last date for Regional Championship Events to advance to the *FIRST* Championship
  - Your local season timeline may end earlier
- **March 30:** Last day to complete payment and housing registration for the *FIRST* Championship
  - Payment and housing is a 2-week rolling deadline from when the team is first invited to attend
- **April 29 - May 2:** *FIRST* Championship
- **May 2:** Storefront closes, last day to use restricted grants



Key Season Dates Blog

## Season Resources – Quick links

<a href="https://ftc.game">ftc.game</a>	Game and Season Page
<a href="https://ftc.game/manual">ftc.game/manual</a>	Competition Manual PDF
<a href="https://ftc.game/cm-html">ftc.game/cm-html</a>	Competition Manual HTML
<a href="https://ftc.game/cm-html#R104">ftc.game/cm-html#R104</a>	Direct Rule Linking (Example Rule R104)
<a href="https://ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/field">ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/field</a>	Playing Field Resources, Field CAD
<a href="https://ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/team">ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/team</a>	Team Resources, StarterBot Links
<a href="https://ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/volunteer">ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/volunteer</a>	Volunteer Resources (coming soon)
<a href="https://ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/event">ftc-resources.firstinspires.org/ftc/event</a>	Event Resources (coming soon)
<a href="https://ftc-events.firstinspires.org/">ftc-events.firstinspires.org/</a>	FTC Event Listing and Results
<a href="https://ftc-scoring.firstinspires.org/">ftc-scoring.firstinspires.org/</a>	Avatars, Hybrid Judging, Premier Event Preferencing
<a href="https://ftc.game/calculator">ftc.game/calculator</a>	Practice Scoring Calculator

# Competition Manual Structure and Updates

The Competition Manual is broken down into sections which are mostly self-contained.

- Not everyone needs to review every section, but the team as a whole is responsible to know and understand the rules.
- Sections with a letter in parentheses “(A)” have specific rules, sections without the letter, are overview or process sections.
- Words in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS have specific meanings, check [Section 16: Glossary](#) for details.

# Competition Manual Sections

<a href="#"><u>Section 1: Introduction</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>About <i>FIRST</i> and <i>FIRST</i> Culture</li><li>How the manual is set-up and how to interpret it</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 9: ARENA</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Overview of the playing field</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Section 2: <i>FIRST</i> Season Overview</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Short description of the season theme and other <i>FIRST</i> Programs</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 10: Game Details</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Overview of the game and match set-up and process</li><li>Scoring and Violations</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Section 3: Competition Eligibility and Inspection (I)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>What teams need to do before competing to be eligible “I Rules”</li><li>Includes ROBOT Inspection</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 11: Game Rules (G)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Specific Game Rules “G Rules”</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Section 4: Advancement</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How do teams earn advancement</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 12: ROBOT Construction Rules (R)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rules about what is allowed when building the ROBOT “R Rules”</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Section 5: Event Rules (E)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Overall event rules (not game specific) “E Rules”</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 13: Tournament (T)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Qualification and Playoff Match process</li><li>Playoff brackets</li><li>Tournament Rules “T Rules”</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Section 6: Awards (A)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Describes the Awards Process</li><li>Provides specific rules about Awards and Judging “A Rules”</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 14: League Play (L)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Additional rules for League Play</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Section 7: Game Sponsor Recognition</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Thank you to <a href="#">RTX</a> for being our presenting sponsor for DECODE</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 15: <i>FIRST</i> Championship (C)</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Processes specific to the <i>FIRST</i> Championship</li><li>Specific Championship rules “C Rules”</li></ul>
<a href="#"><u>Section 8: Game Overview</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>High level “story of the game”</li></ul>	<a href="#"><u>Section 16: Glossary</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>All DEFINED TERMS</li></ul>

# AI Rules Assistant

**New this year:** AI Chatbot available to help find answers to rules questions

- <https://ftc-cmchatbot.firstinspires.org/>
- The chatbot is trained specifically on the current version of the Competition Manual and will update throughout the season.
- The chatbot can help you find what you're looking for, but it's still **up to you to review and verify the answers.**

