

PUBLIC RELEASE

Slack

The main method through which individuals in the growingSTEMS organization communicate is Slack. Slack is a cloud-based software that is used by companies across the world to communicate. As a 501©(3) organization, growingSTEMS is provided with a [free Pro membership](#) for up to 250 individuals. More information about Slack can be found at [its website](#). You can access the growingSTEMS Slack website [here](#).

Channels

Slack is organized around channels, which are collections of messages related to a specific topic. These channel topics can be pretty varied. Channel names are usually a good indicator of what will be discussed in the channel and who will likely be interested in the channel. However, each channel also has a description that should clearly explain the channel's intended use.

Channel Names

For growingSTEMS, channel names may look like the following channels:

- frc_community_media
- frc_ipt_human-interface
- gSTEMS_it
- combat_travel

Looking at these names, you can tell that the first prefix indicates which part of growingSTEMS this channel relates to. gSTEMS is used as the prefix for channels that cover all of growingSTEMS, or for channels that don't fit in other areas. frc is used as the prefix for the FRC team, The RoboBees. combat is used as the prefix for those channels that relate to the combat robotics program.

The second prefix, if it exists, may relate to a further subset of that structure. For example, FRC has the second level prefix of community for its technical communities (such as media) and ipt for its many integrated product teams. A year (e.g., 2026) might be used to describe channels that are related to a specific event or program that repeats year-after-year. These second level prefixes, like the other portions of the channel name, are segmented by an underscore ("_") character.

Finally, the actual channel name will usually end out the overall name. These are often short, but descriptive. Multiple word channel names may be segmented out by a dash character ("-")..

Channels Visibility

Channels are typically broken into two types of channels, public and private. Anyone in the organization can join public channels but people need to be intentionally invited to join private. As

you participate in the various growingSTEMS programs, you will likely be invited to many private channels as the need becomes apparent. However, feel free to browse the public channels to better understand what is out there!

Channel Listing

A listing of the available channels in the growingSTEMS workspace can be found [here](#). As new channels are created, make sure to add them to this list. If you feel that you need access to a private channel, but you aren't in it, ask a mentor.

Direct Messages (DMs)

To ensure compliance with youth protection rules, students are heavily discouraged from using DMs. If necessary, these should be used only with three or more people, ideally at least two adults.

Beyond these youth protection rules, DMs hide information away so that only a few people can access them. When information is shared in a channel, it can be indexed and searched even years later. If it is in a DM, only those who are part of the DM group can access it. For students and mentors who may only be in the organization a short time, this means that information can easily be lost if not shared in a channel.

Rather than sharing information in DM, consider if it would be a better fit for an already existing channel. If not, consider if it would make sense for a channel to be created to store that information.

Notifications

If you have it set up correctly, Slack should notify you (through your phone or computer) any time a channel that you are in receives a new message. If you are in a lot of channels, this can get old quite fast! It is suggested that you mute any channels that you don't need to continuously monitor. Just make sure to check Slack regularly. It is highly recommended that you do not mute the main program channels (e.g., general, frc_general), so as to not miss any important information.

Mentions are a direct way to draw someone's attention to a particular message even when you send that message in a channel that involves a lot of teammates. If you mention someone in a channel, that person will receive a notification (if that person is in that channel, otherwise Slack will ask if you want to invite that person to the channel) and they will be able to see the message easily by visiting the "Mentions & reactions" tab on the sidebar. Mentions can be used to get someone's attention even if they have muted a channel.

General Slack Tips

- Be mindful of the channel's purpose. Each channel is designated for a specific purpose. Although it may be tempting to share something interesting you saw online, remember why the channel was created. Ask yourself, "Is this going to contribute to the purpose of the channel, or should I post it in a different channel?"

- If you are new to a channel, take some time to review the older messages. You will get a sense of the communication style and what is acceptable in the group.
- Think about how to “chunk” your long paragraphs of text into shorter individual messages and post those chunks separately and in sequence. That way, someone can comment or react to something specific that you said without slogging through the whole uninterrupted paragraph. It's a quicker and easier read! If you really need to put the whole paragraph into one post, you can use Shift + Return to create line breaks.
- You can always edit/delete something you have submitted by clicking on the three-dot icon in your message and selecting the option from the dropdown menu.
- Threads are the best way to keep track of discussions and reduce noise. Using threads allows members to ask questions or share ideas without additional unread indicators appearing for everyone else in the channel.
- Want to post the same message in multiple spaces? Use the “share” or “forward” button instead of copying and pasting.

Things to Avoid in Slack

- Try to avoid using Slack to conduct lengthy or detailed communications, unless that information is intended to be accessed for the long-term. Even then, it might make sense to save and manage that information on our Google Workspace or on this wiki.
- Avoid having emotionally charged conversations over Slack. This is best done in-person or over Google Meet. A lot of nuance can be lost in written communication, and this should often include some type of face-to-face interaction.

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