

New Buffalo Robotics Team 5535: Lessons learned in 2015

This was New Buffalo High School's first year participating in the FIRST Robotics program. There were many things we did right this year, as well as mistakes that can be fixed for next year. Since this year's competition was about recycling, there wasn't much defense that a rookie team can do, but we were able to be successful in our first year of robotics.

One of the main lessons we learned this year was about the rulebook. There are many small and detailed rules that we sometimes overlooked, causing the team to have problems. For next year, we have decided that the robotics team must read the rulebook and guidelines thoroughly as possible. Another big mistake that we made this year was in buying parts. Our team was constantly running to the store to get specific parts. When we would try to order the parts online, they would be sold out. In order to fix this problem, we are going to keep track of all the parts of the robot as well as trying to buy parts the day of kickoff.

With a robotics team, not everyone is going to enjoy the coding, building, or website designing. One goal for next year would be to learn the skill sets of each student and put them in a more comfortable position on the robotics team. Another thing our team had trouble with would be coming up with a design. The design process took longer than expected, so finishing the robot at the end became a big rush. The goal would be to spend more time and finish a design as early as possible in order to buy parts and test the robot.

One technical problem we had was the laptop we were given. The laptop was quite slow and installing the programs were problematic. In the end, we were able to use a much faster mac laptop to code the robot. With our robotics team, we want students to be resourceful, to use

whatever is at hand in ways they might not have been designed for. We want students to be more creative, there will be more than one way to complete competition objectives most of the time. When all is said and done, these are the lessons we learned in our first year participating in the FIRST Robotics program.