Judges' Guide

Rev. 2027.0 - **DRAFT**

THE JUDGES' OATH:

I promise that I shall officiate in each BattleBots Tournament with complete impartiality and fairness, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of the sport.

Copyright ©2026 BattleBots, Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction

At the end of a Match, if more than one Bot has not been counted out, the winner is determined by a vote of the Judges.

Judging a BattleBots competition is challenging in that it requires a thorough knowledge of the rules, keen concentration and, above all, impartiality. Since matches involve a wide variety of BattleBot designs, a Judge must maintain an open and flexible perspective on each BattleBot's condition and combativeness.

The primary purpose of this document is to define and explain the criterial for judging a BattleBots competition. However, judging always involves certain amount of subjectivity. An additional goal of this document is to provide an element of consistency among all the Judges by answering some common questions and issues that come up about judging.

Judging Criteria

Per section 7.7 of the BattleBots Tournament Rules, a BattleBot's performance is based on the evaluation of two criteria. Each of the criteria has a maximum point value, as follows:

Damage	4 points
Engagement	5 points

Based on their observations before, during and after a Match, each Judge divides the points between the two competitors. The competitor with the most total points is that Judge's choice for the winner. The winner is then determined by the decision of a majority of the Judges.

This scoring system differs from the previous 3-criteria system. The intent of the new criteria is to allow the Judges to focus more on the bot's actions during the match, and only evaluate the damage after the match is over.

The Damage and Engagement criteria are designed around the principles:

- A winning Bot should actively engage in combat, not just try to survive it.
- A winning Bot will take the fight to their opponent.
- Damage matters when it changes how a Bot approaches the fight.

Each of the two criteria is described in more detail below. Study the questions and answers for suggestions on how to judge specific situations.

Copyright© 2026 BattleBots Inc.

Damage

Damage is defined as the change in each Bot's structure and capabilities during the match.

Since Bots could have some damage from previous fights, Judges should make a note of any pre-existing damage prior to the start of the match. Judges should also note if the pre-existing damage would prevent the Bot from reaching the maximum damage grade against its opponent. Typically, this will only apply to drive system functionality.

After the end of the match, the Judges note any additional damage compared to any damage before the match.

Damage Tiers

The amount and type of Damage is categorized into five different levels ("Tiers"). These are:

- **A Tier**: No damage at all, cosmetic damage, or minor damage to purely ablative armor.
  - If the damage was impacting the fight in any meaningful way it doesn't belong in A Tier.
- **B Tier**: Significant damage to purely ablative armor; minor damage to mobility systems that do not noticeably hinder movement; damage to structure or armor that does not significantly hinder function.
  - Mobility Examples: Wheels with gouges/chunks missing. For Bots with four or more drive wheels, a missing wheel that does not negatively impact a Bot's ability to control its direction of movement and does not result in active or passive weapon features being more difficult to use.
  - Structure/Armor Examples: Gouges taken out of wedges/armor panels that don't reduce their defensive potential or result in sufficient warping to impact other systems. A small portion of a Bot's overall number of forks being damaged or removed so long as the overall fork system operates as normal.
- **C Tier**: Damage to the mobility system or weapon system(s) that moderately hinders function, or damage that significantly impairs the integrity of a Bot's structure or the effectiveness of its armor.
  - Mobility Examples: Wheel or drive system damage that had noticeably impaired the Bot's ability to make controlled movements (particularly, to drive in a straight line) when compared to its ability at the start of the match. Up and down movement of Bot when moving due to a damaged wheel. A self-righting mechanism being rendered non-functional.
  - Weapon Examples: A spinning weapon imbalance that impairs its ability to reach a reasonable speed to be effective; a hammer with the loss of a hammer's head; a functional lifting arm with a damaged lifter tip; a non-operational active weapon system on a Bot with at least one still fully functional active weapon.
  - Structure/Armor Examples: Large gouges in armor, removal or damage of wedge(s) and/or fork(s); significant chassis deformation that affected the Bot's mobility or weapon use.
- **D Tier**: Significant operational impairment of either the drive or weapon systems (but not both).
  - Mobility Examples: Inability to move in a controlled fashion in different directions; crab walking (appears to be translating via one drive side); very slow movement.
  - Weapon Examples: All weapon system elements were rendered completely non-functional.
- **E Tier**: Significant impairment of both the drive and weapon systems
  - See D Tier for examples.

Notes:

To qualify as "purely ablative" armor, the armor must be clearly designed to serve the sole purpose of being damaged or destroyed to absorb damage to protect the main structure of the Bot. Decorative attachments do not qualify as ablative armor but may be classified as cosmetic damage.

Copyright© 2026 BattleBots Inc.

For Bots that rely partially on their weapon systems for mobility, damage to the weapon system such that it impacts their mobility will be considered damage to both systems.