With grant support from  Google.org

## Team Updates and Team Q&A

- Competition Manual is updated frequently throughout the season to improve the clarity and intent of rules, and to fix any errors found.
  - When the manual is updated a Team Update (TU) is published which shows a summary of the changes.
  - Adults can sign up to get an email notification for all Team Updates.
  - [ftc.game/tu-combined](https://ftc.game/tu-combined) links to a PDF of all the team updates this season.
- Team Q&A is available for teams to ask questions about things they believe are not already clarified by the rules.
  - Answers may point teams to a specific rule or sometimes questions will result in a Competition Manual update.
  - At events, the Head Referee and Event Director make the final decision based on the Competition Manual Rules.
- Team Q&A opens on Sept 22nd.
  - Instructions: [ftc.game/q-a-help](https://ftc.game/q-a-help)
  - Log in here: <https://ftc-qa.firstinspires.org/>



**Coaches:** Sign up here to get  
Team Update emails

## Team Update 00

- The first Team Update of the season is out now!
- TU 00 includes:
  - Major changes from last season's INTO THE DEEP to this year's DECODE manual
  - Updates from the V0 Preview Release
- Find it at: [ftc.game/tu-00](https://ftc.game/tu-00)

## Team Calls

- These are for *YOU!*
- Register to join a call and get help from *FIRST* Tech Challenge experts

Topic	Date	Time
Dean's List	Wednesday, November 12th	8-8:55 PM ET
	Wednesday, December 10th	8-8:55 PM ET
Judging, Gameplay and General Support	Thursday, October 16th	8-8:55 PM ET
	Thursday, November 13th	8-8:55 PM ET
	Thursday, December 11th	8-8:55 PM ET



Team Call Schedule

## Team Avatars

Team Avatars ([announced last year](#)) are back!

- Avatars are small images teams can create and use to strengthen their brand or team identity and are shown in the scoring system and other official locations.
- If your team had an avatar last season, it will automatically roll over to this year.
- Lead Coach 1&2 can submit new or updated avatars by logging into <https://ftc-scoring.firstinspires.org/>
  - Avatar submission is only available for fully registered teams.





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**Advancement and Judging**

## Points-based Advancement Model

- Everything a team does well at an event helps contribute to their advancement points.
- Teams will be ranked based on the points they earn at an individual event.
- This model rewards **well rounded teams** who do well with Awards and Robot performance.
- Check out the [Advancement & FIRST Championship Update](#) blog more information.
- No math required! The scoring system will do the math, but you can see how points are calculated in [Section 4: Advancement](#).



Advancement Changes  
Announcement Blog

# ***FIRST* Championship and Premier Event Opportunities**

- As announced in the [Advancement & FIRST Championship Update](#) blog, the *FIRST* Championship will have 336 *FIRST* Tech Challenge teams this year (up from 256 last year).
- *FIRST* Tech Challenge Premier Events are back and bigger! We have several returning and new locations:

**New England Premier Event**

**Mexico Premier Event**

**Michiana Premier Event Presented by GEARS**

**Run for the Robots Premier Event**

**European Premier Event**

**Chicago Robotics Invitational Premier Event**

**Canadian Rockies Premier Event @ K Days**

**Canada Cup - Niagara Premier Event**

**Istanbul Premier Event**

**Western Edge Premier Event**

**Cowtown Invitational Premier Event**

## ***FIRST* Championship and Premier Event Selection Process**

- Specific details will be announced in a blog by November.
- General Process Notes:
  - Teams will be able to submit a ranked choice event list for which events they would like to attend in [FTC Scoring](#).
  - Teams will be able to indicate if they have sibling teams for travel logistics.
  - If there are unfilled spots at an event, teams will be able to indicate if they would like to attend more than one event.

