



FOR INSPIRATION & RECOGNITION OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

2020 **FIRST**[®] LEGO League MUSIC STRATEGY GUIDE

Introduction

Our goal is to provide a consistent musical atmosphere for all **FIRST**[®] events. Please review the Strategy guides prior to your event. These guides will help make your event sound “professional”.

Taking into account that music is a very subjective area, and everyone’s tastes are different, we try to stay in the genre of “sports music”, which encompasses every genre of music. Sports music has different atmospheric vibes, from walk-in music, to game-on music, to award music, and everything in between.

Our aim is to enhance the event by cheerleading, not only reacting. The guides will help identify areas that need audio attention and the choices in the playlists accurately reflect those needs.

The Objective

To create playlists of music that will not only be inspiring, motivating, and uplifting but one that will also create a positive atmosphere that promotes *Gracious Professionalism*[®] and *Coopertition*[®]. We accomplish this by identifying as many different situations and finding audio elements for them.

I recommend editing some of the music files [adding in/out points] to give a "tighter" flow to the sound, especially for music used during the actually match play. "GameON" music tracks should all be Two Minutes 30 seconds [2:30] in length.

The Game and the Pattern

Each **FIRST**LEGO League event main stage area is divided into Walk In, Practice Matches, Opening Ceremonies, more practice matches, Lunch, afternoon ceremonies [including team project presentations] Playoffs, finally the Awards presentation.

The other areas where the participants are include the "Pits", and the "Project Presentation" room, where teams present their Innovation Project to a panel of judges. The presentation lasts only 5 minutes, and is one of the main core elements to a **FIRST**LEGO League event.

We do not pipe in music to these areas, as it is important for everyone to hear as clearly as possible to these young participants, who may be at their first ever event outside their own schools.

Every year the organizers create a different "game" for the robots. But the pattern and process during matches is pretty much the same as the other **FIRST** leagues

"Team Intro's", *StartUps", "GameON", "Wait for Score", "InBetween" repeat.

During *FIRSTLEGO* League events, when one match is over, the other one starts immediately following the score. And the process is repeated. There are times where you may need to fill due to an unforeseen circumstance. Those are good times to play some crowd prompting songs, or as I call them Crowd Rallies.

At the end of the day, organizers usually go into Award mode, during which time the DJ plays an "Awards Song" after a team has been announced, and fades the music off when the last person "high-fives" the last judge in line.

TEAM INTROS - The "Emcee" introduces each team. Two teams play opposite each other on two fields placed north to south. Musically, I like to use good instrumentals especially upbeat karaoke versions of popular songs.

Run the song underneath the Emcee's introductions. When the Emcee gives the "thumbs Up", they are about to begin the countdown to the match, fade the music out of the mix. That way all the teams can hear without any distraction.

STARTUPS - Like anything else, sometimes the Robots are not ready after the Team Intro's, therefore it would be wise to have something on stand-by. These delays don't usually last very long, unless something out of the ordinary happens.

"Start Me Up" "Pump Up" songs fit perfectly here as well as some short stadium stings. The "We will Rock You" drum beating, hand-clapping foot-stomping Arena-type staples are perfect for this. Also "delay" or "connecting" type songs can work well too.

Many times the Emcee's adlib during the delays, either duck the music under them or fade it out completely and just listen for the "all thumbs up" cue that starts the match.

GAME ON- The robots get in place for their missions: It starts with a Countdown from the Emcee and a CHARGE HORN sound. The teams try to score as many mission points as they can. A cartoon-like sound effect signals the last 30 seconds and ends with a BUZZER sound. In a perfect world the tracks should be edited to 2:30 for maximum impact, however fading out at the end of the match is always a fallback... During the matches, the DJ does not have to worry about the game sound effects, as they are usually handled by a sideline referee/judge.

During the actual matches, it's imperative that the music does not overwhelm the Game announcer, it should be there as a backdrop.. I like using songs with an upbeat tempo, usually a BPM (beats per minute) within the 120 -140 range, and as many instrumentals as possible as the Emcee will be covering the "play-by-play". Usually EDM [Electronic dance music] music works well, and when it gets into playoff time, I tend to sway towards songs that building tension and suspense.

2020 PLAYLISTS

I have yet to come across a musical genre that does not work at a *FIRST* event. Even international songs have made it into our mix during an event. Our demographic is not only Elementary School Students; mentors, parents, family, and other spectators also make up the audience. Not everyone will be happy with every song that is played, but hopefully everyone will have a good time by the end of the event.

