

# VOICES of Virginia

Adapted, with permission, for

## *North Carolina Odyssey of the Mind<sup>®</sup> Coaches' Guide 2014 - 2015*

by Lisa Love

(With the help of ideas, suggestions, comments, and feedback from many coaches, team members, alumni, judges, and regional directors. Thank you to Odyssey participants everywhere, for your creativity and enthusiasm!)



### Disclaimer

These pages are produced by, and are the sole responsibility of, Virginia Opportunities In Creativity ExplorationS. The information in these pages is not reviewed by Creative Competitions, Inc., which is the sole and final authority regarding the Odyssey of the Mind<sup>®</sup> program and problems. The contents of these pages are authoritative for information regarding procedures and activities of VOICES only. The content of these pages is, for the most part, universal. However, information about specific Long-Term problems, clarifications, membership requirements, and other official information is available from Creative Competitions, Inc. Each membership should also note that your individual region may have procedures unique to your region. It is the responsibility of your membership school to be familiar with regional information and guidelines.

**Note: This manual does not include all Program Guide wording changes for 2014-2015. There are always changes and new rules each year. All coaches (and officials) must read the new Program Guide very carefully!**

Some changes for 2014-2015 (in bold italics) that may be of note:

Program Guide, Page 18: ***Each member will receive email confirmation of membership number. (No membership cards will be mailed.) Log in to the Member's area and print membership status. Teams must show this printout when registering for official competitions.***

Program Guide, Page 39: ***Required scoring items must be solved by the team and presented live, but do not have to be created live. For example, the team may create a computer image for score, but it must appear during the 8-minute performance. Items such as a backdrop that appear in a prerecorded video will not be scored unless they appear in the live performance.***

Program Guide, Page 41: ***The combined measurement of any commercially produced battery, battery pack or charger is limited to 15". All batteries must be available for checking by Officials except ones in items such as cell phones and computers.*** (Specifics about battery types have been removed.)

Program Guide, Page 42: ***Teams must secure written permission from their Association Director or CCI to sell trademarked items and cannot sell the items online, i.e. ebay.***

Program Guide, Page 48: Cost exempt status of crutches, wheelchairs, etc., is clarified. ***If an aid to a team member is used as a device in the performance, cost must be included on Cost Form.***

Program Guide, Page 54: Definition of **Stage Set** has changed to ***"All immoveable elements on the performance site."***

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## ***Overview of Coaching Responsibilities (or, What Have I Gotten Myself Into?)***

Volunteering to coach Odyssey of the Mind is an adventure. With some preparation it will be an adventure you will always treasure. Your job, essentially, is to help guide 5-7 creative students to learn to solve difficult problems, while allowing all ideas and solutions to be the students' own. So... how do you get them to learn things without telling them answers?? And what, exactly, happens at an Odyssey of the Mind meeting, anyway? And what HAVE you gotten yourself into? This guide is intended to answer some of these questions. Above everything else, Odyssey of the Mind should be FUN: fun for the students and fun for you! Every moment will not be fun, of course, but if your team and you are not having a good time most of the time, you need to evaluate what has taken the fun away. Being creative, getting to do things all by themselves, figuring out difficult challenges, working out how to solve problems together ... these should all be exciting for the team. And watching them do this should be fun for YOU!

YOUR BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:

- \* **Find a time & place for the team to meet; supervise ALL meetings and ensure safety of team members**

Most teams meet for 1-3 hours per week; this is entirely up to the individual team, however! Some teams meet in homes, some meet in schools or churches -- this is also entirely up to the team. If you cannot be present at a meeting, make sure another responsible adult supervises the team. Note: A Division 3 team may have a team captain who is in charge of meetings, but must still have an adult responsible for the team.

- \* **Help the team learn how to read and understand the Long-Term problem, and brainstorm solutions**

See the sections of this handbook about the Long-Term problem and brainstorming. Encourage the team to read the problem, read the problem, and then read the problem some more! Then read the clarifications!

- \* **Teach the team how to solve spontaneous problems; teach strategies for doing spontaneous**

Practice some spontaneous at every meeting. This will help them learn to solve the Long-Term problem, as well as teach them the skills to do well in spontaneous at the tournament. There is NO such thing as Outside Assistance in Spontaneous ... you may help the team in any way to learn this process.

- \* **Avoid giving "outside assistance" for Long-Term & Style solutions; help keep parents from doing so**

ALL ideas and the implementation of those ideas MUST be the team's own. The team will know if you have done something for them ... and will feel less pride inside as a result. Look at the "parents' page" on the state web site and print out a copy for your parents. This page outlines what parents may and may not do.

- \* **Keep the team on task**

Have a calendar - write interim goals and mark the tournament date. Have the team make lists of what needs done and who will do it.

- \* **Teach the team skills they need, or help find someone who can teach them; help them obtain materials**

Sewing, woodworking, welding, acting, writing music, dancing --- any skills the team requires, you, or someone else, may teach, IF you do not apply it directly to any problem solution! The team must decide on the materials they wish to purchase, but you (or a parent) may take them to the store(s).

\* **Be certain that forms are filled out by the team, and meet registration is sent in on time**

You must register for the Regional Tournament with your Regional Director. The team must have copies filled out of Outside Assistance Form, Cost Form and Style Forms. Division 1 and Primary coaches may fill out the forms, but only using the exact words dictated by the team. See the section in this Handbook about forms.

\* **Help find officials for the tournament**

Ask co-workers, neighbors, relatives, but please, try to help find enthusiastic adults (over 18 years of age) to evaluate your own team and all the others. We cannot have tournaments without officials! Look for judge application to come from your tournament director. NOTE: A parent or relative who serves as an official will NOT get to judge (or even see) your own team ... we ask our officials to score teams with whom they have no close affiliation.

\* **Encourage the team to work together; encourage them to meet their goals**

Team building activities -- even just going bowling together, or going for ice cream -- can help the group learn to appreciate each other's talents and to work better together, which is key to a team's success.

\* **Help get the team to the tournament, with props, supporters, and self-confidence in their solution**

Ideally, one or two team members will be in charge of making a list of everything that must get to the tournament. But you, as the adult, should also double check. (A fix-it kit is good to bring along, but the team should put this together!)

YOUR MOST VALUABLE TOOLS FOR DOING THIS ARE:

An **appreciation** for creative young minds (because this is NOT a quiet, structured activity most of the time!)

A sense of **humor** (because Murphy's Law prevails)

A copy of the **rules** in the CCI **Program Guide** (because this is the team's ultimate authority, superseded only by Long Term Problem Limitation and Clarifications)

**Spontaneous problems** to practice (found in many books, and on the internet)

Some **guidelines** (such as sections of the CCI Program Guide and this handbook, because everyone needs a little reinforcement sometimes)

Your regional **coaches' training** (because we are all in this together ... for the kids!)

**Supportive parents** (because the team needs help with transportation, snacks, and encouragement)

**Clarifications and clarification forms** (because that is the only way to ask whether a solution is "legal" if your team isn't sure, and *clarifications take precedence over all other rules*)

**Websites** all over the country dealing with Odyssey of the Mind, starting with <http://www.odysseyofthemind.com> (but be VERY careful of discussions that might be Outside Assistance!)

**Food** (because teams will be much happier when snacks are involved)

## ***COMPONENTS OF ODYSSEY OF THE MIND***<sup>®</sup>

Teams will be scored on each of the following three components:

*Long-Term Problem Solution*

*Style*

*Spontaneous Problem Solving*

In addition, the team may not be able to successfully solve the problem without checking *Clarifications* at [www.odysseyofthemind.com](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com). Clarifications explain some rules or clarify parts of the problems. (See page 29 of this handbook for further information about Clarifications.)

**THE LONG-TERM PROBLEM** is one of 6 written each year by Creative Competitions, Inc. Grades K-2 have one problem available. They perform for demonstration purposes only. Divisions I, II, III, and IV are competitive and have 4-5 problems from which to choose. (See next section for age divisions). The Long-Term Problems for this year are:

Problem 1 (Vehicle):	Runaway 'Train'	(Divisions I, II, and III)	Cost limit: \$145 US
Problem 2 (Technical):	Experiencing Technical Difficulties	(Divisions I, II, III and IV)	Cost limit: \$145 US
Problem 3 (Classics):	Pandora's Box	(Divisions I, II, III, and IV)	Cost limit: \$125 US
Problem 4 (Structure):	Lose Your Marbles	(Divisions I, II, III, and IV)	Cost limit: \$145 US
Problem 5 (Performance):	Silent Movie	(Divisions I, II, III and IV)	Cost limit: \$125 US
Primary:	Wacky Weather Warning	(Grades K-2)	Cost limit: \$125 US

The Long-Term Problem solution is presented in front of an audience and a team of officials. All team members may perform in the Long-Term solution. The Long-Term Judging Officials assign a score to each team's performance. The Long-Term Score's possible maximum is 200 points, which accounts for approximately 57% of the total possible points. Each performance is 8 minutes in length. Some problems require that the team's performance be stopped at the end of 8 minutes. Some problems will allow performance to continue, but will assess an "overtime" penalty if the team goes beyond the 8 minutes. An official timekeeper with a stopwatch will monitor the time. Each Long-Term Problem has specific criteria the team must meet. Read the problem, read it again, then read it again. Have the team read it several times. Then have them read it again. The general emphasis of the problem can be found in "Section A" of each problem. The specific rules and limitations can be found in "Section B". The performance area is described in "Section C". Scoring criteria are listed in "Section D". "Section E" outlines possible penalties, if a team should neglect any rules or limitations. "Sections G and H" tell what will be provided by the tournament director and what the team themselves must bring in addition to the problem solution.

**STYLE** is a part of the Long-Term performance. Each problem has at least one required "STYLE ELEMENT" which every team must have scored. In addition, each team may choose 2-3 other elements to have scored. Each of the 4 elements is worth up to 10 points, and the "overall effect" of these elements is also worth 10 points. Thus the Style Score's possible maximum is 50 points, which accounts for approximately 14% of the total possible points. Separate officials score the style portion of the problem. Teams may choose "free choice" style elements early in their approach to the Long-Term problem, or may wait until they are nearly finished to choose. **The primary thing to remember is that anything scored in the Long-Term portion of the problem may NOT be chosen to be scored for style.** "Section F" of each problem outlines the mandatory style elements for each problem.

**SPONTANEOUS PROBLEM SOLVING** is the third component of an Odyssey team's performance. The team enters a room with no audience and no coaches ... only the team members and officials. The team is told the type of problem, and given one minute to determine which 5 team members will participate. (On a team of 7, two team members will be observers only, or may choose to leave the room.) The three types of spontaneous problems are:

VERBAL  
HANDS-ON  
COMBINATION (VERBAL HANDS-ON)

The problem the teams are given will be one they have never seen before (unless the coach has been clairvoyant!) However, strategies for the types of problems are similar and teams should practice all kinds of problems prior to the tournament. Scoring will vary according to the problem, (high score for the day could be 50 or 500), but the maximum scaled score will be 100 points, which accounts for approximately 29% of the total possible points. Separate officials score the spontaneous portion of the tournament.

See the separate section of this handbook for detailed information about Spontaneous, with examples of problems and strategies for solving them. You can also check out state Odyssey of the Mind websites for sample problems.

The basic types of problems involve the following:

**VERBAL:** This will be a problem read to the team and asking them to think of answers to a question, such as "name things that have a base." They will brainstorm (usually silently) for one or two minutes (usually one – the judge will specify) and then the team must give responses. Score will be based on whether the answers are common ("A lamp has a base") or creative ("Rules are the basis of good behavior"). Some method will be given for determining in which order the team members give answers (they might go consecutively around a table, or they might flip cards, for example.) They may not repeat an answer, nor may a team member skip his or her turn. ("If one member of the team is stuck, the team is stuck.")

**HANDS-ON:** This will be a problem read to the team, and then, usually, given to them in hard copy to look at while they work on a solution. They will be asked to do something with a set of given materials. They might be given some period of time to plan the solution and then some period of time to work. Or they might just be given one period of time to solve the problem. Hands-on problems might ask them to build something, create a picture of some kind, get objects into a target area, arrange elements in a certain order and so forth. The team may or may not be allowed to talk during any part of the solution time.

**COMBINATION:** This will be a problem, usually with two parts, that is read to the team one part at a time. In Part 1, they may be asked to make or build something. In Part 2, they may be asked to give verbal responses about what they have made. It is a combination of Verbal and Hands-On.

It is extremely important that every team learn strategies for each type of problem.

It is also extremely important that teams and coaches understand that on tournament day, a team should not discuss the problem they were given until the end of the competition day, not even to tell the coach the type of problem they had. And after competition, no one may discuss the problems outside their own homes until after all competitions end for that Odyssey year!

## ***BASIC MATHEMATICS (Age Divisions, Scoring, and Other Important Numbers)*** DIVISION GUIDELINES

Each team must compete in the division for which the team (considering ALL members and the division qualification of each one) qualifies. Each team may compete in that division ONLY. Individual team members may qualify for a lower division than the one in which the team must compete. But all team members must be considered when determining the one, correct division for the team.

In order to determine the division for which the team (as a whole) qualifies, you must first determine the division qualification for each individual on the team. Then, you must determine the team's division, based on the eligibility of all the team members.

### DETERMINING THE ELIGIBILITY OF EACH TEAM MEMBER:

To determine the division eligibility for each team member, calculate the division for which each team member qualifies, based on his or her grade (see below).