## Section 6: Awards (A)

- Formal Interviews are now called “Structured Interviews”. There is no format change.
- PORTFOLIOS may only include content from Jan 1, 2025 or later. This universal date helps Judges and Teams understand what content can be included in the Portfolio.
- The Motivate Award has been retired. It has been replaced with two new awards: **Sustain** and **Reach**, so we can better celebrate the required and suggested achievements the Motivate Award represented.
- All non-Inspire awards, in Section 6.3, are given same number of advancement points. This includes the Judges’ Choice Award!
- Teams who have won 1<sup>st</sup> place Inspire at a Qualifying Tournament or League Tournament **can** be considered for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place Inspire at subsequent Qualifying Tournaments or League Tournaments.
- Teams can only receive one Judged Award recognition per event (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>). This allows us to celebrate the accomplishments of many teams.

# Dean's List Award – New Deadlines!

December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 is the deadline for all Dean's List Award nominations, for all regions.

## Dean's List Award – Important Dates

September 6, 2025	Nominations open
December 15, 2025	Deadline for all nominations
Dates Varied	Finalists announced at Regional Championship Tournaments
May 1, 2026	10 Winners announced at FIRST Championship



Dean's List Changes  
Announcement Blog

# DECODE™

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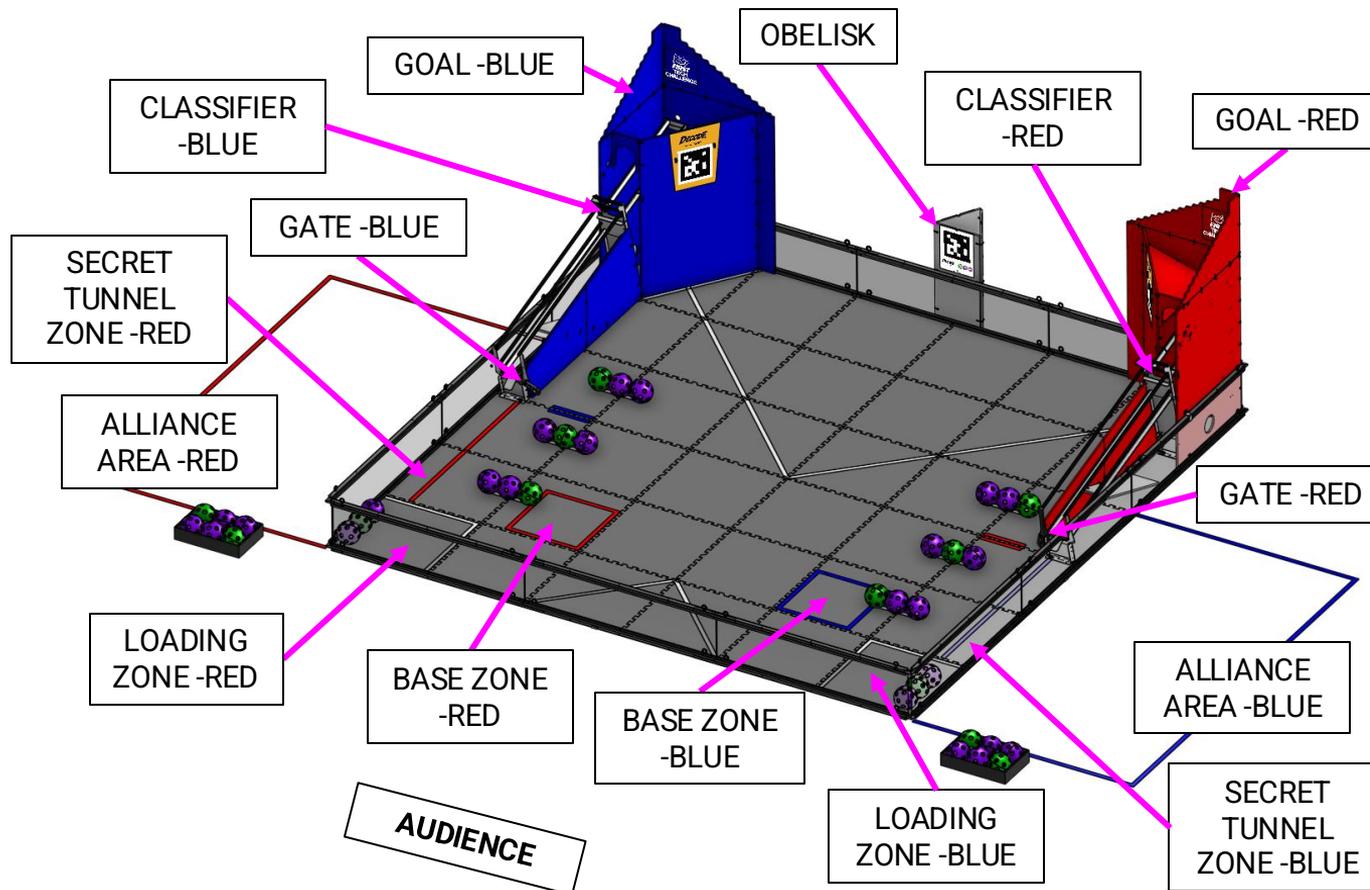
## Game Overview

