

Document It

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1. Online Documentation

In recent years, our Botball team has been successful in online documentation and the onsite presentation. It is our understanding that some teams have had trouble in these areas, so we are providing those teams with guidelines that will make this process easier.

1.1 Reading Through the Rubric

First, read through the rubrics given online. A rubric is a list of specific instructions given for each area of documentation. These are extremely useful when doing documentation because, if followed, they almost always guarantee a perfect score. Throughout the process of documentation, we read through the rubric several times to ensure that we have not left anything out. After finishing, we print off the rubric and read through it along side the documentation to check that everything needed is present.

1.2 Planning Ahead

Second, plan ahead. We start by making a calendar of all events that would interfere with our Botball meetings. In previous years, we failed to do this and encountered many scheduling conflicts. Because we have started making a calendar, we are able to set deadlines and schedule meetings around all of the conflicting events. We recommend setting deadlines a few days early in case something goes wrong. Several years ago, we set our deadline the day documentation was due, and the Internet at our school crashed. We had to scramble around trying to fix the Internet in order to submit our

documentation on time. Now that we set our deadlines early, we have time to spare if something goes wrong. Do not wait until the day before your deadline to begin working on documentation because it takes a lot of time, and you should plan accordingly around things such as building and programming.

1.3 Choosing Documenters

Third, choose documenters wisely. It is important to remember that not everybody is made to do documentation, so choose people who enjoy writing. Also, do not give all of documentation to one person because it is far too big of a task for one person to handle. We have four people who each work on a different section of documentation. Because of this there are sometimes issues with consistency, and it is often easy to tell that multiple people have written the documentation. We resolved this issue by having everyone involved in documentation read over each section and make minor changes to help it flow better.

1.4 Documenting Throughout the Season

Fourth, document information throughout the entire season. Make records of all trial runs, building designs, and ideas because you will most likely need them later in documentation. Also, be sure to take pictures of the team and robots throughout the building stages because documentation sometimes asks for pictures. In the past, we did not always document and take pictures like we should have. This cost us valuable time because we had to go back and recreate earlier robots. We have started documenting and taking pictures early in the season to prevent such problems.

1.5 Proofreading and Editing

Fifth, proofread and edit the documentation before submitting it. By setting your deadline early, you will have a few days to read over and edit any mistakes. Give all of your team

members a chance to read over the documentation, and ask them to give advice on things that need to be changed. We also allow an outside source to read our documentation to make sure everything makes sense. After you have followed all of these steps, it almost always guarantees a good score, but this is just the online portion. Next, you need to focus on the onsite portion.

2. Onsite Documentation

2.1 Written Section

Onsite documentation requires quite a bit of time. There are two parts to onsite documentation; one is the written section, and the other is the oral section. After reading through the onsite documentation rubric, you need to decide how you are going to do the written portion. Some teams in the past have made posters or handouts, but we prefer to do ours in power point form. Electronic devices are not allowed while presenting, so we print off our power point slides and put them in a binder. When writing the written portion, we follow the same basic steps previously discussed.

2.2 Oral Presentation

The key to a successful oral presentation is confidence. When selecting two people to present the documentation, choose well-rounded people who will make a good first impression. We usually dress up in costumes that go with the game of that year in order to stand out. For example, we dressed up in hula skirts and leis this year for the regional onsite presentation. Practicing the presentation is important as well. Knowing the presentation makes you more comfortable and confident, so we practice multiple times. Usually, we have a teacher or student watch us practice so that they can give us constructive criticism. Eye contact is another key factor in presenting. Look at the judges while talking, but do not stare. It is sometimes hard to talk in front of people you do not know but try to be calm and collected. When talking, point to pictures in your documentation or give the judges some kind of visual aid. Spice up your presentation as

much as possible because you do not want the judges to get bored, and you want to be remembered. Most importantly, make sure you include everything on the rubric in your presentation because you lose points if everything is not there. After the oral presentation is finished, be prepared to answer the judges' questions about your documentation or Botball team. Before you leave, be sure to thank the judges for their time.

2.3 Conclusion

By following the rules and tips listed above, documentation has become a much easier task, and we have improved our scores dramatically. The rubrics KIPR provides are now more detailed than the used to be and this is, believe it or not, a blessing. They also provide examples for the written portions that are also extremely useful. When you learn to follow the guidelines given, documentation is often easier than you think. All it takes is a little instruction, much dedication, and even more patience and you will succeed.