FIRST® Tech Challenge 2025-2026 Advancement Model Details

Revision History	
Revision	Description
25-26.1	Initial Release

Contents

> In this paper we will provide more detail on the new *FIRST*® Tech Challenge points-based advancement model which is being implemented for the 2025-2026 season.

Detailed Breakdown of Advancement Points

Qualification Round Performance

Teams earn advancement points based on their qualification ranking. These points will be distributed over a range of 2-16 points. The highest ranked team receives 16 points, the lowest ranked team receives a minimum of 2 points, and everyone else falls on a distribution within that range.

Alliance Captains and Draft Order Acceptance

Teams earn advancement points based on the alliance they are a part of. The formula for this is:

$$21 - <alliance\ number>$$

For example, a team on the number 1 alliance will earn 20 points (21 - 1 = 20), while a team on the 6th alliance will earn 15 points (21 - 6 = 15).

We want to align a team's event priorities with their season priorities. This new system gives the same number of points to the captain as it does to their alliance partner. Alliance captains are still likely to earn more total points when you look at the combination of qualification performance and alliance selection, but we do not believe a team should be at a points disadvantage by accepting an invitation from an alliance captain

In the previous advancement system, there was a notable increase in the number of declined invitations during alliance selection if the event only advanced 2 teams. For example, with two slots in the previous mode, teams may have prioritized being a captain over an alliance partner to maximize their opportunity for advancement - this should no longer be the case. We want teams to be able to make strategic decisions regarding alliance selection based on forming the best alliances as opposed to being forced to follow a rigid advancement order.

Playoff Advancement

Teams earn advancement points based on how far they progress into the playoffs. Points are given to all teams within the alliance.

Playoff Finish	Advancement Points Earned
Winner	40 points
Finalist	20 points
3rd Place	10 points
4th Place	5 points

As a reference, in a 6-alliance bracket - for a single division event:
- The alliance who wins the Finals receives 40 points
- The alliance who loses the Finals receives 20 points
- The alliance who loses Match 9 receives 10 points
- The alliance who loses Match 8 receives 5 points

Team Judged Awards

Teams earn advancement points when they receive recognition from the judges. As the top award in *FIRST®* Tech Challenge, the Inspire Award is given more points than all other awards. The advancement points for judged awards are as follows

Award	Advancement Points Earned
Inspire 1	60 points
Inspire 2	30 points
Inspire 3	15 points
1st Place Award	12 points
2nd Place Award	6 points
3rd Place Award	3 points

With the adoption of a points model for advancement, all awards other than the Inspire Award are considered equal for advancement purposes and receive the same number of advancement points (including the Judges Choice Award). This intentionally reflects our focus on rewarding well-rounded teams for their achievements across multiple aspects of an event.

Another important distinction is that points are only given for team awards outlined in the Competition Manual. If an individual is recognized as a Dean's List Semifinalist or Finalist, or a coach or mentor receives the Compass Award, the team will not receive any advancement points for that individual recognition.

Applying Advancement Points to Sample Events

Digging further into how advancement points work in practice, we will break down what advancement with them looks like at an event level. While the specific events/teams listed here are not real, the scenarios within them are real, and they serve as a good example for what things could look like.

In both cases we will run through the top 10 teams according to advancement points and how they were earned. Each team represented will have two rows of data.

Team #	Qualification Ranking	Playoff Alliance	Playoff Finish	Award Received	Total Points
	Qualification Round Performance Points	Alliance Captains and Draft Order Acceptance Points	Playoff Advancement Points	Team Judged Awards Points	

Our hope is that, through these examples, it is easier to see how advancement points work and how they will be applied at events this upcoming season.

Event 1 Simulation (Anonymized)

For this first event, we are looking at a 24-team event with a single dominant team and a strong field behind them:

Team "Number"	Qualifications	Playoff Alliance	Playoff Advancement	Team Judged Awards	Advancement Points
(1) ⚡	Rank 1	Alliance 1	Winner	Inspire 1st Place	136
	16	20	40	60	
(2) 🐁	Rank 10	Alliance 1	Winner	1st Place Award	82
	10	20	40	12	
(3) 🐬	Rank 2	Alliance 2	Finalist	1st Place Award	66
	15	19	20	12	
(4) ⭐	Rank 7	Alliance 3	None	Inspire 2nd Place	60
	12	18	0	30	
🟦	Rank 6	Alliance 4	3rd Place	Inspire 3rd Place	54
	12	17	10	15	
🌵	Rank 5	Alliance 2	Finalist	None	52
	13	19	20	0	
✈️	Rank 4	Alliance 4	3rd Place	2nd Place Award	46
	13	17	10	6	
🏔️	Rank 8	Alliance 5	4th Place	1st Place Award	44
	11	16	5	12	
🌊	Rank 9	Alliance 6	None	1st Place Award	38
	11	15	0	12	
🌶️	Rank 18	Alliance 5	4th Place	2nd Place Award	34
	7	16	5	6	