### Disclaimers

- This is based on limited time to review the game materials.
- Teams should review the Competition Manual.
- Teams are encouraged to ask Q&A online when it opens.
- Team Updates may change or modify the rules or their interpretation.
- This is the best information available as of Kickoff (September 6, 2025).

# High Level Game Narrative

- In DECODE™ presented by RTX, 2 competing ALLIANCES of 2 teams each score purple and green ARTIFACTS in their GOAL, build PATTERNS, and race back to their BASE before time runs out.
- Just before the MATCH starts, the OBELISK is randomized to show one of 3 MOTIFS. The MOTIF for the MATCH defines what color PATTERN ROBOTS try to create on their RAMPS.
- During the first 30 seconds of the MATCH, the ROBOTS operate autonomously. ROBOTS can use sensors to decode the randomized MATCH MOTIF. ROBOTS can earn points by scoring ARTIFACTS in their GOAL and building a PATTERN on their RAMP based on the MOTIF. ROBOTS also earn points for moving off the LAUNCH LINE.
- During the remaining 2 minutes of the MATCH, human DRIVERS take control of their ROBOT. ROBOTS collect and continue to score ARTIFACTS in their GOAL to earn points. DRIVE TEAM members can retrieve ARTIFACTS from the ALLIANCE'S LOADING ZONE and help their ROBOTS by loading them with ARTIFACTS.
- As time runs out, ALLIANCES can work together to return both of their ROBOTS to the BASE. ALLIANCES that build PATTERNS based on the MOTIF at the end of the MATCH earn additional points.
- The ALLIANCE that earns the most points wins the MATCH and additional RANKING POINTS can be earned though completing other scoring achievements.



## Ranking Points (RPs)

- Average Ranking Points (Rank Score) are the 1<sup>st</sup> order sort for Qualification Ranking
- Teams earn RPs from a Win or a Tie. New this year:
  - Win is worth 3 RPs
  - Tie is worth 1 RP
  - Additional scoring achievements can also earn extra RPs (up to 3 RPs)
  - Teams can earn up to 6 RP during a MATCH
- Thresholds will vary for these achievements as event levels progress.

**MOVEMENT RP:** Combined LEAVE + BASE points earned at or above threshold

**GOAL RP:** number of ARTIFACTS scored through the SQUARE at or above threshold

**PATTERN RP:** PATTERN points earned at or above threshold

Table 10-3: DECODE RP thresholds

RP Type	FIRST Championship	Regional Championships	All Other Events*
<b>MOVEMENT RP</b>	TBA	21	16
<b>GOAL RP</b>	TBA	TBA	36
<b>PATTERN RP</b>	TBA	TBA	18

## MOVEMENT RP

Combined LEAVE + BASE points earned at or above threshold = 16 for events under Regional Championship level

- Is a combination of LEAVE points earned in AUTO and BASE points earned in the endgame
- Multiple combinations of ROBOT accomplishments can earn this RP
  - 2 LEAVE (3 pts each) + 1 fully returned (10 pts each) = 16
  - 2 LEAVE (3 pts each) + 2 partially returned (5 pts each) = 16
  - 1 LEAVE (3 pts each) + 1 fully returned (10 pts each) + 1 partially returned (5 pts each) = 18
  - 2 fully returned (10 pts each) + 10 pt bonus for 2 fully returned = 30
  - And more!