Most of the top hits, especially today's modern pop genre, have suspect lyrics and content, be cautious when playing this musical genre, as this is usually what most students are listening to.

**To play it safe, if a song has a "Radio-Edit" or "CLEAN version",
don't even listen to it, just don't play it.**

For instance from the Top 100 Billboard Pop music and Spotify for 2019 so far, I found a little over 75% would not be **FIRST** friendly. That's a lot of mining to get to the gems.

***Songs that use profanity in their lyrics, Please Don't Play,
Even if they're the most popular songs out there***

***Songs with content about Sex, Drugs, Bullying,
Taunting, or Violence should also be avoided***

Songs that are going to be used should be sorted into their prospective playlists, ranging from Walk In music all the way through to the Awards and Walk Out.

These guidelines and suggested playlists are meant to keep our events consistent with each other, however it does not preclude any event from playing music that is regional to that area. Keeping in mind always, that we are an **all-ages family sporting event**, and some very popular songs may not be appropriate to be played at a **FIRST** event, such as anything from Drake and Nicki Minaj or even John Travolta's & Olivia Newton Johns "Grease Lightning mega dance mix".

Please keep in mind that this season we will Not Be Able to Play ANY music from John Williams and the Star Wars franchises...

Therefore, no Star Wars Theme, Imperial March, Cantina Band etc..... Though classical composer Gustav Holst's The Planets Op.32 sounds eerily familiar to the Star Wars soundtrack, there is a recording of John Williams conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra rendition of the 1916 seven-movement suite. Basically teetering on the line, so out of respect to our sponsor this year, we should just avoid that track all together...In fact scratch off all the John Williams library for this year...

2020 THEME - *FIRST RISE*SM, powered by *Star Wars: Force for Change*, and *CITY SHAPER*SM

The 2019-2020 season is sponsored by Star Wars: Force for Change and it is setting out to inspire citizens of the galaxy to work together, strengthening and protecting the Force that binds us and creating a place where collaboration and collective wisdom can elevate new ideas and foster growth.

Each league has it's own theme under the *FIRST RISE* banner. The 2020 *FIRST* LEGO League game is called "City Shaper". You have the power to help the cities, towns, and places you call home reach new heights. This is your opportunity to lead our future forward—and up, together we rise.

Our cities and towns face big issues, like transportation, accessibility and even natural disasters. How can we shape a better future for everyone? It will take teamwork and imagination. The teams will challenge themselves on the field and try to outperform the others via strategy, communication and performance...to get a better idea it's recommended that you visit the **FIRST** website and watch the animation video...

WALK IN MUSIC

Doors open early morning, and the many of the participants are eager to get to their pits, while the supports & public find their way into their seats. The morning music mix feel should feature the theme of the season, if possible, and have an easy tempo and uplifting groove.

Most teams, mentors, staff, etc. have probably had long night's prior, therefore blasting high-octane music at this point may not be highly advised. But playing very slow music isn't the right choice here either. Current and popular songs would work best here; it eases everyone into a rhythm of familiarity and sets a positive tone for the day.

LUNCH MUSIC

Similar to walk in music, it's a part of the day that would be considered "downtime". The morning of competitions have concluded, and everyone is in need of a break. Not only do the robots need to recharge their batteries but also us humans. The feel again is slightly subdued and very easy going.

Usually the breaks last for approximately an hour, but it's good to have a little extra put aside. We've tended to go with songs about the theme and lean more to current music during the lunch break.

AMBIENT BACKGROUND

Prior to the afternoon matches there is a period where there may be no one in the "staging area" participating in any games or presentations. During this period it's best to keep the music on a different easier vibe. Easy listening, chill, and even upbeat folk songs would be apropos. It is very important for everyone to be able to hear each other; therefore the music should not be overbearing, loud or intrusive

OPENING CEREMONIES

This is when the fun begins. And this is when the music begins to "rev up" a notch. Intro music for the Emcee, and even some instrumental background music while the judges are being introduced works well here. Having short "walkup" songs [aka stings] can be used when guests are introduced either for a speech or acknowledgement.

The DJ should be able to go with the flow, as he will be reacting rather than leading, but it would all depend on the Emcee and time...if the event is running slightly behind, they may just want to plow through, and get to the matches.