All long-term problems (except Primary) are open to Divisions I, II and III. All problems except Primary and Problem 1 are open to Division IV. Grades K-2 are considered Primary Division, but are also considered Division I, if they choose to solve on of the 5 competitive problems available to Division I instead of the Primary Problem. Primary Division is exhibition only and one problem is open to these teams who perform at local tournament but do not advance in competition.

For all U.S. teams:

- \* Any team member in Grades K-2 is considered Primary, OR may compete in Division I.
- \* Any team member in Grades K-5 qualifies for Division I.
- \* Any team member who is in Grades 6-8 qualifies for Division II.
- \* Any team member who is in grades 9-12 qualifies for Division III.
- \* Collegiate level is Division IV. All team members must have a high school diploma or its equivalent and be enrolled in at least one course at a two- or four-year college or university. High school students taking accredited courses do not qualify for Division IV. Team members do not have to attend the same college.

Thus, if you have a team with six team members in grade 5 and one team member in grade 6, that team would be considered a Division II team, as one individual member qualifies the team for Division II. The team may NOT compete in Division I, as the 6<sup>th</sup> grade team member does not qualify for Division I.

The Program Guide has further examples and clarification of divisions on page 17 ("Age Divisions").

The Program Guide also explains who may purchase membership and the number of teams a membership may enter into competition. Schools, organizations serving youth (such as Scouts, church groups, libraries), and home-school organizations may purchase memberships. See pages 16-17 in the program guide for details.

[pridefarm@gmail.com](mailto:pridefarm@gmail.com) is the e-mail address of the Virginia Association Director, Dennis Godfrey. Write to him or your regional director with any concerns or questions about age divisions or other rules or policies in Virginia.

## **SCORING**

All Odyssey scores given by the officials are "raw" scores. Long-Term raw scores may be any number up to 200 (before penalties). Style scores may be any number up to 50. Spontaneous raw scores may be any number at all (depending on the problem and the scoring criteria.) Raw scores are then "scaled" (sort of like curving grades.) **YOUR TEAM'S SCORE MEANS ALMOST NOTHING BY ITSELF** --- a score of 120 out of 200 might be the highest or the lowest score of the day. You won't know how it compares with others until scores are posted after the awards ceremony!! You will also not know the team's spontaneous score until scores are posted: the team is not told its score after they compete in spontaneous. Long-Term scores are given to the coach by the Head Judge approximately 1 -2 hours after a team's Long-Term performance. The head judge should explain the scores and answer any questions. The coach will initial the sheet to verify he or she received the scores.

The top Long-Term raw score in a given problem and division is scaled to 200 in the SCORE ROOM. The highest Style raw score is scaled to 50. The highest spontaneous score in the same problem and division is scaled to 100. All other teams' scores are scaled accordingly. All penalties are deducted in the Score Room from the final, scaled total score. A team that places first in all three categories, with no penalties, would have a scaled total score of 350. This is very rare! It is much more usual for one team to be top in spontaneous, another to be top in Long-Term, and perhaps a third team to be top in style. Thus, you can see that until all the scores are scaled and entered into the computer, looking at your scores only tells you what the judges liked (relatively good scores) and what they perhaps impressed them less (relatively lower scores.) Each team is really competing against its own personal bests, and working to be as creative as they possibly can.

Some scores in Long-Term are OBJECTIVE --- either the vehicle crossed the line or it didn't; either the sound effect was produced or it wasn't. OBJECTIVE SCORES may usually not be questioned. All Long-Term judges should give the team the same score (all or nothing -- the action occurred or it didn't). Objective scores may only be questioned in the event that an objective score has obviously been averaged. (This isn't supposed to happen: if it does, ask the head judge to check it out!) Objective scores may also be questioned in the event that the coach believes something occurred and the judges didn't see it. In this case, the coach may respectfully ask the Head Judge to revisit the issue with the Long-Term judges. However, the judges' decision is final (and video tapes will never be considered in making a judgment call.) If all the officials agree that they didn't see something, it didn't happen (so far as scores are concerned!)

Some scores in Long-Term are SUBJECTIVE -- the score reflects the opinion of a given set of officials on a given day. SUBJECTIVE SCORES may NEVER be questioned. Officials have given their opinions of a team's creativity or performance, and their decision is final! The officials judging a given category each give their scores and these scores are averaged. If they thought a musical composition was worth 10 points out of 20, it wouldn't matter if John Williams or Mozart were in the audience saying it was a perfect composition --- subjective scores are final! This includes all style scores, which, of course, are entirely subjective.

Note that if a required, scored element is missing, then the score for that element will be a "zero," even though the scoring range may be a minimum of one. No score is given for a missing element. It is also possible to receive a "Spirit of the Problem" penalty if a team has intentionally chosen to ignore elements required in a problem, whether they are scored elements or not. (See page 36 of the Program Guide, #3 of "Rules That Apply to All Problems.")



## Scoring Examples:

Team A Raw Scores:	Long-Term 162	Style 37	Spontaneous 95
Team B Raw Scores:	Long-Term 140	Style 43	Spontaneous 125
Team C Raw Scores:	Long-Term 122	Style 49	Spontaneous 100

When these team's scores are scaled, the final scores (and total) will be as follows:

Team A Scaled (Final) Scores:	Long-Term 200	Style 37.76	Spontaneous 76	Total: 313.76
Team B Scaled (Final) Scores:	Long-Term 172.84	Style 42.14	Spontaneous 100	Total: 314.98
Team C Scaled (Final) Scores:	Long-Term 150.62	Style 50	Spontaneous 80	Total: 280.62

Note: To get Team B's scaled Long-Term score, take the raw score, 140, multiply by highest possible, 200, and divide by the top Long-Term score, 162. Use this procedure for each score in each category, according to the possible maximums. Also note that the range of spontaneous raw scores can result in a great impact on the total, scaled scores. Sometimes spontaneous scores are all very close; sometimes there is a very wide range. Note, also, that in the example above, Team A was first in Long-Term, Team C was first in Style, but Team B was first in spontaneous and had strong Long-Term and style scores, placing them first overall. (Also note that in the structure problem, there may be subcategories that are scaled and then added together, to make a potential for 200 total points, rather than all elements added and then scaled.)

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT ALL TEAMS UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH OF THE SCORING AT AN ODYSSEY TOURNAMENT IS SUBJECTIVE. TEAMS CANNOT, THEREFORE, CONTROL ALL OF THEIR SCORES, EXCEPT THAT THEY CAN DO THEIR BEST IN SOLVING THE PROBLEM AND PERFORM AS WELL AS POSSIBLE. A team that has given its best effort will be a winner, regardless of score, because they will have won self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, the ability to take risks, mastery of skills they have learned, and a general realization of talents and abilities that will serve them well in all of life! Even failure is a positive in Odyssey of the Mind, because, in the words of one former Odyssey participant, "you learn more from failure than you ever learn from success" and Odyssey of the Mind is about learning, above all else! Look at scores as FEEDBACK to lead to improvement, not an evaluation of the team's success.

## **A WORD ABOUT GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP**

The emphasis in Odyssey of the Mind® is on competing with the team's own personal best to achieve all a team is capable of achieving. While scores are important feedback for evaluating your own team's performance, remember that they are often subjective and that subjective scores are not open to question. If you, as a coach, inquire about an objective score or a rule, remember that our officials are volunteers just like yourself, who are doing their best to make this a positive experience for the kids. They are also responsible for keeping the playing field level, and are told they **MUST** assess penalties if rules are not followed, in order to be fair to teams who were careful to follow all the rules. You may read more about penalties on Page 25 of this guide. Remember that you, as coach, set the tone for discussion and questions...please exhibit good manners and good sportsmanship at all times! Your team is watching.

A team (or coach) may never question another team's score, or whether another team received a penalty, etc. Each team's scores are discussed only with the team that receives them. You will have to trust our officials ... they are working hard to make sure every team receives a fair evaluation and appropriate score. It is possible for them to make errors (last time we looked, all our judges were members of the human race!) but it is unsportsmanlike for any coach or team to question an error unless they believe it may be one made to their own team's scores.

### ***OTHER NUMBERS YOU MIGHT WISH TO KNOW***

1st Place Teams: Usually only the first place teams continue on to the next level of competition in Virginia. Occasionally, second place teams may be invited to continue on also, when the number of teams in a given problem exceeds the number that can be accommodated in a single judging site (then we have to have two sites and send first place teams from each site) or when the number is so great that sending one team does not seem representational. The State Board makes this decision for Association (State) Finals. CCI makes this decision for World Finals. (Currently both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place teams from Association Finals continue on to World Finals.)

10% or fewer teams continue on in competition from the average tournament. 100% of the teams who perform at a tournament are winners (see the paragraph above!)

7 team members may perform in Long-Term.

5 team members may perform in Spontaneous in competitive divisions.

XXXXX is a four or five digit number that is your school's membership number. It must go on the team sign as well as all the paperwork you submit. Each school has a different number (and schools with 2 or 3 memberships have 2 or 3 different membership numbers, as well as "A", "B" or "C" designations. Once a school purchases a second membership, the first membership becomes "Team A," the second "Team B," etc.) The "Team A" and "Team B," etc., designations should be on the Membership Sign for schools with more than one membership.

## *Coaching FUNDamentals (or, What To Do with 5-7 Creative Minds)*

So... now you have a room full of excited young minds, ready to get started. What do they do? What do YOU do?

Coaching an Odyssey team can be the most rewarding activity you have ever experienced. The primary key to success is to keep your sense of perspective. You need to enjoy and appreciate young people. You need to laugh, giggle, scowl, sigh, tease, moan, and maybe even growl at your team. But if you LOVE YOUR TEAM and keep your sense of humor, there are no problems they cannot conquer, with your guidance. Just remember that the team's problems are not YOUR problems. They must solve their problems by themselves with some nudges and facilitation from you. They are creating things no one has ever seen before, learning things they never learned before, and that fact alone should make you very proud of them. YOU will make this possible, and that makes you a hero, regardless of scores or a performance on one given day! You are making a difference in children's lives forever. And it should be FUN!

Ideally, your first meeting will include the parents. You need to set guidelines for behavior, agree on meeting times, days, and places, convince all team members and parents of the importance of attending every meeting possible, and, perhaps involve the parents in a spontaneous problem ... just so they can experience a sample of the activities their children will be doing.

At the end of this section, there are suggested "LESSON PLANS" for the first 5 meetings. These include spontaneous problem suggestions, team building ideas, fundamental brainstorming methods, and ideas for tackling the Long-Term problem. Use these as a springboard for your own ideas ... there is NO RIGHT OR WRONG METHOD for conducting meetings, so long as you avoid giving Outside Assistance. Feel free to adapt any or all ideas to meet your own needs and materials. Odyssey of the Mind meetings should be fun, but you should emphasize that this is your home (or their school) and insist the team respect each other and other people's property at all time!

One suggestion from experienced coaches is to start with ONLY SPONTANEOUS for the first few meetings. That way, if a child drops off the team (because he or she didn't realize the commitment involved) you may replace him or her. The rule is this:

You may only have the input of 7 minds in any Odyssey year. So long as you have never had 7 team members, you may add up to seven any time up until you register for the tournament. If you have had 7, you may not ever replace someone who drops out, UNLESS the team has not discussed Long-Term or Style. This is why some teams only do spontaneous at first, until they are sure the entire team is committed to coming to meetings. Other suggestions from experienced coaches include:

- \* Plan several activities for each meeting. These might include the following:
- \* Teaching the team skills such as sewing, painting, cutting balsa, engineering, drama ...
- \* Doing at least one spontaneous problem
- \* Some fun activity (can be silly) or snack (mmmm...) for socializing (which is also team building!)
- \* Brainstorming solutions to parts of the Long-Term problem -- keep paper and pencil handy
- \* A trip to a store, museum, library or other place where materials or ideas might be found
- \* Working on Long-Term problem requirements (which might mean dividing to conquer)
- \* Rewards for meeting intermediate goals (like ice cream, or a half hour at a local playground)

## ALL LONG-TERM PROBLEM AND STYLE IDEAS, AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION, MUST BE THE STUDENTS' OWN!

Sure, you can figure out how to attach that sheet to a board, and you can probably paint that tree trunk to look pretty realistic. But the Long-Term problem is NOT YOUR PROBLEM to solve!! If you do work for the team, or give them suggestions, they will not "OWN" their solution. One of the most basic goals of Odyssey of the Mind is to give children the power to do things themselves, and to feel the pride of knowing they did it all by themselves. If you so much as suggest a costume, or staple a piece of paper, you have "submarined" the team's "ship of self-esteem"!

**Keep the team on task.** Encourage them to make a "Must Do" list, and keep them on that one, not the "Maybe Do" list! Let them cross off items that are completed ... we all like to feel a sense of accomplishment. Have a "Master Calendar" setting down goals. Set up sub-groups to do tasks, if the team can work that way.

**Resolve social conflicts as soon as you notice them.** Learning to work as a team is one of the most important things an Odyssey team can do. It is OK to allow disagreements, and, ideally, let the team resolve conflicts themselves. But do not allow feelings to be hurt. Avoid plurality votes --- someone always loses. Approval voting, where each person tells all the ideas he likes, is better. Better yet is never to vote at all, but to come to consensus. Learn to recognize burnout, and lighten things up when that happens. Surprise the team with a fun, non-Odyssey activity, like a video or "unbirthday" party once in a while!

**Make safety a top priority.** Always supervise the use of tools, including **hot glue guns**, and make sure the kids know the safe way to use them. Use safety goggles, when appropriate (such as when testing balsa structures.)