## GOAL RP

Number of ARTIFACTS scored through the SQUARE at or above threshold  
= 36 ARTIFACTS for events under Regional Championship level

- Includes ARTIFACTS scored as CLASSIFIED & OVERFLOW.
- Does not include ARTIFACTS scored in the DEPOT.

# PATTERN RPs

PATTERN points earned at or above threshold = 18 for events under Regional Championship level.

- Teams earn 2 points for each matched index.
  - Each index scores separately, a full MOTIF is not required.
- All 9 indices matched at the end of AUTO and/or TELEOP = 18 points.
- Below is an example of ARTIFACTS that score 5 PATTERN matches (10 points) for the MATCH period.



Figure 10-5: Example PATTERN scoring with GPP scoring

PATTERN Scored	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								
CLASSIFIED ARTIFACTS	<input type="radio"/>								
Index	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
GATE	G	P	P	G	P	P	G	P	P
	MOTIF (GPP)								

SQUARE

## DRIVE TEAM Changes



Table 10-1: DRIVE TEAM roles

Role	Description	Max./ DRIVE TEAM	Criteria
<b>DRIVE COACH</b>	a guide or advisor	1	any team member and may be an adult, must wear "DRIVE COACH" badge
<b>DRIVER</b>	an operator and controller of the ROBOT	3	STUDENT, must wear a "DRIVE TEAM" badge
<b>HUMAN PLAYER</b>	a SCORING ELEMENT manager		

A STUDENT is a person who has not completed high-school, secondary school, or the comparable level in their home region as of September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current season.

- Up to 8 total DRIVE TEAM members per ALLIANCE (up to 4 per team) per MATCH.
- Each team may have one or more HUMAN PLAYERS per MATCH, allowing more STUDENTS to participate at the FIELD.
- DRIVE COACH has different restrictions (e.g., cannot contact ARTIFACTS – G430, cannot handle gamepads – G429) than other DRIVE TEAM members.

# HUMAN PLAYER

- HUMAN PLAYERS may load SCORING ELEMENTS into their ROBOTS.
  - Each team optionally contributes a HUMAN PLAYER for loading their ROBOT
- A HUMAN PLAYER may be in the LOADING ZONE at the same time as a ROBOT.
  - This allows teams with basic ROBOTS to focus on scoring and contribute to the MATCH score (e.g., ROBOT does not have intake to collect SCORING ELEMENTS on the FIELD on their own)
- There are rules for HUMAN PLAYERS while loading ROBOTS.
  - e.g., no transitive ROBOT-SCORING ELEMENT-human contact or direct ROBOT-human contact is allowed per G431.

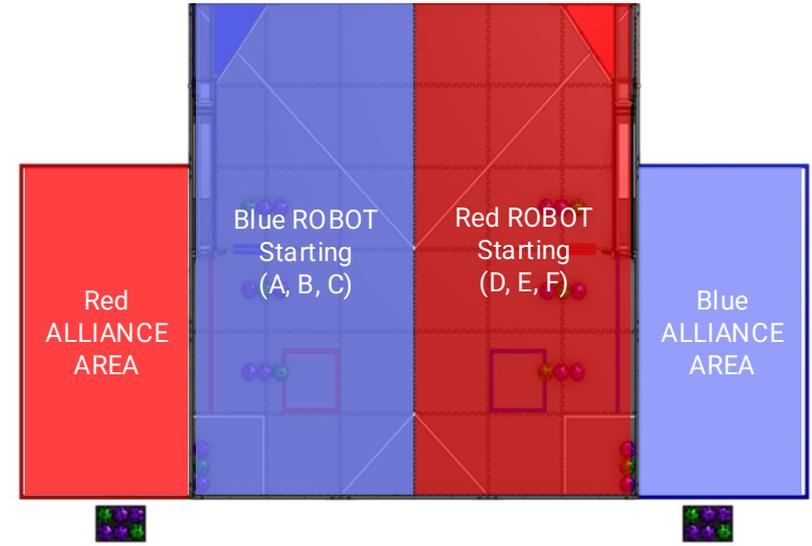
Make sure to **review the Competition Manual**, specifically section 11.4.6 for complete HUMAN PLAYER and loading rules.