Looking closer at these teams and their placement in the advancement order from Event 1:

(1) ⚡ achieved success across all aspects of the program (they "ran away with it" at this event). They achieved the maximum number of advancement points possible at a single event by seeding first, being on the number 1 alliance, winning the event, and winning the Inspire Award.

(2) Their alliance partner, 🐁, also had a strong showing despite a lower ranking in qualifications (qualifying 10th). Winning the event provided enough playoff advancement points to place them second overall at this event in advancement points.

(3) 🐬 has the 3rd overall highest number of advancement points and is several places above their alliance partner (🌵). This is because 🐬 seeded higher in qualifications and was recognized by the judges as an award winner.
  o While this team did not win the playoffs or the top awards, their well-rounded performance (Rank 2, Alliance 2, Award Winner) across the event is reflected in the final points outcome.

(4) ⭐ had a poor performance in the playoffs, but they still had the 4th highest total advancement points due to their strong showing in the other categories (qualification ranking, playoff alliance, and awards).

– While not a requirement (as shown by ⭐ , 🌵 , and 🌊), most teams who place highly in the advancement points order do so because they scored points in all available categories.

Event 2 Simulation (Anonymized)

As a contrast to event 1 shown above, this 23-team event lacks a single dominant team and instead shows how the advancement points model would affect a more balanced field.

Team "Number"	Qualifications	Playoff Alliance	Playoff Advancement	Team Judged Awards	Advancement Points
(1) 🖤	Rank 6	Alliance 4	4th Place	Inspire 1st Place	94
	12	17	5	60	
(2) 🥑	Rank 2	Alliance 2	Winner	1st Place Award	86
	15	19	40	12	
(3) 🦩	Rank 4	Alliance 1	Finalist	Inspire 2nd Place	83
	13	20	20	30	
🍕	Rank 7	Alliance 2	Winner	1st Place Award	83
	12	19	40	12	
🕷️	Rank 1	Alliance 1	Finalist	Inspire 3rd Place	71
	16	20	20	15	
🍄	Rank 5	Alliance 3	3rd Place	1st Place Award	53
	13	18	10	12	
⚽	Rank 12	Alliance 4	4th Place	1st Place Award	43
	9	17	5	12	
💎	Rank 3	Alliance 3	3rd Place	None	42
	14	18	10	0	
🥨	Rank 11	Alliance 6	None	1st Place Award	37
	10	15	0	12	
🐝	Rank 8	Alliance 5	None	None	27
	11	16	0	0	

Breaking down the results from Event 2:
 (1) Despite them only having a middle-of-the-pack playoff run from the number 4 alliance, 🖤's recognition as the winner of the Inspire Award lifts them up to the number one spot.
 (2) Behind them is 🥑, an award winner and captain of the winning alliance from the number 2 seed.
 (3) There is a tie at the 3rd spot between 🦩 and 🍕. The tie-breaker is in favor of 🦩 based on them earning more points in the Team Judged Awards category, which is the first tiebreaker after total advancement points. (The Competition Manual includes a table of tiebreakers that will be used when two or more teams have the same number of points.)
 – There were strong showings from the winning and finalist alliances, as they received recognition across the board on the competition field and from the judges, as teams from both alliances round out the top 5 spots.

Looking Forward - Potential Future Changes

A feature of this system is that these point values can be adjusted in the future. This will help ensure that as the quantity of teams and events continues to increase or if the capacity of the *FIRST®*

Championship changes, we can ensure the advancement model remains aligned with the *FIRST®* values.

While we believe this will be a significant improvement over the previous advancement model, there are still more areas we would like to improve. Specifically, teams compete over the course of an entire season while advancement only takes an individual event into consideration. A team may have had a fantastic year overall but then experienced some "bad luck" which ended their season. In the future we plan to explore a system where teams advance to the next level based on not just their performance at a single event but also taking into account their performance at previous events from the same season. In this way we would be able to better reward season long consistency and excellence.

Feedback can be shared with *FIRST* via customerservice@firstinspires.org or by contacting support.