**PRACTICE SPONTANEOUS** at every meeting, if possible. (See the section on Spontaneous in this Handbook, page 32.) Enlist a co-coach or parent to plan and bring materials for hands-on practices, if that makes your life easier! You may wish to have a Spontaneous Coach.

**Talk with older teams** (above Primary level especially) about all of the following issues:

**Failure:** something doesn't work? what can you do about it? how can you try to prevent : what does it mean when disasters at the competition? how do you handle mistakes? disagreements?

**Competition:** why is Odyssey a competition? against whom are you really competing?

**Criticism:** are there ever any "bad" ideas? how can the team choose ideas without ever insulting anyone?

**Outside Assistance:** what IS Outside Assistance? is there a "secret code" the team might use to politely give the coach or parents a cue that they should take a few steps back, physically or metaphorically?

**Goals:** what do you really want to achieve with your solution? what do you want to accomplish in this Odyssey year? how can you do that?

**Learn how to ask questions** and how to answer a question with a question. Learning the technique of questioning is the best way to help your team while avoiding outside assistance. The art of asking questions is mainly the ability to be very open-ended. Here are some examples of “good“ questions and “bad” questions:

Limiting questions (and steering from coach)      Open-ended (allowing the team to be creative)

How can you sew a duck costume?  
Can you use (item) to solve that problem?

How can you make someone seem to be a duck?  
What, exactly, does this need to do?  
How can you cause that to happen?

Do you want some glue to put those things together?      How might you fasten those things together?

Well, you get the idea here --- let the team make decisions for themselves, but encourage them to brainstorm the questions. Try not to limit their thinking ... what they come up with won't usually be what YOU would have done ... but that is OK!

If the team asks you a question, try to answer with another question that will start them thinking in the right direction:

Team asks:

Do you think this glue will work?  
Should we put more yellow in the tree?  
Why did the vehicle wheel come off?

Coach asks:

How can you find that out?  
What does your team think?  
Let's look at it ... what do you think happened?

After a time, the team will learn to ask THEMSELVES the right questions. But, at first, it will be hard, because they are used to adults giving them the correct answers! Let them discover that THEY have the power to come up with answers, and that they can find "correct" ones ... or, at least, ones that work ... all by themselves.

**Help the team understand what STYLE is all about.** (See the section on Style of this Handbook). Be sure they DO NOT CHOOSE SOMETHING SCORED IN LONG-TERM for a Style Element. (If they do, the staging area judge will ask them to change it. Teams handle this just fine, but surprises the day of the tournament are best avoided!)

**Arrange practices for the team when tournament day approaches.** The best method is to simulate a tournament --- practice setting up, time the performance, and perhaps videotape. Rehearsing a couple of weeks before the tournament will allow the team to go "back to the drawing board" with any problems. They can refine the script to get the performance under 8 minutes, repair or redesign sets or props, etc. Watching a videotape will allow them to critique themselves --- can you hear everyone? are they facing the audience? (Note: if YOU, as coach, tell them these things, it is outside assistance. Help them critique and discover things for themselves!)

**NEVER allow the team to be discouraged when things go wrong.** Tell them "this is what a rehearsal is all about!" Remain their biggest cheerleader. NEVER feel that "this is never going to come together." IT WILL! Don't get depressed --- if you could see every other team at the same stage of preparation, you would learn that every team has some difficulties the last few weeks. Every coach feels like, in the words of one coach, "running down the hall screaming". It would be unusual for a coach not to have a few dreams about Odyssey at this point! Have faith ... it WILL come together! NEVER assume that the performance site will be a particular orientation or set-up. Have the team practice with different configurations.

**BRAINSTORM "what if's"** ... what if the judges are sitting over here or aren't seated at all? what if the vehicle stops? what if someone forgets his lines? what if our structure isn't "legal? what if the sun is in our eyes? what if a loud noise occurs during our performance? (This happened once at a regional tournament when a TV began blaring, and the team never skipped a beat!). Being prepared for a disaster will help team members feel more confident going into competition, and help them keep it together if a catastrophe should occur. As in life, many things may happen which are out of their control, but they CAN control their reactions! Remember a fix-it kit --- but this should, as always, be the team's work to put together.

**Consider a "house arrest day"**. If very many things need finished two or three weeks before the meet, and your team is not yet ready to rehearse, consider having an all-day meeting on a weekend. Tell the team "you are mine from 9 a.m. until you finish". Order pizza, have cold cuts, bake cookies, ask parents to bring food, whatever it takes to fuel them... but keep them working all day and sit back and be amazed at what can get done by a determined crew in one day! And don't forget to throw in a fun break or two ... maybe a spontaneous problem involving food, or a nature scavenger hunt, or just a round of a card game.

**Have fun!!!!!!!** Enjoy these creative young people. Learn a little about how to brainstorm solutions to problems in your own life. (One former Odyssey team member said, when she got to college, "Life is just one big spontaneous problem!") Be amazed at what the team comes up with. Enjoy a few activities with them that have nothing to do with solving the Long-Term or spontaneous problems. On tournament day, relax and enjoy the creativity of all the teams doing this worthwhile "mental sport"!

The next few pages are suggested plans for the first 5 meetings. These are only suggestions to get you started!

## SUGGESTED "LESSON PLANS" FOR THE FIRST FIVE Odyssey of the Mind<sup>®</sup> MEETINGS by Lisa Love

### With a very large DISCLAIMER:

It is the spirit of Odyssey of the Mind to encourage creativity, divergent thinking, and creative problem solving.

We expect no less of our coaches.

These lessons are only intended as a starting point, to get you thinking of ways to approach taking 5-7 excited students and get them to work together to make something uniquely theirs.

Please feel free to change, delete, adapt, rewrite ... in short, to vary... these plans to suit your team's needs as well as your own.

Your Odyssey should be fun and exciting, and each team has an individual chemistry and its own way of working and problem solving.

Keep this in mind as you take your own unique ODYSSEY OF THE MIND<sup>®</sup>!

**Suggested "LESSON PLANS" FOR THE FIRST 5 Odyssey MEETINGS: Div. 1-3 New Teams**  
by Lisa Love, VOICES of Virginia

**Meeting #1**

This would be a good time to have a meeting of both parents and students (for Divisions I and II) and to cover some of the basics (in all Divisions.) It would also be a good time for at least one fun activity to demonstrate the principals of Odyssey of the Mind to parents and students. You may want to print out the parents' guide from the state web page at [www.vaodyssey.org](http://www.vaodyssey.org)

Suggestions for basics to cover with parents and students:

- \* Odyssey is fun! Start (and end) with an activity that demonstrates the fun & learning in Odyssey. Some suggestions are:
  - A simple hands-on spontaneous problem  
**Example:**(Give each group some spaghetti, sticky labels, a piece of paper, scissors, a paper plate and a cup. Tell them to build the tallest possible structure with the cup on top. Allow 4 minutes for this. At the end of 4 minutes, each group places nails in the cup. Points awarded for height and for number of nails held.
  - A simple verbal spontaneous problem  
**Example:** Have students and parents all be in one big group. Give them one minute to think and three minutes to answer the following: Name things that go around. (One point for common answers, such as a "carousel" or "hands on a watch," three point for creative, such as "my thought when I'm undecided" or "a politician skirts - goes around - the issues.")
  - A demonstration of how Odyssey of the Mind encourages both fluency and flexibility of thinking  
**Example:** Divide into two groups, one students and one parents. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pencil. Ask the following question: How can you catch a monkey? Allow each group 3 minutes to brainstorm and write down all the answers they can think of. At the end of three minutes, ask each group to count the number of answers they have. The number represents their fluency. Then give each group 2 minutes to choose the THREE most creative answers. Have them read them. Each answer that is NOT on the other group's list is judged to be creative. The creativity of their answers represents the group's flexibility. Wild answers, such as "turn the monkey into a virus and catch it" are definitely allowed!
- \* Meeting times, days and length (everyone might bring a calendar, or you might provide a printout)
- \* Odyssey of the Mind costs - how much the team may spend and how it will be funded
- \* Expectations of commitment from students AND parents! Use "contracts" if desired.
- \* Date and location of regional meet
- \* Role of parents (Do you want help with spontaneous, providing snacks, taking the team to get supplies, fund-raising, carools, driving on "road trips," teaching skills like woodworking? sewing? particle physics (just kidding.) Also, the team must provide a judge and 1/2 volunteer - one for every 2 teams from a membership - at the Regional Meet.)
- \* NOT Role of parents: outside assistance, i.e., explain all ideas & work must be team's own.
- \* Importance of teamwork; fact that 7 perform in Long-Term and 5 perform in spontaneous
- \* You might want to give each team member and parents a copy of the problem synopses, if your team has not yet been assigned or chosen a problem. However, **it is highly recommended you do not discuss Long-Term at this meeting nor the next one. THE REASON IS** that you can replace a team member who decides this activity is not for him or her so long as you have not discussed the Long-Term solution in any way. A two-week "grace period" allows all the team members to be certain they want to commit to Odyssey of the Mind.
- \* End with another fun activity or snack

## Meeting #2

This meeting would be a good time to work on teaching the team the Odyssey philosophy and some of the basic skills used in Odyssey: thinking creatively and working cooperatively. It is **still recommended that you not discuss a Long-Term problem solution** at this meeting! You might begin this meeting, and all subsequent ones, with a spontaneous problem or team-building exercise.

IDEAS TO TEACH:

### **The Difference Between "Winning Prizes" and "Succeeding" (Being Winners)**

OBJECTIVE: To have the group begin to realize that ribbons or trophies do not equal achievement.

FORMAT: Group discussion.

PROCEDURE: The coach asks open-ended questions and lets the team members discuss such issues as: "Why do you want to do Odyssey?" "Why do you think Odyssey is a competition?" "What does 'winning' mean?" "What do you expect from your teammates?" "What do you hope to achieve at Odyssey meetings?" "What do you hope to achieve at the Odyssey of the Mind® Meet?" (This is a good time for the coach to practice letting the TEAM come up with the ideas, and letting the coach be a "guide on the side.")

### **"Rules of Engagement" for Odyssey of the Mind®**

OBJECTIVE: To begin to establish "Rules of Engagement" for team efforts; To practice brainstorming; To have the team realize that criticism of others' ideas undermines teamwork and prevents good ideas from appearing and evolving

FORMAT: Demonstration and group discussion

PROCEDURE: Give each team member a sheet of paper, a pencil, and a simple, unusual object (each team member gets a different object; could be citrus peeler, metal washer, etc.) Ask each team member to write creative use for the object. Then have them pass objects to their left until each person has written a use for each object. Have them read their lists aloud.

Discussion: Ask the team "what answers did you hear that you liked?" Let each person have a chance to contribute his/her praise of another person's written answer. Ask the team: "were there any answers that you thought might be impractical?" "how could you change or adapt the answer so that it is more practical?" "have you improved on the original idea?" "does hearing all ideas make you think of more and better ones?"

Discuss the idea that in Odyssey there are NOT ANY BAD IDEAS, only ones that may need further work or discussion. Suggest RULE No. 1: All ideas should be allowed and never criticized! Suggest that the team begin a list of "OUR TEAM'S RULES" tailored to "Just Us."

(Note: empowering the team to make their own set of rules gives them ownership that will promote their following the rules by choice. It also begins teaching them that in Odyssey of the Mind, they are encouraged - required, actually - to do the work themselves. The coach may write team's lists in Div. I if words are the team's own.)

### **If We Can Dream It, We Can Do It**

OBJECTIVE: To give the team confidence in themselves and promote mutual respect

FORMAT: Group interaction with some direction

PROCEDURE: Ask the team members to take the sheet of paper from the previous activity and list all the things they think they are "reasonably" good at doing. If they know one another already, have them list at least one thing they think each of their teammates is good at. If they don't already know one another, have them write the other team members names and something they do know about them, such as where they live, how many brothers and sisters they have, what sport or musical instrument they play, etc. Let them discuss this if they don't know anything about each other - a sort of "get acquainted" time. You might consider SERVING REFRESHMENTS during this activity. Then let them share their thoughts and positive comments.



### **Meeting #3**

This meeting might be the time to begin discussion of Long-Term. However, you may continue to work on Spontaneous for another week. Some new teams might require three meetings to achieve all the goals thus far. Adapt to meet your group's needs! Again, you might start the meeting with a spontaneous problem, or, better yet 2-3.

IDEAS TO TEACH:

#### **Brainstorming Can Be Fun**

OBJECTIVE: To teach the team a brainstorming technique: Diamond method

FORMAT: Group interaction

MATERIALS: Poster board, newsprint pad, or white marker board and some markers.

PROCEDURE: Ask a spontaneous sort of question that might also be a Long-Term sort of category. (Example: name ways to make music; name ways to make backdrops for a play, etc.) Have the team generate ideas, building on each other's answers and adding more as they discuss their answers until they have at least 15. List all ideas on the paper or board. Talk about the answers that are similar and group them together. Eliminate ideas that are less creative and keep the ones that everyone agrees are the most creative in each column. Narrow the list down to one or two of the favorite ideas.

#### **The Long-Term Problem Requires Much Thinking and Discussion**

OBJECTIVE: To allow the team to see all the complexities and possibilities of a Long-Term problem.

(You could actually do this without discussing THIS year's problem if you are still unsure whether everyone is committed - just evaluate a problem from last year.)

FORMAT: Group Discussion

PROCEDURE: Read through a Long-Term problem (can be the one the team has selected or been assigned, or can be any Long-Term sample problem.)

Give everyone a copy of the Long-Term problem, if they have chosen one. Read and discuss "the creative emphases" of the problem and discuss what it means. (What is creativity?)

