

Design Contest
ME72 Engineering Design Laboratory
Fall & Winter Terms, 2006-07
Cautionary Note

One aspect of the class that can become detrimental is the natural level of competitiveness that an event of this sort can create. While a certain level of competitiveness is valuable, and even beneficial, too much can clearly create problems. The spirit of the class is to focus on learning how to be a better engineering designer, not to win the contest at all costs. Your evaluation (grade) is very strongly related to what you learn about design from the class, how you put that learning into practice, how well you work with your teammate, how well you communicate your design work to the instructors, and will take into account your engineering design abilities before you start. Your grade is essentially totally independent of your (device's) actual performance in the final contest. One of the primary reasons for this decoupling of grades and contest performance is that luck plays an unavoidable and significant role in the outcome of the final contest. In past years, designs that have gotten "A"s and even "A+"s have been eliminated in the first round. While you should be serious about your learning and designing, don't take the contest so seriously that you become distraught when you lose.

The final contest is a chance to show off to your friends all of the hard work that you have put into learning about engineering design. The final contest is not a chance to determine who is the best engineer or designer. Even all of your grades from all 4 years at Caltech are only an imperfect indicator of your true abilities. Don't put too much emphasis on this one event in this one class.