

We mentors on 1501, follow this guideline for selecting drivers:

"We can train a monkey to drive a robot but we can't train it to be a leader."

The most important thing to realize is that the robot drivers are the most visible representatives of the team -- as such they must be ready and able to represent the team in the most positive way possible. Drivers will frequently find themselves "in the spotlight," not just at competition but at home as well. They must be able to comfortably communicate the values of the team.

In addition to their role as representative, the success of the team within the competition is directly dependent on the actions of the drivers. This is quite a lot of responsibility to be placed on the drivers, and makes their appointment an important decision.

We are evaluating students from day one to see if they will fit in leadership positions on the team. By the time driver selection comes around most of the mentors already have a pretty good idea who the leaders are on the team.

Here is the list of criteria used when selecting a driver:

**Strong Work Ethic** -- This is probably the most important criteria. We want students on the drive team who will work their butts off! Regardless of how good they are at driving the robot when the season starts, they will be much better with practice. If we have drivers with good work ethic, they will have take advantage of this practice...

**Good Communication** -- This is one of the most important skills anyone can have in life, and it (of course) applies here as well. The drivers need to be able to communicate with each other, with their coach, with the other teams they work with, with the team's tacticians, with the judges, and with everyone else who will want to talk to them. (which will be a large number of people, given they are the team's most visible representatives).

**Works well with Others** -- You can't last long if you're not a good teammate, and the drivers need to take this to the next level. Potential drivers are judged by how they work with their peers, and especially those younger than them on the team.

**Follows Coach's Direction Well** -- One of the driver's primary roles is to listen to the coach during a match, without question. Though there are plenty of opportunities for free thinking, the driver must follow the coach's direction during the match -- the coach will be focused on the overall match strategy and play, not just the team's individual robot, as such the coach will be able to make the best decision.

**Responsible** -- Drivers need to be able to handle the responsibility placed on them, and must be responsible students by nature. This one should be self-explanatory...

**Positive Role Model** -- The drivers will be looked up to by many people (team members, community members, members of other teams, etc) and they must act in a manner fitting of this.

**Focused** -- Drivers have a difficult enough job without worrying about other things. They need to be

focused on the job they've been assigned. We want drivers capable of focusing on this, focusing on doing their part, and avoiding distraction... You can't be a successful driver if you're worrying about the cute girl in the pit next to ours...

Maturity -- A driver must behave beyond his or her age to be successful.

Leadership -- Drivers must be able to lead their team, to make it greater than the sum of it's parts. They need to be able to rally their peers to do what is necessary for the good of the team.

Familiarity with the Robot -- the drivers and the robot should be almost "one" during the match. They need to be able to "feel" when something is wrong with the robot, and compensate accordingly. This is also important if the robot is damaged during competition and the driver must assist the pit crew in repair.

Good Under Pressure -- Anyone who's been there, knows how much pressure being a competition robot driver can be. It is important that when the lights are hot, the crowd is screaming, and things aren't going according to plan that the driver maintains his or her calm; this calm can be the difference between victory and defeat.

Good Strategic Thinking -- There are times where the driver must be able to act in the same manner as the coach. Drivers must be strong strategic thinkers, and be capable of strategic analysis of the game.

Ability to Drive the Robot -- This is last on the list and generally least important. We always test to make sure potential drivers have some capability with a joystick in hand. Initial practice sessions (with the full cadre of potential candidates present) serve also as tests of driver ability.

(the above was taken from JVN) in excerpts that follow our same mind set.