Read "Spirit of the Problem" and discuss what this means. (Why is there a "spirit of the problem?") Look at the problem requirements; look at the scoring criteria; look at the penalties

Ask them to re-read it before the next meeting and bring 2-3 of their best ideas for themes, etc., to discuss at the meeting next week.

If the team has not chosen a problem, they should choose one in this meeting or the next.

#### **"Rules of Engagement" Part II**

OBJECTIVE: To continue the team's efforts to make a list of acceptable behaviors or "team rules."

To have the team understand that all must share in the work involved.

FORMAT: Demonstration and discussion

MATERIALS: 10-14 sticks

PROCEDURE: Give each team member one stick. Ask them each to break it in half. Now give one person 7 pieces and ask them to break all seven in half at once. Ask them why it is harder to break all at once. Ask them what that might say about the strength of many as opposed to the strength of one. Ask them how this idea might apply to a team. Let them discuss this and perhaps discuss the idea that everyone needs to share the labor needed for a solution. You might discuss absenteeism. They might make a team rule about these ideas. (For example, if someone must be absent, they will have OotMwork.)

End with another fun activity, such as a spontaneous problem or group artwork, etc.

## Meeting #4

This meeting might be a good time to examine the Long-Term problem in more depth and brainstorm skills and task necessary to complete a solution.

IDEAS TO TEACH:

### **Brainstorming Can Be Fun, Part II**

OBJECTIVE: To teach another brainstorming technique: making creative connections

FORMAT: Group discussion and interaction using the infamous newsprint pad and markers

PROCEDURE: Tell the team that many great ideas have come from finding unexpected connections. And example might be the union of plastic and zippers to make Ziploc bags, or chairs and wheels to make a wheelchair. Give the team some of the following pairs and ask them to brainstorm at least 5 links for each: Film and Piano; Telescope and Shovel; Table and Lever; Button and Stove. The links may be tenuous, and do not have to be actual, practical objects.

### **Long-Term Attack**

OBJECTIVE: To begin brainstorming solutions to the Long-Term problem

FORMAT: Diamond method of brainstorming

PROCEDURE: Using the ubiquitous newsprint pad or white board, have the team brainstorm at least 20 possible themes/ solution ideas for the Long-Term problem. (They were to have thought of some of this during the week.) Let them narrow it back down to 2 or 3. Have them discuss all the creative possibilities of these themes. If they can narrow it down to one, great; if not, let them think about them over the next week.

### **TIME is of the Essence**

OBJECTIVE: To have the team begin working on a timeline for Long-Term

FORMAT: Group discussion

MATERIALS: A Large, One-page Calendar with all the weeks until the Meet shown

PROCEDURE: Mark an "X" through all the days team members will be out of town (that they know of.) Circle the Meet Day in RED. Back up two weeks and circle a weekend day in RED. Tell the team that that day is "House Arrest Day" - they are YOURS for the day until all Long-Term items are finished and ready for dress rehearsal. Mark all other meeting days & see if there are some additional ones they want to add (such as teacher in-service days, for example, when they are out of school.) Keep the schedule handy and add to it as the year advances.

### **Skills Workshops and Road Trips are a FUN Part of Odyssey of the Mind®**

OBJECTIVE: To identify needs for Long-Term Problem Solving & expand the team's horizons

METHOD: Brainstorming for fluency

PROCEDURE: Ask the team to answer the following questions: What skills do you think you need to have someone teach you to solve this problem? What places do you think you might visit to get supplies? What are all the ways you can think of to fasten things together? What ways can you decorate props? etc. Have the team make lists and post them. Find a creative way to post the lists that fits your situation and environment. You might have each item on an index card and hang them from a clothesline in the basement. You might make a file. You might make a huge poster or two. But let the team do the writing if they are old enough. In Division I, a coach may write down the team's ideas verbatim, not adding his or her own

## **Meeting #5**

The lesson plan for this meeting is less detailed. By now, you should have a thread going through your meetings, a team "style" for brainstorming and for working together. You should also be going in some direction in terms of Long-Term and planning your time together. Some suggestions for this meeting might be:

### **Spontaneous Fun**

This meeting might be an excellent time for a "road trip" spontaneous. Go to McDonald's for an ice cream cone and brainstorm "Name ways to make a better cone," or go to a neighborhood playground, and brainstorm "playground equipment in the year 2050," or go to a nature trail, take a walk, and brainstorm "how could you build the world's greatest tree house?"

### **Brainstorming Can Be Fun, Part III**

Teach the skill of piggybacking. One possible activity would be to take a large sheet of paper, give each team member a marker, and ask the team to sit around a table. One person would draw a line of some sort on the paper. The next person would add one more line or object, etc., until the team had created a picture. No talking would be allowed, and no planning, so they would have to use visual clues to add to teammates ideas. A verbal activity might be to have the team sit in a circle. The first person would name an object, the next person would give two verbs, the third person would tell how the object could be related to the two verbs. Then the fourth person would start over again. (If you have six people, you might have them skip a person on each round so that everyone would each have a "role".) This activity also teaches the "making connections" skill.

### **Long-Term Attack, Continued**

If the team has chosen a problem and discussed themes, you may be ready to narrow down to one and begin brainstorming solutions. EACH TEAM will approach a problem in its own way. Some may wish to start by discussing one small portion of the problem and branching out from there. Others will start with the main theme or overall motif and work downward.

There is NO ONE CORRECT way to solve an Odyssey problem: that's the point! Allow your team to work in whatever manner they like, but make sure that they stay on the subject. If you see interest begin to lag, you might take the point they are discussing and turn it into a verbal spontaneous problem (for example, "name all the ways to make a person seem to be a bear" - one minute to think, three minutes to respond.) Or it might be a good time for the 15 minutes of fun (which, of course, you have planned in advance, since we all know that Odyssey coaches never have to come up with something on the spur of the moment )

### **Spontaneous Practice**

Remember to practice both verbal and/or hands-on spontaneous at every meeting.

At this point, you should have set a pace for meetings, and the team should begin to be making its own decisions about the tasks to accomplish each week. But it will be up to you, the coach, to provide spontaneous problems for them to solve.

## ***RULES***

Rules and forms are your friends. They provide the gravity for this high-flying team you are coaching! Rules keeps things safe, consistent and level the playing field. Forms help the team explain to the officials what they are doing and assist the officials with scoring.

You can find the complete rules in the PROGRAM GUIDE, pages 36-49. Every membership receives this book as part of the membership packet, so check with your school coordinator if you did not get a copy of the rules. You need these 14 pages! There are also other policies in the Program Guide that you must know, so be sure to read ALL of the guide.

Here are just a few highlights, emphasizing some of the most common oversights:

### ***Membership signs***

Each team must have a membership sign displayed and visible from at least 25 feet throughout its performance. You may have multiple signs, but at least one must be visible to the judges during the entire presentation. Ask your team: how can you make sure this is always visible? how can you make sure it is visible as soon as possible after time begins?

The team sign must have the membership name and number. It may also contain other information, if the team wishes. It must fit through a 28" x 78" doorway (standard size at tournament sites).

Do not let the team limit their thinking on this --- a sign is not necessarily what might first come to mind! Do not give outside assistance by suggesting any alternatives to the team, but use your creative questioning technique to allow them to come up with ideas: how can your team show the membership name and number throughout the performance?

A creative membership sign is one possible style element.

### ***Cost***

One form your team must fill out is the Cost Form. The Program Guide, on pages 47-49, outlines items that are counted for cost, items with an assigned value, and items exempt from cost. Some items with assigned values are musical instruments, computer systems, and AV equipment. Some items exempt from cost are extension cords and batteries. Learn all of the assigned value and exempt elements. List assigned value items on the form at the value given, unless cost was less than that amount, in which case you may use actual cost. Other items must be listed at either full cost (if purchased) or "garage sale value" (if items are used and commonly available to other teams at a yard sale or equivalent).

Items which a team might overlook but should be on the Cost Form if the team has them in the performance, include jewelry which is part of a costume, the clothing they wear (except foot coverings, so long as those aren't decorated) and items they retrieved from the trash but which are not generally considered "trash items", such as an old sheet or any item which another team might have to buy at a garage sale or thrift store if they were creating the same solution. (Just because something was in the trash does not make it valueless.)

The basic philosophy behind the Cost Form is that all teams should be able to recreate the same solution for the same basic cost, no matter which part of the world they live in. Thus, your team should count items they "scrounged" at garage sale value -- what another team might pay if they had to go out and find the items. And your team should list at cost any items they purchased new. If an item was sold to the team by a parent or relative, the cost listed should be what another team would pay if that team didn't have the same parent or relative!

## Copyrights

It is illegal to use or reproduce copyrighted materials without the owner's permission. If the team uses such materials, it is the team's responsibility to get permission from the copyright holder. Our judges are not "Saturday attorneys" and will not assign any penalty for copyright violations, but the team uses material at its own risk, and could be prosecuted by the copyright holders for any violation. This is an opportunity for your team members to learn a little more about the world of business and art. Odyssey of the Mind® members, however, have blanket permission to use CCI trademarks. For the complete list, see page 42 of the Program Guide.

## Safety

A team may not do anything at any time during a tournament (or during meetings) that would injury anyone or cause damage to the facility. Officials will give penalties for any such actions at a tournament. Judges will stop a team member who is creating any such potential for injury or damage. This includes stopping a team member who does not have non-penetrable foot coverings. All team members must have the bottoms of their feet covered by something that would not allow glass or splinters to penetrate.

Read the Program Guide, pages 39-41, for a complete list of prohibited substances, but be aware that the following are not allowed at Odyssey tournaments:

- Lead acid, zinc-air, zinc-mercury, silver zinc, metal chloride, AGM, Gel Cell type, etc., batteries
- Any unsealed batteries
- Lighter-than-air (helium) balloons that are not tethered or weighted down
- Items excessively hot or cold (including dry ice!)
- Items that leave a residue (some types of fire extinguishers and fog machines)
- Internal combustion engines
- Flammable fuels and fires in any form, including candles and sparklers, smoke bombs, etc.
- Liquids that can stain or damage the floor
- Weapons or items that closely resemble weapons (See page 38, section (16) of the Program Guide. Teams should ask the Staging Area judge about anything representing a weapon.)
- Any materials prohibited by the meet facility: in VA public schools, this may include fog machines.

**Damage to the floor** is subject to a penalty, whether intentional or non-intentional. Guidelines are on page 40 of the Program Guide. Most floor damage comes from dragging props to and from the staging area and into the performance area. Encourage your team to pick up items, or, if necessary, to put felt or a similar material, or wheels, on any items they cannot lift off the ground. Note that YOUR TEAM must pay for any necessary repairs!

**Other Rules** are listed on pages 36-43 of the Program Guide. Your team should read and then re-read these. A few of the more commonly overlooked rules are:

- \* Judges may not become part of the presentation. Nothing may be given to judges during the team's presentation, nor may the judges be involved in the performance.
- \* The audience may not be involved in more than a general way, such as laughter or applause. Any specific involvement will result in an OA penalty. Nothing may be thrown into the audience.
- \* Boundary lines for long-term solutions are the vertical planes of the outside of the tape mark. The team may not cover boundary lines in a way that obstructs judges' views.
- \* All parts of a solution must fit through a doorway that measures 28" x 78". If the team's solution doesn't fit through the door, parents and coaches may NOT disassemble and reassemble the parts that are too large (that would be Outside Assistance.) Note that in some competition sites, doors may have parts that make the useable opening a little smaller --- if that is the case, your tournament director will attempt to notify all teams of any exceptions. (We can't redesign the buildings for our tournaments!)
- \* Lights will not be dimmed at any competition site. (Page 43 of Program Guide)

**PLEASE READ THE PROGRAM GUIDE FOR ALL APPLICABLE RULES.** The ones listed above are only the "highlights". Also, note the **GLOSSARY** on pages 52-54.

## **FORMS:**

Your team must present the Staging Area Judge (the person who greets the team before they perform, usually in the "Check-In Area") with the following:

- \* One copy of the Cost Form
- \* One copy of the Outside Assistance Form
- \* FOUR copies of the Style Form

Blank copies of these forms can be found in the Program Guide in the Appendix. Make several copies of each to have on hand. NOTE: Forms may be scanned or photocopied, but not altered.

The following is a description of the requirements for each form:

### **THE COST FORM**

The team must present **ONE copy of the Cost Form** to the Staging Area Judge. (Be sure to make a copy or two in case your team moves on to the next level of competition. We will try to return paperwork to winning teams, but sometimes that connection does not get made.)

A master copy of the Cost Form can be found in the Appendix of the Program Guide.

For instructions on what to include on the Cost Form, **refer to pages 47-49** of the Program Guide.

***Only the items the team is using in its problem performance*** must be listed on the Cost Form. ***ALL ITEMS the team is using must be listed***, except those exempt from cost.

The term *Cost Limit* does not mean that the team could, would, or should spend that amount of money. Rather, it means the "**value** of the materials used during the demonstration of the team's solution cannot exceed this amount."

The judge may have questions regarding the Cost Form and has the right to question the team about certain items. The team should have receipts for materials available if a judge should request them (for items actually purchased)

Cost forms must be filled out by TEAM MEMBERS. In Division I, coaches may help the team fill out the form, but decisions should be the team's. It is important that the form be legible.

If a team purchases items from a friend or relative, it may be that the value is greater than what they paid. Be sure to put down a fair value that reflects the price another team would have to pay for the item when the team values the material for the form.

It is helpful to the judges to have items listed by category or use – for example, list materials used in the vehicle all together.