During the opening ceremonies the National Anthems are also sung at this time, it is imperative to have the your back-up Anthems on stand-by just in case there are any technical/artist difficulties.

TEAM INTRODUCTIONS

The Emcee introduces each team prior to each match, at which time having a piece of music that adds a little to the announcements adds a nice touch, and keeps the atmosphere alive... I've always liked instrumental pieces as they compliment the announcer better.

All types of instrumentals work well here, even upbeat jazz. However it should be upbeat and motivational as each team is getting into the starting gate.

GAME ON - Qualifying.

During these matches, the Emcee is usually doing a play-by-play commentary over the sound system; therefore using songs with lyrics tend to get in a battle with the announcer.

My experience has been to use instrumental music usually with a heavy techno beat and as it gets closer to the playoffs I try to increase the tension with more dramatic and epic music.

GAME ON - Finals

These songs should now be more dramatic and intense as it builds up to reveal the champion. Over the years it seems to have become traditional to start the match with a **FIRST** music staple called "Sandstorm" by Darude.

AFTER MATCHES/INBETWEENERS

After the match ends, there is an anticipatory period as everyone awaits the results. However with **FIRSTLEGO** League, if the scores are not ready immediately, they may just move onto announcing the next match. The DJ would have to be alert to what is happening on the field

These songs are used to keep everyone's toes tapping but are not necessarily "interactive Crowd Prompt" songs. Once the score is given, there may be some time to play an upbeat song while waiting for the emcee to introduce the next match. In-betweeners or Crowd Rally songs can get the audience up dancing, clapping singing or just nodding their heads.

FIRST FAVES or CROWD RALLIES

While waiting for final ranking tabulations prior to Alliance selection or waiting for the Award ceremonies to begin, it's usually the best time to get in some **FIRST** favorites like Cotton-Eye Joe, Cha-Cha-Slide, Macarena or even newer songs like The Git Up or Dimitri Vegas' Crowd Control.

Also these songs work great during the playoffs and finals, during the timeouts. Cotton-Eye Joe is by far the most requested song ever at any **FIRST** event.

AWARDS CEREMONIES

After the games have concluded for each day, there is an Awards Ceremony to recognize those teams that have been chosen to receive them. The Emcee usually describes the award, and then the merits of the team and then the team(s) name. Everyone cheers at the announcement, and begins to clap as the teams make their way down to the floor area.

The music played here is usually the upbeat, energetic variety. Think celebratory songs from your favorite sports team.

The Awards given out at a **FIRSTLEGO** League event include the following:

- Champion's Award
- Mechanical Design Award
- Programming Award
- Strategy & Innovation Award
- Robot Performance Award
- Research Award
- Presentation Award
- Inspiration Award
- Teamwork Award
- Gracious Professionalism® Award
- Judges Award
- Rising Star Award
- Outstanding Volunteer Award
- Coach/Mentor Award.

SPECIAL MOMENTS/MENTOR DANCES

During **FIRST** events they occasionally have a mentors moment, where they all come out and do a dance of some sort. It's good to have a few of these on standby. Check out the song choices in the crowd rally section, but just in case, keep the Chicken Dance or the Macarena at the ready.

This year's big sing along hit is Old Town Road by Lil Nas ft. Billy Ray Cyrus and in the dance-along vein it's Blanco Brown's The Git Up...

REQUESTS

Everybody wants to hear their favorite music, regardless of where they are it seems. Because we play so many different types of music, and so many different songs, some guests think that it's an all-request radio station.

Some fail to realize that we are trying to create an atmosphere. Their intentions are great; they are probably having a good time and also want to contribute. If someone approaches, be as diplomatic as possible, most of the times they ask for something that is already on the playlist.

The problem that arises is that many DJ Booth locations are not in a fan-friendly accessible area, and safety issues become a major concern. Therefore, for the present time, **WE WILL NOT BE TAKING ANY REQUESTS** from the floor.

If there are songs that are not on the playlist, especially International or Regional songs, and you think they'd be a good fit with our presentation then send those requests via email to **requests@firstmusicdjs.com** and I will listen to them and slot them in when possible.

Conclusion

Pace yourself, it is a LONG day, and you will have to be on your toes the whole time. It's a non-stop show as far as the music is concerned. Hopefully I've programmed the music so they will be singing YOUR praises. It's a win-win for everybody!