For determining the damage type, wedges, plows, forks, and other similar non-active elements are considered to be part of the structure or armor, not weapons. Flame emitting devices are also not considered weapons.

Damage Matrix

Use the chart below to allocate the **4** Damage points, depending on the Tier values for each Bot.
To use the chart, select the Tier for Bot 1, then move across to the cell below the Tier for Bot 2. The first number in the cell is the Damage score for Bot 1; the second number is the score for Bot 2.

		Bot 2				
		Tier A	**Tier B**	**Tier C**	**Tier D**	**Tier E**
Bot 1	**Tier A**	2-2	2-2	3-1	4-0	4-0
	Tier B	2-2	2-2	2-2	3-1	4-0
	Tier C	1-3	2-2	2-2	2-2	3-1
	Tier D	0-4	1-3	2-2	2-2	2-2
	Tier E	0-4	0-4	1-3	2-2	2-2

For Multi-Bots the damage level should be averaged between all segments that participated in the match. If the average lands between grades the final Tier assignment value should be rounded down (e.g., if between C and D, assign C).

Damage Considerations

Judging Damage before and after the match requires some understanding of BattleBot functionality:

- Try not to be unduly influenced by highly visual damage that doesn't affect a Bots functionality, effectiveness or defensibility. A visible gash in a Bot's armor may only minimally reduce the armor's functionality. Loss of a large, non-moving spike may only have a minor effect on the Bot's offensive capabilities.
- Look for damage that may not be visually striking but affects the functionality of a Bot. Some examples:

> A small bend in a lifting arm or spinner weapon may dramatically affect its functionality by preventing it from having its full range of motion.

> A wobbly wheel indicates that it is bent and will not get as much traction.

> Cuts or holes <u>through</u> the armor means there is possibly more Damage inside

Often, the best way to judge Damage is to observe how the Bot functions before and after the damage occurred.

Damage FAQ

Q: How should self-inflicted damage be judged?

Copyright© 2026 BattleBots Inc.

A: Self-inflicted damage (such as driving over the Kill-Saws) should be considered to be no different than damage caused by an opposing Bot.

Q: What if the Bot is smoking at the end of the match?

A: Obvious amounts of white smoke (possibly accompanied by flames) coming from a Bot is likely due to batteries or a motor-controller overheating. Even if the smoking and flame stops, the batteries or controller may have lost functionality, and thus such smoke may indicate "Damage" that should be watched for during the post-match functional display.

Q: What do flames indicate?

A: If the flames are accompanied by considerable smoke, the Bot may have been damaged. If a Bot with a flame system shows continuous flames coming from the interior of the Bot (but little smoke), it probably indicates that the propane storage tank has been damaged. In either situation you should watch to see if there are functional impacts to the bots performance to determine how it impacts damage scoring.

Q: What about damage due to an opponent's flame system?

A: Damage from flame systems is treated the same as damage from any other source since the criteria does not require a specific source be identified.

Q: What is the difference between a self-righting mechanism and a lifter?

A: A lifter is clearly designed to interact with the opposing robot while a self-righting mechanism is designed such that it will be unlikely to directly interact with the opposing robot.

Engagement

Engagement is about which Bot takes charge of the flow of the match. Robots that score well in engagement will bring the fight to their opponent.

Engagement Examples

Bot actions that positively contribute to Engagement

- Attacking the opponent using the Bot's weapon(s)
- Pinning the opponent
- Getting the opponent stuck-high centered
- Chasing the opponent
- Inverting the opponent if that significantly impacts the opponent's ability to engage

Bot actions that negatively contribute to Engagement

- Staying in one area waiting for the opponent to attack
- Getting pinned by the opponent
- Getting stuck or high-centered
- Continually fleeing from the opponent
- Getting inverted by the opponent such that it limits the Bot's ability to engage
- Using passive methods (e.g., ramming) to attack the opponent for an extended period without using a functional active weapon

Actions that are neutral with respect to Engagement

- Brief disengagements to prepare, reset, or spin-up the Bot's weapon
- Self-righting attempts

Copyright© 2026 BattleBots Inc.

- Inversion that does not impact the Bot's ability to fight
- Attempted but missed attacks
- One Bot moving more slowly than its competitor

For scoring Engagement in fights involving Multi-Bots you should look at how the entry as a whole influenced the flow of the match.

Engagement Scoring

The point scores for Engagement are also dependent on the portion of the match each Bot controlled the "flow" of the fight. The table below describes the general scoring emphasis.