### **THE OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE FORM**

A Master copy of the Outside Assistance Form can be found in the Appendix of the Program Guide and guidelines on pages 45-46. Additional information regarding Outside Assistance may be found in the next section of this handbook.

Make two copies for your team to sign so you have an extra one. One is given to the Staging Area judge.

Many teams wait until the night before the tournament to sign this form; some sign it at the point at which the problem is solved and the solution is complete.

It is imperative that you read this aloud with your team before they sign it. You may think everyone has read it, but the only way to be *sure* is if you read it aloud.

Some coaches read this form aloud and then ***leave the room while the team members discuss it and sign it.*** This allows the team to talk freely about the possibility that there may have been Outside Assistance without worrying about how the coach may react. Or, if the coach has assisted the team in some way, it allows the students to discuss it privately.

No matter how you choose to handle this signing, make sure you create an atmosphere that is conducive to HONESTY.

If an Outside Assistance penalty needs to be assessed, imagine how powerful an example you will set if you handle it in a **calm, ethical** manner. All eyes will be on you. DO IT RIGHT.

The signing of this form marks the successful completion of your team's Odyssey. Many coaches celebrate this milestone by having a party: What a great idea!

### **THE STYLE FORM**

The team must present **FOUR COPIES OF THE STYLE FORM** to the Staging Area Judge. (Be sure to keep one or more *photocopies* of this form for yourself in case your team moves on to the next level of competition and so you will know the order of the scores. The judges will not return any style paperwork to teams.) A master copy of the Style Form can be found in the Appendix of the Program Guide.

For help with the concept of "style" see the Style Section of this guide as well as on pages 23-24 of the Program Guide. *In Division I, adults may type or write the Style Form, but the words and ideas should be the team's.*

Style sheets should be filled out BEFORE the tournament. Make photocopies for your records.

Your team must fill in the FIRST FOUR CATEGORIES WITH SPECIFIC ITEMS. Read the Style Section of your problem very carefully. Fill in any items that MUST be scored under STYLE. Describe the category as it applies to your team's performance.

— **Example:** If one category that must be scored is "The appearance of one character," have the team describe the specific character they wish to have scored. Don't say "The appearance of one character" or "The appearance of Susie". Say "The appearance of the purple frog." (Officials aren't mind readers, and they probably don't know which team member is Susie.)

**FREE CHOICE OF TEAM:** The team should choose a specific prop, costume, or characteristic of its solution that best displays its theme. Be specific. Ask the team, "Are all your strengths receiving points somewhere?" Many times teams have very creative parts to their presentation but do not ask to be scored on them.

**A TEAM CANNOT CHOOSE AN ITEM THAT IS BEING SCORED ELSEWHERE IN THE PROBLEM** and ask to have it scored under style also!

Use the space at the bottom to describe the Style or theme, how all the elements tie together and relate to the Long-Term solution. The team points out props, actions, dialogue, etc., which support their solution, which the Style judges may otherwise miss in the brief time they are watching all the action! How do all the other 4 elements relate to the theme in a special way?

## *OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE*

The concept of Outside Assistance is fairly simple. It is in the day-to-day interpretation that coaches find difficulty. Guidelines can never cover every situation!

Essentially, all ideas for Long-Term and style solutions must be the team's own. And all work on Long-Term and style solutions must be the team's own.

So, what if something the team needs done is dangerous for them to do? **HAVE THEM REDESIGN THE SOLUTION!**

So, what if the team is unable to do something they need done, like sew? **TEACH THEM THE SKILL THEY NEED, OR HAVE THEM REDESIGN THE SOLUTION!**

So, what if the team is running short on time, and they just need someone to slap on some paint or staple something? **ALLOW THE PROJECT TO GO UNFINISHED OR SEE IF A TEAM MEMBER CAN COME ANOTHER DAY AND FINISH IT!**

So, what if the team wants to find information on the Internet? **IF IT IS SOMETHING YOU COULD GET FROM A BOOK, THAT IS OK. IF IT IS INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO THIS YEAR'S LONG-TERM PROBLEMS (in an Odyssey chat room, for example) THAT IS NOT OK.**

The state web page has a compilation of a number of Outside Assistance questions answered by CCI's long-time director, Carole Micklus. You can go to [www.vaodysey.org](http://www.vaodysey.org) and see many questions dealing with different situations answered on the Outside Assistance page.

But the essence of all the answers is, the team must learn to do things for themselves. They also must learn to ask themselves the right questions and come up with their own answers. And, since they do not come from the womb knowing some of the skills they need, you may teach them anything they could get from a book. But ... you should always show them several methods of doing something (like cutting balsa) and then let them experiment and choose a method **THEY** prefer. Or, as in the example of sewing, you should show them the basic skills, but you may **NOT** design a costume for them, let alone sew any of it.

When the team is having trouble coming up with ideas, you should not say, "what about doing thus-and-so?" The ideas must be the team's own. So what should you say? Well, depending on the situation, you might get them to brainstorm related ideas. Or you might do a spontaneous problem related to the problem they are tackling. For example, if they can't figure out how to make a stained glass window, you could ask them to brainstorm the question "what makes a stained glass window look like it does?" (See the questioning techniques in the Coaching **FUND**amentals section.) Or you could take them to a craft store and allow them to pick out a few dollars worth of materials with which to experiment. (Be careful here not to steer them to an item **YOU** think would work!) You should be a "guide on the side" not a "sage on the stage". Ask questions. Make the team **THINK**. Allow them to come up with unusual answers that you would never have considered. That is what Odyssey of the Mind is about.

You, as coach, will have to bite your tongue and sit on your hands many, many times. You can even arrange "secret" codes with your team. They can say "hmm... another great idea we can't use" if you begin giving an idea. Or you can say "Use Inside Assistance" if they ask you for an answer you aren't supposed to give. After a while, they will probably recognize the look on your face when you are tempted to answer something, but know you shouldn't.



## ***PENALTIES***

Penalties are probably one of the most misunderstood elements of Odyssey of the Mind. They sound so terrible ... as if they were a punishment. In fact, penalties are simply a way of ensuring that all teams are following the rules, and all teams have the same equal opportunities for score. You might consider an absence of penalties a reward, rather than the presence a punishment. As in football, sometimes penalties occur when no one meant any foul. It is possible to "rough the kicker" without having meant to do so. But the referees must give a penalty because that isn't supposed to happen and isn't fair to the other team if it is ignored.

Penalties in Odyssey of the Mind® are much the same ... a team that abides by the rules carefully would have been treated unfairly if another team could do something the first team had so carefully avoided. And sometimes penalties happen to the best of teams because of some inadvertent action, so your team should consider some penalties to be part of the learning experience. Officials are never trying to keep anything secret ... the goal is for the team to read and understand all the rules and officials will try very hard to answer questions and help the team do what is correct.

An example of a penalty that is almost always inadvertent is the overtime penalty (in some problems.) It is not fair to a team that has rehearsed many times to keep the performance under the prescribed 8 minutes, if another team gets to perform for 10 minutes and show the judges more of their creativity. So there is the need for an overtime penalty for a team that does goes beyond 8 minutes (in some problems). However, a team that has rehearsed many times can inadvertently go overtime simply by stopping to fix a prop that broke in the middle of the performance. So a penalty can be just the result of Murphy's Law, not a reflection of any deliberate wrongdoing. Encourage a team to view them as a learning opportunity for future problem solving.

Perhaps the most serious penalties are unsportsmanlike conduct and Outside Assistance penalties. That is because good sportsmanship and the team's own work are basic tenets of Odyssey of the Mind. These penalties, however, are also a chance for team to learn from its actions and improve for the future.

Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are the only ones that might be considered punitive. There is NEVER any excuse for a team's behaving inappropriately. Vulgar language, striking a fellow team member, yelling at a team member or booing another team ... these actions will be dealt with severely and without sympathy from the officials. Also remember that these penalties may be given by ANY official at ANY time during the tournament.

Outside Assistance penalties are given when a team has received help with a solution. These penalties are given in varying amounts according to how integral to the solution the assistance was. Sometimes these penalties are given for actions that are inadvertent. Remind parents that on the day of the tournament, if they help carry in props or other items, they may not repair something that breaks, even if they were the ones who broke it! A parent will sometimes, without even thinking, touch up a child's hair, or put something back together that came apart. In adherence to the rules, the team will receive a penalty for those actions if an official observes it. (Penalties are NOT given based on reports from other teams or coaches, however!)

It is possible for a team to choose to be given an Outside Assistance penalty, if they want to have as part of their solution something that a coach, parent or other adult must do. In this case, they should state on the Outside Assistance form what the adult did to assist them. Penalty points will be assigned according to how integral to the solution the assistance was. It is much better if a team decides to redesign a solution so that they did it all themselves! Even a very small penalty can detract from the team's score, and, even more importantly, from their sense of accomplishment.

Floor damage penalties are usually the result of an unforeseen accident. (See the Rules section of the Program Guide for the scale of floor damage penalties.) These can be entirely avoided if team members remember to lift all items off the floor whenever possible, and protect the floor with some type of material when the items cannot be lifted. Tournament directors do NOT wish to explain to a school principal that the gym floor was scratched by Odyssey of the Mind!

Incorrect or missing membership sign penalties can also be avoided by reading the Program Guide and making sure the team has a membership sign (or more than one.) Usually, this penalty is given when a sign falls over during the performance, stays down, and is not visible any longer, even though it is physically there. Have the team brainstorm how to make sure the sign is always visible!

Over cost limit penalties can be avoided by careful completion of the Cost Form. Be sure all items in the performance are listed (unless exempted from inclusion.) Be sure the correct value has been assigned.

"Spirit of the Problem" violations are the most difficult for teams and coaches to understand. Sometimes these are penalties given for something that is counter to the "Spirit of the Problem" description in Section A of the Long-Term problem. More often, they are penalties given for something that is missing from the solution that the problem said must be there, but which is not scored for Long-Term or Style. For example, if the Long-Term problem said the team should have a poem as part of the problem solution, but there was no score given for the poem, then, if the poem were absent, it would be a "Spirit of the Problem" violation. Another example would be in a problem that specified "the spirit of the problem is to create a humorous performance" and the team chose to present a tragedy with no humor involved. This would merit a "Spirit of the Problem" penalty. This is a difficult penalty because sometimes it hinges on the interpretation of the judges. (In the poem example, what if the team said, after being told the judges didn't find a poem anywhere, that a line in the script, "my cat is back," was their poem? In the humorous performance example, what if the team had one joke in the middle of a script entirely about someone's tragic death? These questions occasionally make a "Spirit of the Problem" penalty a matter of the judges' opinion ... aren't you glad there are several judges?)

Balsa structure penalties are clearly defined in the balsa wood problem, and result from oversized wood, overweight structures, etc. These are unique to the balsa structure problem, and balsa teams should note the requirements carefully.

Problem specific penalties in other Long-Term problems are outlined in Section E, when applicable. For example, sometimes things must fit into certain areas, or meet certain other specifications. Be sure to ask your team to measure more than once, and measure exactly! Odyssey of the Mind encourages "thinking outside the box" but your team must be inside the box when it comes to measured items!

Misunderstood penalties, that are NOT penalties at all, are safety issues/prohibited substances. There is NO penalty for not having non-penetrable foot coverings ... the team member will simply be stopped from performing until he or she puts on shoes. There is generally no penalty for having untethered helium balloons or other prohibited items... the team will be asked to remove them from the problem solution in the staging area. The only exception to this would be when the judges do not notice a prohibited substance until they have made an appearance in the middle of the performance. A penalty may be given afterwards to a team as a warning to be more attentive to the rules. (Ideally, the staging area judge will notice such violations and ask the team to remove them before time begins ... but even staging area judges are not infallible! Rules are, ultimately, the teams' responsibility.)

**Will my team know if they are being given a penalty?** No, not for most penalties, until the coach picks up the Long-Term raw scores. And, for spontaneous, they will not receive a penalty for any action, but any offending team member will be escorted out of the room. The only time a team *might* know it may receive a penalty might be if a team which exhibits unsportsmanlike behavior or outside assistance observed by an official someplace in the building during the day ... an official will ask them for their school name, Long-Term problem, division, coaches' name, etc. If they have been behaving in an unsportsmanlike manner, or a parent has been repairing the vehicle, they will probably know what this means! A team will also know that it should expect a penalty if the team lists Outside Assistance on the OA form. The penalty will be in accordance with the amount the assistance affected the long term solution.

Generally, penalties are first revealed to the coach with the Long-Term raw scores. Even if a team is missing its membership sign, or something doesn't measure correctly, the Staging Area Judge will NOT upset the team by telling them before they perform. **An exception** is an instance where a team might be able to solve the problem, and fix something. In the balsa problem, when a structure doesn't meet specifications, the team is given a chance to bring it into compliance, for example.

Staging Area Judges will always be "on the team's side" as much as possible. They will allow a team to try to adjust something to fit in an area, or to complete a form, if they believe the team might be able to do so. If it is obviously impossible, either physically or because of the time constraints, they will not upset the team by pointing out the deficit. The cardinal rule is to attempt to allow the team to bring something into "spec", but never to upset a team if it can be avoided.

**Where are penalties written down?** Penalties in Long-Term are indicated on the score sheet given to the coach by the Head Judge approximately an hour after performance time. The coach and Head Judge will discuss any penalties, and the judge should be able to explain why the penalty was given. If there is no notation about why a penalty was given, and the Head Judge doesn't know, the coach may ask the Head Judge to review the issue with the team of Long-Term Judges. A team should always understand exactly why a penalty was assessed. If the exact reason for a penalty is not cited on the score sheet (pink copy of the NCR triplicate form), ask that the Head Judge note the reason for the penalty before initialing the form. No one may change the value of a penalty category stated in the problem or create penalties not listed in the Program Guide or the Long Term Problem.

