As veterans of the VEX Robotics program, 1489D has a lot of varied experiences. Most of the members on our team have gone to worlds, and all members plan to be at worlds in 2013. As 2nd and 3rd year returners our team knows how hard it is to start off with new tasks every year, especially when you are new to VEX. Here are the tips we have found useful, and the suggestions to live by when involved with VEX.

1. **Always read the rule packet before anything else.**

Every year our team starts out reading, highlighting, and annotating the rule packet. To be a good player, you have to know the game. We see so many teams, even within our school, who jump straight to building the robot, without as much as a glance at the rules. Although they may have a great robot, the usually choke at competition, because they didn't know this or that.

2. **Wear your safety glasses all the time!**

One of the main things that our coach and teacher stresses is wearing safety glasses. Although they can get fogged and scratched, it is much better than getting some metal shavings in your eye or having a spark fly in your eye from the grinder. Just make sure that you like the pair of safety glasses that you wear, because you will be wearing them a lot. You know that you have found the right pair of safety glasses when you wear them home… apparently I have found the right pair. Although safety glasses may not be a trending fashion statement, they are very necessary. After all you need eyes to build a robot!

3. **Stay organized.**

It is always easier to work in a clean environment. Besides a clean environment is a safe one! Keeping organized is one of the best ways to guarantee that you will never lose anything. Recently we constructed custom inserts for our cabinet and made lollipop holders (we are all very hungry, but our team captain gives them to us when he wants us to stop talking, smart on his part) to utilize all of the space, and we needed it! We were always the last to clean up, and our cabinet was a mess. We are now organization nation!

4. **Simple robot design.**

Especially if you are new!!! You really need to start simple and work your way to being more complex. If you are not a builder try not to think of a robot design that is too extravagant, remember your idea needs to be built and programmed.

5. **Have fun!**

The best and most productive robotics teams are teams that make the best of every practice. Make each practice more productive than the last. In doing this the pressure and stress will be lifted, naturally making robotics more fun!