FIRST has a lot of awards you can win, but most of them you don’t apply for. The ones you can apply for are the Chairman’s award, Dean’s List, Woodie Flowers, and Entrepreneurship.

A complete list of awards can be found [here](http://www.firstinspires.org/robotics/frc/awards). The description of these awards can be found in the Admin Manual, linked [here](https://firstfrc.blob.core.windows.net/frc2016manuals/AdminManual/FRC-2016-admin-manual-06.pdf).

A couple general things that apply to everything: there is always a character count. And it always includes spaces. And it usually feels like not enough. It’s better to over write than under write, though. You can always cut stuff. Check the character count before you submit.

In general, submit before you have to by at least a couple days. That way, if you’re over character count, or the site crashes (sometimes happens on the due date...), it’s no big deal. It also allows you to not have a last minute panic.

# **Chairman’s Award:**

[FIRST’s Resources](http://www.firstinspires.org/node/4876)

Here is FIRST’s description of the Chairman’s Award:

The concept of the Chairman’s Award includes Regional and District Championship Chairman’s Awards, which enable FIRST to recognize more teams for their exemplary efforts in spreading the FIRST message, as well as their talents in organizing materials for their presentations. Because the Chairman’s Award recognizes sustained excellence and impact, not just a one (1) year team effort, it is not possible for a FIRST year (rookie) team to receive the Chairman’s Award, Rookie Teams will NOT be considered for the award, are NOT required to provide a Chairman’s Award video, and will not be interviewed, as Chairman’s Award judging resources are limited. The teams who have earned the Regional and District Championship Chairman’s Award can travel to the FIRST Championship to be considered for the Chairman’s Award.

Here is a more personal one:

The Chairman’s Award goes to a team who exemplifies FIRST’s values, and who works for what they believe in. They are good not in just on the field, but in the pits, and in their community. It’s also about growth. Growing in size and impact and amazingness is really memorable. Everyone loves an underdog story. Winning the Chairman’s Award means that you are really, really amazing, and it feels *really really* good to win it. It takes a lot of work, but the payoff is incredible.

What the Chairman’s Award involves:

1. A theme. Pick one, and go all out. It should be in every aspect of your team. Change it every year. Get as many sub-teams involved as you can - we have marketing, media, and spirit teams that are critical to our Chairman’s success. We also involve the mechanical and pit teams but extending the theme to our robot and pit area as much as possible.
2. An essay. You’ll want to include all of the stuff you do in the community and school. Tie in your theme to the different sections. Make a lot of puns. Make it memorable, and cram as much information as possible into it. You want the judges to know your team backwards and forwards after reading it. However, there is a 10,000 character limit (not words, includes spaces), which is about 3 pages, single spaced, so you have to be concise.
3. Short essays. The specific questions can be found in the Admin Manual (linked above). Make sure you check the FIRST site after the current game manual is released to see if there have been changes from year to year. These also have a character limit of 500 characters, which is about 1 long paragraph or 5-8 terse bullet points. You want to tie in your theme here too. You are going to basically cram all of your essay into these little ones so the judges can really know your team. We think this is a “go-to” section for judges to easily see how teams compare, so we sometimes repeat information if it is applicable to more than one question. We present our information in bullet points to make it that much easier for judges to see the data.
4. Presentation. At competition, you have a seven (7) minute presentation. Two-three people do this. The Paladins have found that what’s most effective is picking the four or five things that really make your team unique and expanding on them. Go really really hard on your theme here. Make it as memorable and ridiculous as possible. If possible, memorize it. If it’s not, don’t stress it.
5. Question and answer. After the presentation, the judges (there’s usually two or three, won’t be more than four) ask you questions for five (5) minutes. These questions really depend on your team and presentation, so make sure your presenters really know everything in the essay and presentation. It’s okay if your presenters specialize, but altogether, your presenters need to be well versed in the whole team, from marketing to mechanical. It’s a good idea to have some ideas on what to say when the judges ask things like “What are you plans for this year?” Or “Is there anything else you wanted to tell us?” This is a great opportunity that can easily be wasted if the presenters aren’t prepared ahead of time.
6. Video. This only plays if you win, but it’s a 1-3 minute video based on your theme that is basically an ad for your team. You want to let everyone know why you won, and why you deserve to win at the next level. It’s not judged, though, so have fun with it, and don’t worry if it isn’t that good. You do have to have it though, no matter what. We are not sure why, but FIRST puts a lot of emphasis and advice from other teams on the video in their Chairman’s resources, and some teams get trapped in creating a work of art and don’t have enough time or resources to work on the other parts of the submission that are actually judged. The video is a good place for other sub-teams like marketing to come in and help as well. You can play the video in the pit during the competition.