**How are penalties calculated in to the score?** The master copy of the score sheet (which is a triplicate form – one copy goes to the judges, one to the coach, and one to the score room) has any penalties noted (it appears on all three copies.) This master copy goes to the score room, and after all of a team's scores are entered in to the computer, the penalty points are deducted from the total, scaled score.

**Can you have penalties in Spontaneous?** No. Offenses in Spontaneous occur if non-performing team members give assistance (which is, in this case "outside assistance") to the five members solving the spontaneous problem, or if any team members exhibit unsportsmanlike conduct. Team members will be escorted back to the holding room if this occurs and the "penalty" will be lost time in solving the problem.

**What are the most common penalties assessed a team?** Probably overtime penalties, and outside assistance are the most common. Remind parents that, at the tournament, they should not "just fix this little thing coming off the prop/vehicle/costume"! (Parents are protective of their children, and want so badly to help, but you, and they, must sit on your hands and keep your advice to yourselves on tournament day.)

It would be wonderful to have a tournament in which no penalties were given, but as you can see, sometimes even the best of teams with the best preparation can incur a small penalty. If you view scores AND penalties as feedback, you will see this is part of the "learning curve." A team seldom receives the same penalty the next time they participate!

And the last word on penalties is this: do not blame yourself, as coach, for the penalty given a team (unless you gave them Outside Assistance or behaved in an unsportsmanlike manner!) If the team has read the problem and studied the rules, they should be responsible for following them. Of course, you are going to try to make sure they do so, and will probably feel somewhat responsible if they do not, but ultimately the team must read all the rules and all details in the problem, and take responsibility for those rules as well as their own behavior.

## ***LONG-TERM PROBLEM INTERPRETATION AND CLARIFICATIONS***

How should your team tackle the Long-Term Problem? What should they do if they don't understand part of it?

How a problem is stated can often influence the success of a team in solving it. Help your team learn to state a question in a way that allows for many possible solutions. (See questioning techniques in the Coaching Fundamentals section of this handbook.) In school, and in most of our lives, we think of problems as having "a solution". But creative minds will always investigate MANY possible solutions. Pages 13-15 of the Program Guide have a discussion of how to state a problem in an open-ended manner. Essentially, you never want to ask "how can you build a doghouse?", but, rather, you want to ask "how can you find a better way to have a place for a dog to live?" Be careful, however, of two things: be sure that in restating the question, you do not lead the team towards a solution YOU have thought of; and be sure that in restating the question, you keep the original objective as a goal. (Designing something for "an animal" would not result, necessarily, in something for a dog!)

Here are a few suggestions for approaching the Long-Term problem. Each coach and each team will have their own approach, and these are only intended as a springboard for your own team's method of working:

Have the team read Section A of the Long-Term Problem out loud. Ask them to discuss what this problem is all about. What does the problem say are the areas where creativity is emphasized? What does the problem say are the general goals? Let the team discuss and brainstorm their initial reactions and ideas ... and perhaps write them down. (For Division 1 and Primary, coaches may write down the team's ideas, but they must be the team's exact words!)

Have the team read Section B. Take lots of time with this one ... it is the "meat" of the problem.

Note that 8 minutes includes set-up time.

Note the cost limit, and discuss the Cost Form.

Talk about all the limitations for your particular problem -- how many, what minimum, how measured, what type, etc. of things are required. What can the team do or not do?

Where can the team stand or not stand?

What does the team need to give the Staging Area Judge?

Ask some questions that promote divergent thinking and many possible solutions.

At your next meeting (if you have done a lot of discussion of Sections A and B), have the team read Section F, Style. Talk about how style fits into the Long-Term solution, and what style IS. (See the next section of this handbook.) Brainstorm style a little bit, and ask if the team has any ideas for the free choice elements or whether they want to see what develops! You might wait a couple of meetings to examine the problem further. Brainstorming ideas for the first two sections and style could easily take a week or two of discussion, and you don't want to overload the team, especially at the Division I level. Don' forget that all talk and no play makes for dull Odyssey meetings --- throw in plenty of spontaneous practices at this point, when there is time and you are trying to build teamwork and have fun!

Have the team read section C and talk about how the set-up fits in with Section B, Limitations.

Have the team read Sections D and E, Scoring and Penalties. Talk about scores as feedback, and about budgeting their time according to what is scored. Talk about how they might divide into sub-groups ... and whether they wish to do so. Examine penalties and how to avoid them.

Now the team should have a pretty good grasp of what is expected and what their ideas for a problem solution are. Some next steps might be for the TEAM (not the coach) to:

Work out details

Do research into subjects related to the Long-Term Solution

Examine how things work that might relate to an item they want to make or build

Build models of items they plan to make

Learn the skills they ask to learn

Go to craft, home supply or hobby stores and investigate what materials are available

Experiment with materials

Decide who is working on what parts of the solution

Begin outlining the performance or script

One VERY important tool, once the team begins to work, are CLARIFICATIONS. The form for asking questions to clarify the problem may be found online at <http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications/>. You can see general clarifications that resulted from other teams' questions and also submit your own questions, which will be kept private unless the reply is generic. Your team should ask for a clarification there is ANY DOUBT about the "legality" of their solution. Odyssey is about divergent thinking and risk-taking, but the rules are intended to be the same for everyone and will be strictly enforced. Don't take risks with the RULES. If an idea of the team's seems to stretch an interpretation, or if the team doesn't understand one of the limitations, the team should ask for a "Clarification" that explains the problem or that says "yes" or "no" to their risky idea.

## TEAM-SPECIFIC PROBLEM CLARIFICATION REQUESTS

- **ON-LINE:** you may request a clarification via e-mail by going to [www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications) and following the directions. (You must log in with your Member Number.) Be sure to print out a copy of the question and the reply to bring to the tournament. Be sure to cite the section of the problem or rule in question. Be sure you have read the Program Guide and the problems thoroughly and your question has not already been answered there or in the posted General Clarifications. THE DEADLINE FOR CLARIFICATION REQUESTS IS FEB. 15, 2015.

Read the Program Guide, pages 24-26, for specifics about clarifications

Your TEAM should write out its question in the e-mail message. Division I teams may have an adult do the typing, but the questions should be in the team's own words.

If the team has a question specific enough that it might give away its solution, the problem clarification will not be published as a general clarification, but only given to the team and to officials. Bring a copy to the tournament, as officials may or may not have gotten a copy!

The rule of thumb in asking a question is: Better to be safe than sorry!! ... but do not ask a question that is covered in the Program Guide or the problem.

Don't forget to bring all clarifications that were given to your team with you to the tournament.

- **Your team should also check the CCI web site at for GENERAL clarifications specific to each long-term problem every couple of weeks.** Questions that seem to apply to all teams will be posted there, and may help your team understand the problem. Clarifications may be posted by CCI even after the team clarification deadline, so CHECK BEFORE EACH TOURNAMENT in which the team is competing.

## *STYLE, STYLE ... Ya Gotta Have Style!*

New coaches are often confused by the Style component of Odyssey of the Mind. WHAT, exactly IS that? I mean, the team has solved the Long-Term problem, and their solution is pretty unique, so why have this style stuff?

Well, Style is the "Icing on the Cake", so to speak. It is the special things the team has made or done that fit together ("Overall Effect") to make their solution unlike anyone else's. It adds the component of artistic talent, or performance talent, or any other kind of talent to the basic skills needed to solve the Long-Term problem. It is the opportunity for your team to SHINE by displaying their special abilities! This is a great chance for the team to identify their own talents or develop new ones! It makes their solution not just unique, but memorable and exciting!

STYLE can be any of a large number of elements. Each problem identifies two that are mandatory for that problem. ("How well the membership sign enhances the presentation" or "creativity of use of materials in one costume"). Then, the team also gets to pick two other elements, according to their talents and desires. (Note that sometimes what YOU would choose to be scored may not be what THE TEAM wants to have scored ... and it is the TEAM'S decision, as in all things Odyssey!)

Pages 22 – 24 of the Program Guide have some information about Style.

Some elements teams have chosen in the past to have scored have been:

Membership Sign	Appearance of Character(s)	Dialogue
Narration	Props	Acting
Lighting	Original Poetry	Environment
Smell	Mime	Movements
Use of Color	Playbill	Artwork
Interaction between people	An <i>Original</i> Effect!	Surprise effect!
Humor	Creative use of materials	Choreography

One method for helping a team understand what Style is, would be to give each team member a bag with some materials (construction paper, scissors, glue, pipe cleaners, crayons... whatever, the crazier the better.) Ask each of them to find a place to work by himself/herself. They are then to create anything they wish, and present it in any way they wish (a poem, a song, a story, etc.) Let them work for 20 or 30 minutes and then ask each person to present his or her creation. After they have done this, explain that each team's Long-Term problem solution will be as different as each of their own creations. The special things that are unique or original elements of their team's Long-Term solution are the things they will want scored for style. Have the team brainstorm all the wonderful things they might have for their own amazing Style.

Some teams choose style elements (free choice) early and work on them throughout the months they work on Long-Term. Some simply allow things to develop and evolve, and choose the free choice elements after they see how everything turned out near the end. As with more creative problem solving, there is no one right or wrong method. But be sure the team knows which elements are MANDATORY style elements, and make sure they are included on the "must do", not the "maybe do" list!

### **Two cardinal rules to remember:**

- Nothing scored in Section D of the Long-Term Problem may also be scored for Style.
- Style forms may not be altered (spacing changed, etc.)

### **Two cardinal guidelines for Style Forms to remember:**

Be VERY specific in listing Style elements. Don't write down "team sign" --- describe what, exactly, is special. ("Team sign that changes into the Stay-Puf Marshmallow Man") Don't write down "costume" --- describe **which one** the judges should look at. ("Dog costume worn by boy with glasses.") If the team wants only the hat part of a costume scored, they must state "Hat worn by the detective." Otherwise, the entire costume will be scored.

The paragraph at the bottom should tell how the **Style** elements create an effect. Do not have the team write a summary of the long-term performance!

### **Four items of information:**

Only the Style judges see the Style form. Writing something for the long-term judges will not be helpful.

A playbill, if counted as a Style element, will be given to the Staging Area Judge to give to the Style judges (remember how team members may not give anything to the judges?) And, if playbills are intended for the audience, they must be given out by team members after time begins.

Style judges have only a few minutes to read the Style Form. If the team uses a computer to print the form, do not use 8 point font or try to write a small novel in the bottom space! Write enough to give the general idea of what is wonderful about the team's style, and intrigue the judges, but don't expect the officials to be able to absorb too many details. Look on this as an advertisement for what they are about to see. And remember, only Style judges will read this.

Style scores are 100% subjective. What one group of judges on one day really likes, another group of judges on another day might not like as much. Your team can only control how THEY feel about their style elements ... if they are proud of what they did, that is what counts, always! Style scores cannot be debated or argued ... the judges' decision is final. (And don't you hope to have enough officials at the tournament to have at least 2 or 3 style judges whose scores are averaged? Recruit judges for your tournament!!!)

## ***SPONTANEOUS***

Too often neglected when props need painted or scripts need polished, spontaneous is a crucial element of Odyssey of the Mind. It is important not only because it is scored at the tournament, but because it teaches the team many of the skills they need for problem solving and because it is FUN! Spontaneous is the soul of teamwork, creativity, risk-taking, and divergent thinking.

Page 6 of this Handbook describes the types of problems. More information is also available in the Spontaneous Guide provided with each membership packet. (This booklet has sample spontaneous problems. Ask your school coordinator about these.) You can also find practice problems at some internet sites.

### **#1 TIP FOR SPONTANEOUS SUCCESS: PRACTICE EVERY WEEK**

Some guidelines your team will want to learn are:

#### **VERBAL**

Listen carefully to the directions. The unspoken rule in Odyssey of the Mind® is, "if it doesn't say you can't, assume you can." However, you must listen for do's and don'ts.

Ask questions if necessary, but avoid wasting time asking what you have been told or asking something the judge can't answer.

Speak **LOUDLY AND CLEARLY**. Sometimes the way you answer can give an added meaning, and sounding confident might make a dubious answer credible.

Do not repeat an answer a teammate has already given.

You may usually not pass, so save one answer to give if you are stuck. If you get stuck again, **SAY ALMOST ANYTHING!** (Note: some problems have a "pass" card to allow you one pass, but it is still better not to use it and give up an opportunity for a point.)

Use your environment or one you can picture in your head to spark an idea.

**NEVER** argue with a judge!

Don't elaborate unless it makes an answer creative. One word takes less time than ten.

Don't hesitate to give a "common" response, especially if answers are not limited. 3 fast common responses = 1 slow creative one. But also note that if there are **limited answers**, you may want to take time to give a creative one, because you have the time to do so, and each answer is more important.

Have a special category about which you are knowledgeable. Use it to generate ideas.

Pick up the key word in the problem. Think of all the meanings, synonyms and spellings. Think of book titles, puns, etc. For example, a "base" could be in "baseball," a movie ("Basic Instinct") or be spelled differently (bass guitar.)



Analyze in practices what may be considered creative and what may be common responses.

### **Non-verbal**

Listen carefully to ALL the directions. Only ask questions if you truly cannot understand what you are to do. Do not ask for help solving the problem; you may only ask for clarifications of the rules.