Points		
Bot	Opponent	Description
0	5	The Bot spent most or all of the match avoiding any engagement with the opponent
1	4	The Bot spent a large portion of the match avoiding any engagement The Bot had only a minor effect on the flow of the match
2	3	The Bot spent a slightly smaller portion of the match dictating the flow of the fight The Bot had slightly less effect on directing the flow of the match
3	2	The Bot spent a slightly larger portion of the match dictating the flow of the fight The Bot consistently maintained a slight edge on directing the flow of the match
4	1	The Bot spent a large portion of the match dictating the flow of the fight The Bot consistently maintained a significant edge on directing the flow of the match
5	0	The Bot spent most or all of the match dictating the flow of the fight

Note that since 5 points are assigned for Engagement, both Bots cannot have the same Engagement score.

Engagement FAQ

Q: Should avoiding contact with an opponent always count against a Bot's Engagement?

A: Not necessarily. If a Bot is moving away from its opponent in order to get its weapon ready for attack, moving away should not count against Engagement. Examples are when a spinner-bot is spinning-up, or when a pincer-bot is repositioning its weapon. However, if the Bot continues to avoid its opponent when the weapon appears to be ready, that should count against its Engagement.

Q: Which shows more Engagement: Circling an opponent in an attempt to find an approach angle, or staying mostly stationary while keeping a weapon aimed at the circling Bot?

A: Actively moving around searching for an attack angle is considered more Engagement.

Q: Do pushing and ramming count as Engagement?

A: Pushing or ramming an opponent Bot should count somewhat toward Engagement. However, pushing or ramming should count for much less than attacking using an active weapon. Pushing or ramming for an extended period without utilizing a still functional active weapon will count negatively toward engagement.

Q: Does using a flame count as Engagement?

A: Flame systems are not considered to be a weapon and using a flame does not count as Engagement.

Copyright© 2026 BattleBots Inc.

Multi-Bots

A "Multi-Bot" is a group of two or more Bots from the same Team that operate together as a single "Bot". All of the Bots must have a weapon capable of doing damage to an opponent.

A point to keep in mind is that each Bot that is part of a Team's Multi-Bot will usually have its own Operator.

Configurations

Many configurations of Multi-Bots are possible, but most fall into one of three categories:

- A larger Bot with a weapon, and one or more smaller weaponed Bots.
- Two medium-sized Bots with weapons.
- Multiple smaller Bots with weapons

Rumbles

Judging for Rumbles is slightly different than for the one-on-one matches since, if two or more Bots are functioning at the end, there are no "Knock-Outs".

During a Rumble, a Bot may appear to be temporarily unresponsive, then become functional again. This may be a mechanical malfunction, or it may be a "fake" by the Operator to lure other Bots. In either case, this should negatively affect the Bot's Engagement score.

Keeping Track of Bots

A competition Match can be fast-moving and chaotic, with potentially several Bots moving around. Some BattleBots are very similar looking. You do not want, at the end of a Match between two flipper-Bots, to be uncertain which Bot is which.

It's a really good idea to use written notes during each match. Some suggestions:

- When the Bots are entering the Arena, draw simple pictures of them along with their names. Note distinguishing marks, features, colors and especially any existing Damage. For Multi-Bots make sure to clearly identify the Multi-Bot segments in your notes.
- Keep track of Engagement from the beginning of the Match until the very end. Don't be unduly influenced by what happens at the end of the Match. These records can be as simple as hash marks made as the fight progresses.

Judges' Responsibilities

In certain cases, the Judges may need to confer with each other, or with other BattleBots personnel.

- Judges may discuss among themselves technical or other information about the identity, starting square color, or features of one or more of the competing BattleBots. They may also discuss robot actions or other Arena events that occurred during the Match. However, Judges must not discuss their final scoring values with one another until after their decisions have been publicly displayed.
- If a Judge has a question for a contestant, they should try first to relay their question through a Match Steward. If that is not satisfactory, the Judge(s) may discuss the matter directly with the Contestant(s). Any time a Contestant is being questioned, at least one member of the opposing Team must be present as an observer.
- At the end of a Match, but prior to the Arena doors being opened, the judges may request one or both Teams demonstrate the current functionality (or lack thereof) of their Bot's mobility system and weapon system(s).

Copyright© 2026 BattleBots Inc.

- If a Judge believes that one Team's BattleBot is violating a Tournament Rule, they should inform a BattleBots official of the violation as soon as practical, or else immediately after the Match has completed. Once the official has been notified, the Judge has no further responsibility in the matter.
- Judges have to be familiar with the Appeal process defined in section 2.4.7 of the Tournament Rules. During an Appeal, Judges can confer only with the Match Steward regarding the Appeal, and should avoid contact with any members of the Teams involved in the Appeal.
- Any attempt by a Team to influence, harass or otherwise interfere with a Judge or the judging process should be immediately reported to a BattleBots Officer.

Copyright© 2026
BattleBots Inc.