## Section 12: ROBOT Construction Rules (R)

- New legal components
  - Additional legal motors (also rebranded MATRIX to goBILDA 5000)
  - Power control electronics (switches, servo power block, battery)
- Actuator Count Changes
  - Reduced maximum servo count to **10** servos
- Expansion limits are back and smaller
  - Robots must remain within an 18 in. (45.70 cm) cube until the last 20s of the MATCH.
  - During the last 20s of the MATCH, ROBOTS can expand in height up to 38 in.
  - Expansion limit rules are: R105, G414, and G415

## MATCH Set-up (G304)

- ROBOTS are set up on the other side of the FIELD from the ALLIANCE AREA.
  - Blue sets up in columns A/B/C but stands on FIELD right.
  - Red sets up in columns D/E/F but stands on FIELD left.
- Pre-loaded SCORING ELEMENTS come from their own ALLIANCE AREA. (Section 10.3.4 SCORING ELEMENTS)
- ROBOT must start over a LAUNCH LINE (including DEPOT) & contacting a GOAL or wall.



## AUTO

- Earn LEAVE points, contributing to MOVEMENT RP.
- Contribute to ARTIFACT scoring as CLASSIFIED or OVERFLOW, contributing to GOAL RP.
- Earn PATTERN points at the end of AUTO based on the MOTIF, contributing to PATTERN RP.
  
- If ARTIFACTS on the RAMP at the end of TELEOP are the same ARTIFACTS that were scored in AUTO, they will score PATTERN points for both periods based on the MOTIF. They will only score as CLASSIFIED during AUTO.

## DECODE is a highly interactive game...

- ROBOTS will be frequently interacting and "sharing" space on the DECODE FIELD.
- Defense is an important and strategic part of DECODE.
- ROBOT-to-ROBOT contact is okay!
  - G420 protects a ROBOT from deliberate damage or damage caused by contact initiated **inside** the ROBOT CHASSIS.
  - G421 protects a ROBOT from deliberate tipping or entanglement by an opponent ROBOT.
- ROBOTS should be designed accordingly.

## Protected Zones (G424-G427)

- For G424-G427, it doesn't matter which ROBOT initiates the contact.
- G424, G426, & G427 all follow the same guidance: it doesn't matter which ROBOT is in the protected zone when contact occurs between opponents in the zone.
  - GATE ZONE (G424) and LOADING ZONE (G426) protections apply throughout the MATCH.
  - BASE ZONE (G427) protection only applies during the last 20s of the MATCH.
- G425 is unique in that a ROBOT in its own SECRET TUNNEL ZONE is not protected; a ROBOT violates this rule when it is in the opponent's SECRET TUNNEL ZONE and contact occurs between opposing ROBOTS.
  - SECRET TUNNEL ZONE (G425) protection applies throughout the MATCH.

## GOAL, GATE, OVERFLOW. Oh my!

- Scoring of ARTIFACTS as CLASSIFIED or OVERFLOW happens as the ARTIFACT transitions through the SQUARE on the CLASSIFIER.
  - CLASSIFIED ARTIFACTS must transition directly to the RAMP.
  - OVERFLOW ARTIFACTS do not meet the requirements of CLASSIFIED ARTIFACTS.
- An ARTIFACT must meet **all** the following conditions to score as either CLASSIFIED or OVERFLOW:
  - enter the open top of the GOAL,
  - go under the archway of the GOAL, and
  - pass through the SQUARE.

## Online Score Calculator



<https://ftc.game/calculator>

# Deciphering DECODE



## ⚠️ Reminder:

- These are thoughts to get you started!
- Review the Competition Manual!
- Keep an eye out for Team Updates!

**DECODE**<sup>™</sup>

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**Good luck and have fun!**