Don't ask permission for every idea you have: if it doesn't say you can't assume you can. DO ask a question if you think your idea might be counter to the spirit of the problem.

Try to analyze all aspects of the problem during planning time. Consider materials, time, and potential difficulties. Have a timekeeper (without a beeper on his/her watch.)

DO NOT EVER JUMP IN WITHOUT PLANNING. Have each person give his best idea, and then modify it.

ALWAYS work as a team. Arguing and lack of cooperation will submarine the best team. Working as a team will help you all to relax and each to do his best.

Have one team member responsible for knowing everything you may NOT do, so he can be your "policeman" *during the planning stage* and keep you from doing something illegal. (Hint: pick your best listener)

### **Characteristic examples of each type of problem are:**

#### VERBAL

1. One word problems (Name things that are blue; Name things that are tall)
2. Two-parters (Name a discoverer and what s/he discovered)
3. Pictures (Give a caption for this picture; what might the person in this picture be saying?)
4. Procedures (Tell ways to clean up leaves)
5. Objects (What might this be used for?)

#### HANDS-ON

1. Building (Build something that goes across a distance, that will hold weights, that will be scored for height)
2. Communication (Guide a blindfolded teammate to do a task, or non-verbally communicate directions to do something)
3. Target (Get objects into a target area)
4. Pure creations (Make something from materials given)

#### COMBINATION

1. Object to be demonstrated and discussed (Make something out of aluminum foil, then tell what it might be)
2. Sound/visual combined with verbal (Make sound effects and tell a story about them)

These are only a few examples of the types of problems ... the entire point of spontaneous is for the team to face a problem they have never seen before! These problems could be ANYTHING ... which is, in a way, easier for you to coach, because you can set any group of objects before the team and ask them to do anything with them!

### **Some techniques for coaching spontaneous are:**

Work with your team to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses. Encourage them to build their strengths, improve their weaknesses and, most of all, to work together to maximize their strength as a whole.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Creativity is a skill which can be taught. Then, having been taught, it must be used to stay sharp.

Teach your team to take risks. Then teach them to judge which risks are worth taking.

Learn brainstorming techniques and use them with your team. Remind the team members that criticism is not allowed, and that all ideas, however zany, may lead to a good solution, if only by sparking other ideas.

Practice with card-turning, a spinner, dice, whatever you can think of to slow down verbal spontaneous and make them use two parts of their brains at once.

Practice saying "Unclear, please repeat," even if you could hear an answer. The team needs to be relaxed when that happens, and know the judge simply couldn't hear them, and repeat the answer a little louder.

Try some of the following variations on brainstorming:

Break into pairs. Partners in each pair then take turns suggesting ideas to each other, keeping track of them to bring back a list to the whole group.

Each person in the group (in turn) selects a random object out of a bag or box filled with miscellaneous items. The group then takes two or three minutes to make new connections for a given scenario or problem from each new object.

Give each group member a stack of small slips of paper and a pencil. Each one writes as many ideas about a problem as possible. Then, combine the results. Discuss fluency and flexibility. (How many answers did they have? How many DIFFERENT answers did they have?)

Create a time for individuals to encourage visual images to "stream" into their vision. Encourage them to capture any images, signs, or symbols that appear, without judging them, and to try to manipulate images and play with new possibilities. Ask them to record their images.

Let team members keep score in practicing spontaneous. They will be better able to judge what is common and what is creative. They will also get an appreciation for how subjective the scoring is, and realize that they can only do their best and hope for judges who appreciate their answers!

Tape record (or video) the team in action. Let them critique themselves.

Use Spontaneous skills to solve Long-Term Problems.

Teach the team how to S.C.A.M.P.E.R. - **S**ubstitute one part of something for another, **C**ombine things to make a something new, **A**dapt something to another use, **M**odify the size or shape (mentally), **P**ut to other uses, **E**liminate part of the whole, **R**everse the idea or object.

Above all, have fun with Spontaneous. This should be an enjoyable and exciting way for everyone (including YOU) to expand his (her) thinking skills.

#1 TIP FOR IMPROVING VERBAL SPONTANEOUS: Have the team bring in interesting articles or things they've read and discuss them. The more their "database" of knowledge, the more likely they will have divergent thoughts from which to pull answers. You could, for example, discuss the American West, and then say "name things that are red ... in the American West".

***SUGGESTIONS FOR A "MAGIC BOX 'O SPONTANEOUS" SUPPLIES TO KEEP AROUND THE HOUSE***

Sticky Labels	Paper Clips	Spaghetti	Toothpicks
Envelopes	8 ½ x 11 " paper	Chalk	Scissors
String	Masking Tape	Ping Pong Balls	Golf Balls
Rubber Bands	Small containers	Unsharpened Pencils	Clay
Pencils and Pens	Marbles	Plastic Cups	Scotch Tape
Clothespins	Turkey Baster	Other kitchen gadgets	Tissue Paper
Tinker Toy Parts	Straws	Washers	Nails
Jar Lids	Markers	Empty toilet papers rolls	Band-Aids
Miniature Marshmallows	Cotton Balls	Plastic Spoons	Colored Yarn
Wooden Molding	Dowels	A Brick	Balloons
Pins (older teams)	Paper Plates	Aluminum foil	Ribbon
Corks	Plastic Lids	Twist Ties	Deck of cards
Spinner	Dice	Stopwatch or timer	Imagination
A Belief That Kids Will Have Fun with Whatever You Give Them!			

**PROCEDURES FOR SPONTANEOUS PROBLEMS AT TOURNAMENTS**

1. All team members and one adult report to the Spontaneous Holding Room if one is being used.
2. When the team is called, ONLY team members may go to the Spontaneous Problem Room.
3. Upon entering the Spontaneous Room, a judge will tell the team the type of problem.
4. The team members will be given one minute to decide which five team members will participate. (If there are only five the ALL must participate, if they are present at the tournament.)
5. The non-participating team members may stay in special seats set aside for them in the room. If they choose to stay, they must remain quiet and serve as observers only. It is recommended that all team members stay, since they are still part of the team, whether speaking or not.
6. All team members should be certain they are not wearing a watch or other item that could beep. Teams may keep track of the time, but not have a stopwatch or timer or a watch with an alarm set.
7. There will be NO PENALTY for not sending more than five team members. However, **if a team has only five or fewer team member, all must report.**

8. The five team members participating will be given two written copies of the problem in order to be able to read along as a judge reads the problem.

Any interference from the non-participation team members will be penalized by removal of the non-participating team members.

If a coach does not choose to send all team members to spontaneous (either to the holding room or to the problem room,) it is perfectly acceptable, so long as at least 5 report (or all report if a team has fewer than 5 members).

#### **REMINDERS:**

To avoid congestion, usually only 1 coach may accompany the team to the spontaneous holding room.

If materials are used for manipulation in a verbal or combination problem, the team should listen carefully to how they are to be used. (For example, if you are to put a lima bean into a container every time you answer, make sure you do that before the next person may give an answer.)

**Materials for a VERBAL spontaneous may not usually be altered** unless officials tell the team they may do so. If in doubt, the team should ask during thinking time.

Be sure all team members know they MAY NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES discuss or reveal the nature of the spontaneous problem until after the competition is ended! Wait for the awards ceremony to talk about it – and even then only in private, as other regions/states may be using the same problem and may not yet have competed! Problems should remain secret until after the last US/international tournament prior to World Finals, i.e., basically until the end of May.

A team that has fewer than five team members should have all team members participate, but the team might be at a disadvantage in some spontaneous problems.

**PRIMARY ONLY:** In some regions or associations, primary does NOT participate in spontaneous. In most regions, if primary does participate, all team members may participate. Check with your regional director to find out how this will be handled in your particular region. If spontaneous IS offered to primary, the coach should relax ... the problem will be age appropriate, and the officials will be very nurturing and supportive of the team's efforts!

## ***PARTICULARLY PRIMARY***

Primary coaches often ask, "since this division is non-competitive, why should we worry about the rules and forms and such?" The answer lies in the entire purpose of the Primary Division: this is an age for learning about Odyssey and learning the process. Also, as a matter of practicality, coaching is actually easier if you are familiar with all the procedures and methods described in this handbook.

**Forms** are optional for primary, but it would be good to have the team at least become familiar with them. Not only will they need to know about them if they advance to Division I, but the forms can help point out the process to the team.

**Scores** are not usually given to primary, but are in the problem. Why? Because the scores can help a team plan its time and decide what they need to do. Also, the team may wish to "score themselves" at a rehearsal, just to see how they think they are doing. Remember, this is about learning and feeling good about problem solving. Scores can help with that process.

**Feedback** in the form of comment sheets may be given in some regions to primary teams at the tournament. If your region does not give you any comments, you might ask your regional director whether that would be possible. If not, you might have the team parents write down a few comments for the team. **KEEP THESE POSITIVE.** Do not allow any negative remarks to spoil the hard effort of these young Odyssey team members.

**Spontaneous** may or may not be offered to primary teams at a regional tournament. So you may wonder, why practice? Here again, spontaneous thinking is a fundamental ability in creative problem solving. A team has FUN with spontaneous, and may not even realize they are learning to work together, to analyze problems, to think divergently, and to take risks. Whether someone is 5 or 55, spontaneous problem solving teaches a way of thinking that we can all use in our lives every day. Let the primary teams have fun with spontaneous ... just adapt the problems for their age level!

**Meetings** should be adapted to the age level. It is unlikely that a group of Kindergarten-age students will want to work at any given task for an hour! Plan your meetings accordingly. Enlist the aid of parents, if necessary, to allow the team to work in several small groups.

**Expectations** should also be adjusted for the age level. Don't expect primary teams to invent cold fusion in a bottle, or paint like Degas! And, even more important, don't allow the parents to expect the team to have the polish and expertise that the team would have if the PARENTS were helping solve the problem!! Sometimes it is difficult for parents to understand that a tree painted pink is OK! This is about learning, not about perfection. (And who said a tree couldn't be pink, anyway??)

**Penalties** are not given to primary teams, since they receive no scores!! However, good behavior is certainly expected, and parents could be asked to remove a child from the tournament if the behavior is totally unacceptable. (It never is ... these teams are very excited to be participating!)

**FUN and LEARNING** should be the primary focus of primary team (and for all teams.) This is not a competition for them, and everyone should relax and enjoy the showcase of the talent of these young teams!

## PRIMARY PRIMER (for primary teams, grades K-2)

Keep meetings brief,  
You'll save yourself grief.

(30 minutes may be a long enough meeting time for the little ones.)

Gauge your group's attention span,  
Keep units short and have a plan.

(Plan work in blocks of time with small, achievable goals. Let the team check them off a list.)

Adapt the plans meant for older ones;  
Simplify them and make them fun.

(See what the idea is behind some of the more complex activities and simply the method.)

Do the Odyssey forms if desired,  
But keep in mind they're NOT required.

(Doing the forms with 2<sup>nd</sup> graders would help them learn a skill for next year.)

Keep a big box of much miscellaneous,  
It will come in handy for doing spontaneous.

(A bag of tricks can be pulled out for some instant brainstorming to keep meetings fun.)

Write down the team's ideas and list du jour;  
But make sure it's the teams own words, not yours!

(It would be outside assistance for a coach to inject his or her own words.)

Having an assistant coach would be in your favor  
For working in smaller groups can be a lifesaver.

(For painting and other work sessions, dividing may mean conquering, as well as less mess.)

Lots of snacks appeal to the tummy;  
Odyssey will be more fun if it is also yummy.

(All of us operate on the food is social and fun principle.)

Don't expect perfection or a production that's "just so;"  
These are young children, not a Broadway show.

(These are 6, 7 and 8-year-olds. Adjust expectations accordingly)

Don't come into this expecting a score:  
Primary is an exhibition age, nothing more.

(Primary is a learning experience with no pressure of competition.)

All the work should be the students' alone,  
What you do for them they will not own.

(If the coach or parents do the kids' work, they have not won the self-esteem and confidence that are the true rewards of Odyssey of the Mind!)

## ***WHAT HAPPENS AT A TOURNAMENT?***

Walk in the door ... oh, my goodness! So many people! Everyone carrying props, costumes, vehicles, containers! Where do we go? What do we do? Each tournament will be slightly different, depending on the number of volunteers and officials, the site itself, the number of teams, and so forth. But in general, this is the way your day should go:

The team will arrive with props and excitement at the tournament site. The coach will register the team for competition, and pick up a registration packet at the registration desk.

Plan to arrive at least 2 hours before your performance time (either Long-Term or spontaneous, whichever is first.) Check out the performance area and the building, looking to see where the pre-staging area may be and where the team can put props until they report to the pre-staging area.

The team, coaches and perhaps parents should bring in props about one hour before the Long-Term performance time.

The building will seem chaotic ... people everywhere, carrying large trees, small children, wide signs, narrow backdrops. Somehow this sorts itself out, as people take teams' possessions to the appropriate areas. Find an area where you can set down your props, preferably near the staging or pre-staging area for your problem. Let the team examine things for any damage and make repairs. Then it's time to get into costume, while the coach or parents keep an eye on the props to keep them from getting trampled

Whether Long-Term or Spontaneous is first, a little while before the scheduled spontaneous time, the team should prepare in a quiet (sort of) corner someplace, and then report to the spontaneous check-in about 15 minutes before their time to perform.

Check the information mailed by your specific tournament director – each tournament may vary slightly so far as procedures go. The team and coach will be taken to the spontaneous area. Only the team (except for primary) will go into the room with the officials to perform.

At 15 minutes before their scheduled Long-Term performance time, the team should bring props and vehicle, etc. to the check-in area.