While most teams don’t win Chairman’s in their first try, it’s important to put your all into it. The Chairman’s Award is about growth and seeing the team evolve, so it often takes two or three years of submitting before a team wins.

This applies to everyone - high hopes often end up sad. Only one team can win at each District Event, and there are many many teams that are qualified.I know that it’s really rough to work so hard and not win, but it’s probably going to happen. FIRST really values seeing teams struggle and come out with their head held high and a smile on their face while cheering for the other teams. It speaks volumes about the character of your team, which is what the Chairman’s Award is about.

Another thing about Chairman’s is that if you win, it means you have been in the running for every other (non-submitted) judged award, but you will not win one. Chairman’s teams can also win the other submitted awards like Safety, and Entrepreneurship, but this is rare. Every award give teams points towards their overall ranking, so at a competition of 40+ teams, the judges usually spread out the awards so that as many teams as possible win something. This is not true about winning or being the finalist of the robotic competition - that is separate from all awards. It is often the case that the Chairman’s team is also part of one of the top two alliances at the end.

# **Dean’s List:**

Sorry, students, but this isn’t as huge as Chairman’s is, but nothing is, so. Dean’s List is for sophomores and juniors that exemplify FIRST’s values. It’s basically what the Chairman’s Award is, but crammed into one student.

Determine who on your team is eligible and send that list to your mentors, along with the qualifications for nominees. Have the mentors send one or two names back as their nominee, with any comments they would like to add to the essay. Two head coaches then use that information to submit 2-4 nominees to the team for their input. Create a nomination form that asks students to pick one of those nominees as a Dean’s List, with their input on why. Then take that information and the two head coaches would select the final two nominees and write a submittal essay.

When writing the essay, use the qualifications listed in the manual as your guide. Explain how your student meets each of the qualifications – be specific and give personal examples. Have someone proofread your essay. Check the character count (including spaces!) prior to upload. GPA is needed for your nominees. Once essay is finalized and a photo is ready, then go to TIMS to upload information. An email will be sent as to which competition your Dean’s List nominees will be interviewed. If you have two nominees, they are interviewed at the same competition. Interview is typically 15 minutes in length. It is informal, but your nominee will want to dress up – business casual, or shirt/tie, are appropriate.

To students nominated:

There’s an interview at competition. The judges are really nice, and they don’t ask you any trick questions. In my interview, they asked me about what I do for the team, and how I’m a leader. The biggest tip I can give you is to love FIRST. People can see that, and it’s what they’re looking for. The phrase “[drink the KoolAid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drinking_the_Kool-Aid)” is what they are looking for. The judges are looking for people who love FIRST and robotics and who have really drunk the KoolAid. Don’t stress about the interview too much. Dress up nice, and take a breath. The worst thing that can happen is not winning.

# **Woodie Flowers:**

This goes to your most amazing mentor. Again, it’s like all of the amazingness of Chairman’s in one mentor. Think about the mentor that teaches students the most, who really supports the team and their ideals. Think about a mentor that doesn’t just do things for team members, but shows them how.

It’s not as involved as Chairman’s, though. You write a short essay on why they are the best, most bomb mentor ever, and you submit some pictures. Since this is pretty low-stress, you should do it every year. The Paladins like to do a mentor that is most likely going to be leaving next year, like the parent of a senior student.

Your team needs to vote on it, and none of the mentors or coaches can know who you chose until it gets announced at competition.

The competition part is a little confusing - at regional events (in Michigan), they just list off the people who were nominated. Then, at the District Championship (for Michigan) they announce one winner. It's a little confusing, and I'm not sure how it works in other non-Michigan districts, but that's how it is here.

That’s it, really! There’s no interview or anything, so your essay has to be really good. What needs to be in it specifically is all in the Admin Manual (linked above).

# **Entrepreneurship Award:**

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This is really about future plans for your team. It helps you organize your team and it shows judges that you are interested in sticking around, and you have plans to help you stay put. It’s really a business plan (which is also a marketable job skill, knowing how to do this).

I would recommend doing this not only to win it, but because it really does help the team. Working on this requires people who know what the team has done, and people with ideas about where it’s going.

If you have a team handbook, it can be really helpful. The Paladins did a lot of copy pasting. You can also borrow from your Chairman’s essay, if you’re submitting. I wouldn’t copy paste a lot of stuff from there without rewording it, but it is still way easier than writing it all new.

I’m not going to go through specifics of it, because it’s explained pretty well in the Admin Manual (linked above).

It doesn’t take weeks and weeks, really. If five or six people sit down and work on it together, each taking a different section, it really only takes a couple days.

Where possible, have the team approve everything, and come up with as few new ideas as possible. Try to use things the whole team came up with. It makes it easier to carry out your plans.