All long term problems have a "Check-In" area where a Judge takes the team's paperwork and measure things, looks for any safety concerns, etc. Sometimes this is done in the Staging Area.

BALSA teams must have the structure weighed at least one hour before scheduled performance time (see your tournament's guidelines for weigh-in).

If the structure does not conform to requirements, the team will be given a period of time to try to reduce the weight. They may then have the structure re-weighed. The teams will pick up their sealed structures (which have been weighed) no earlier than 25 minutes before performance time, and then proceed to the check-in area.

Long-Term and Spontaneous will be scheduled at least an hour apart, in most instances.

Often, because of scheduling issues, there will be even more time. You may have Long-Term and Spontaneous several hours apart. If so, take time out for lunch, go see some other teams, or bring some cards or coloring books, or spontaneous problems to do (or all of the above.)

Long-Term performances will begin from what is called the Staging Area.

This is an area near the performance site (almost always only a few yards away.) The team takes all items for the performance to the Staging Area from Check-in Area (or from the hall if there is no Check-in. When the previous team has left, and the judges are ready, the Timekeeper will ask the team if they are ready to perform. When everyone is ready, the Timekeeper will say "Begin" and the team's eight minutes starts. The coach may sit in a specially designated seat ... or in the audience.

## OFFICIALS

It is an amazing fact of an Odyssey of the Mind<sup>®</sup> tournament that anywhere from 100 – 200 officials are needed to give feedback to the teams! Who are all these people running around in Official's shirts, anyway? Do we really need them??

Each Long-Term Problem site, should, ideally, have the following judges:

1 Head Judge	Supervises the judges; answers questions; returns scores
3-4 Problem Judges	Score the Long-Term Problem
2-4 Style Judges	Score Style
1-2 Staging Area Judges	Take forms, check solution materials, try to put the team at ease
1 Timekeeper	Announces the team to the audience; tells the team when to begin
1 Doorkeeper	Prevent people from entering during a performance
1 Score Compiler	Checks all the math; may take scores to the score room

You can do the math for yourself --- if there are 15 problems and divisions, and also a Primary performance site, this means at least 160 Officials just for Long-Term (not even counting Score Room personnel, Problem Captains overseeing every problem set-up, or Tournament Directors!) Now add 3-4 judges for each spontaneous site, and you have the need for over 200 officials!

Of course, some divisions are scheduled into the same site with the same judging team. So, depending on the number of teams registered, and the number of sites needed, there may be fewer Officials. But, the bottom line is this: **if you want your team's subjective scores (including spontaneous scores) to be an average of several people's opinions**, and if you want the tournament to run smoothly with few errors, it is up to YOU, as the coach, to help recruit enthusiastic, interested officials. We truly do need lots of help to run a tournament, and this is an all-volunteer organization, in which everyone must pitch in for the kids.

Another point to consider, when you look at the list of Officials, is the fact that only 5 or 6 of 8-10 judges will be actually scoring your team in the Long-Term performance (Problem and Style judges). Be sure to tell your team that they should not worry if some judges don't seem to be paying attention ... the Head Judge may be reviewing scores, or a Score Compiler may be "doing the math" from the previous team. All Officials try to watch and to appreciate each team's performance, but in order to stay on schedule that isn't always possible. But you may be sure that the **scoring** judges will be watching every second!

One Official not yet discussed is the Long-Term Problem Captain. This person trains the other judges, and supervises all sites in a given Long-Term Problem. If a team has a question that cannot be resolved after talking to the Head Judge, the Head Judge will call in the Problem Captain to try to resolve the issue. (And if, after talking to the Problem Captain, a coach is still not satisfied, the coach and team may request a tribunal. A tribunal is a meeting of the Problem Captain, and two other Officials, usually the Tournament Director, Regional Director, or perhaps another Regional Board member, who make any necessary final decisions on rule interpretation, when necessary.)

The primary concern of every Official at a Tournament should be to make this a positive and enjoyable experience for each and every team, regardless of score, and to make each and every team feel that they have achieved the amazing ... which, of course, they have!



## ***TOP TWENTY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEAM IN THE WEEK BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT***

20. Have you filled out a Cost Form and do we have photocopies of any receipts  
and at least one (plus one more “back-up”) copy of the form?
19. Have you filled out the Style Form and made 4-6 photocopies (4 copies + auxiliary back-ups)?
18. Have you filled out two copies of the Outside Assistance form (1 copy + back-up)?
17. Do you have any other required lists (as specified in some problems), and extra copies?
16. Do you have any team clarifications you need to give the judges? Have you made copies?
15. Is the team sign “legal” and will it (they) be visible the entire performance?
14. Do all parents (and family members) know how to get to the tournament and what time arrive?
13. Do we have a camera to take pictures? Would a team member like to be in charge of that?
12. How can you be sure you won’t go overtime?
11. What if the scenery (or props) fall down?
10. What if someone forgets his/her lines?
9. Who is going to do a verbal spontaneous problem?
8. Who is going to do a hands-on spontaneous problem?
7. Do we have a master list and a person in charge of making sure everything we need, including  
the fix-it kit, arrives at the tournament on time?
6. Does everyone (including family planning to attend) know our schedule?
5. Do you all have watches you can wear, if possible, that will not “beep” during spontaneous?
4. How can we show our Odyssey of the Mind spirit and good sportsmanship?
3. Do all parents understand the Outside Assistance rules (including on Tournament Day?)
2. Does everyone know that our team is a great team and you are all winners, because you have  
won knowledge, skills and abilities that you will keep all your lives?
1. And lastly, Coach, two questions for YOU: have you planned a party or reward one day soon  
for this group that has worked so hard all year? And have you planned a rest period for **yourself**  
the day after the Tournament?? Take a good look at how far this team has come and then remind  
yourself that it is the process, not the score on the day of the Meet, which they will remember  
forever!

## ***A FEW RESOURCES THAT MAY BE OF ASSISTANCE***

(Because coaches can have Outside Assistance and sometimes need a little!)

**BALSA** wood may be ordered from:

Creative Competitions, Inc. ([www.odysseyofthemind.com](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com))

SIG Manufacturing, 1-800-524-7805

Balsa USA, 1-800-225-7287

And other sources you may find on the Internet

Be sure you have a micrometer (or calipers) and scales for the team to use to measure and weigh wood. Be sure your team checks for itself to be sure wood meets specifications.

### **BOOKS:**

Books may be ordered from CCI on the Internet or by calling 1-856-256-2797

Some regions/states will have books available at Coaches' Trainings

Other helpful books can be ordered from Fox Imaging (<http://foximaging.com/store>)

**Scavenger Hunt: [www.ScrapExchange.org](http://www.ScrapExchange.org) 923 Franklin St. Durham, NC 2770  
(919) 688-6960**

### **HUMAN RESOURCES:**

Experienced coaches may be of help to new coaches. Go to your region's coaches' training, and meet some of the other coaches. Network with other coaches from your school and perhaps even work together to put on a "spontaneous night" or share spontaneous problems.

School coordinators should provide you with copies of newsletters, the rulebook and the problem. Often they can also help with any questions, based on their past experience with Odyssey.

Regional Directors are always available to answer questions. Their e-mail addresses may be found under "State Board" on the state website <http://ncom.org> .

Skilled personnel may be recruited to teach the team sewing, acting, etc., but may NOT directly address **any** requirements of a specific Long-Term problem, which would be Outside Assistance!

### **THE INTERNET:**

National Web site: <http://www.odysseyofthemind.com> (Has links to Odyssey sites all over the world, and materials you can order, plus downloads of forms and the Program Guide and a lot of other information! General Clarifications are posted here.

North Carolina Web site: <http://ncom.org> (Has links to **regional web pages** and other information)

Fox Imaging (for books, spontaneous kits, and other items) <http://foximaging.com/store>

Odyssey-World (a global group of Odyssey discussions): <http://www.odyssey-world.org>

Virginia Spontaneous Problems: <http://va.odysseyofthemind.org/weekproblemarchive.html>

# DIAMOND BRAINSTORMING METHOD: A TOOL FOR IDEA GENERATION

Any group attempting to create great things must first start with small ideas and build upon them. Odyssey teams often need to learn how to brainstorm ideas, then how to discuss them, and, finally, how to narrow them down to ones that are practical. At the same time, they must learn to respect each other's ideas and be willing to give up individual ideas for the success of the group.

The Diamond Brainstorming Method is a visual method that encourages as many ideas as possible. Teams build one idea from another, and all ideas are listed as they "pop out" of the team members' heads, no matter how "impossible" they seem. Also, by building up ideas one at a time and narrowing them down one at a time, the method encourages team members to relinquish ownership of ideas, so no one's feelings are hurt by rejection during later discussion. The visual quality of this appeals particularly to younger teams who can "see" their ideas taking shape.

**MATERIALS:** A large chart, newsprint pad, blackboard, or white board; markers or pens; and eager team members wanting to share ideas.

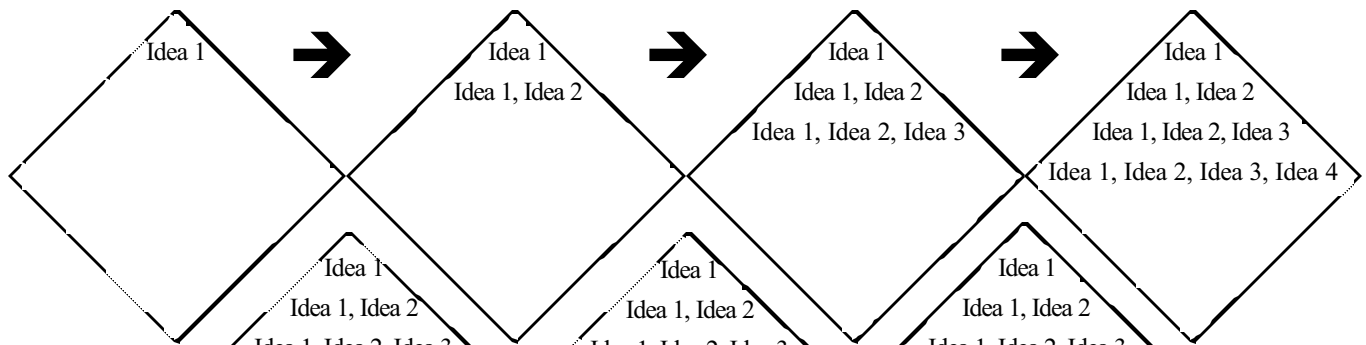
**FORMAT:** Team members sit in chairs or on the floor, with one person recording ideas. (The coach may record the ideas, but he/she must write down the teams' exact words.)

**PROCEDURE:**

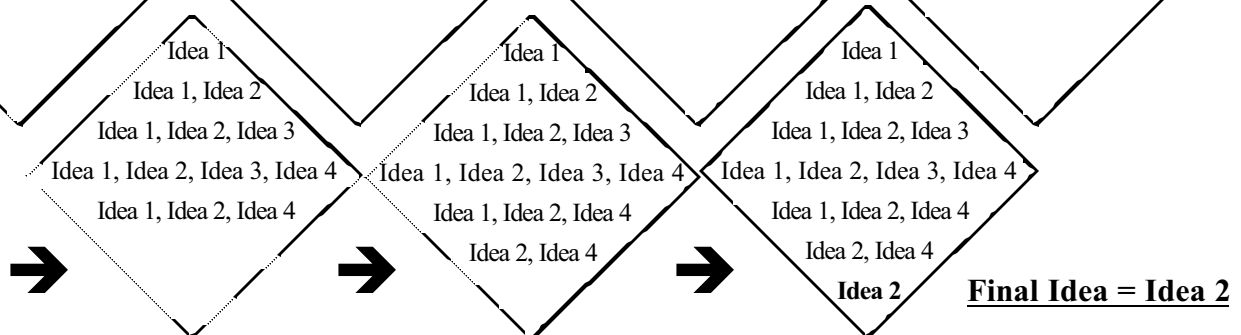
1. Team members pose a question, such as, What would be the best way to do 'X', or, How can we make 'Y', or, What should 'Z' look like? Note: The team members must generate the questions themselves, and the questions should be general and open-ended. A coach may help the team determine exactly what it is they want to brainstorm by asking questions such as, What is the problem you are trying to figure out?
2. All the team members brainstorm answers to the question, and someone suggests his/her idea, and the recorder writes it down on the board or chart.
3. A second member gives an idea, and it is written down with the first one just below the first idea, so that the ideas begin to fill in the top half of the diamond shape (see Row A). Ideas are repeated on each line; the widest part of the diamond displays ALL the team's ideas.
4. After the team members come up with all possible ideas (as few as 4 or 5, or as many as 10 or 15) they then begin, through discussion, to narrow down the possibilities by eliminating one at a time as shown in Row B. They could even combine two or more separate ideas to determine the final one. Hopefully, they'll come to an agreement on their favorite idea without voting -- and without argument!

**Remember: Only constructive criticism is ever allowed!**

**Row A: Idea Generation**



**Row B: Idea Elimination**



## What is Outside Assistance?

First let's review the basics: Coaches need to organize the team, maintain order and discipline, and sometimes motivate the kids. They may serve as a "recording secretary" to a team (no matter what division) as long as they write only what the team members say. Only Division I coaches may fill out official forms for the team. Division II and III team members must fill out the forms themselves.

Coaches are allowed to ask the team members questions to prod them to think about their solutions and how to improve them. However, these questions must not lead the students. For example, a coach could not ask, "Don't you think it would be better to narrate your play, rather than act it out?" The correct way to state the question would be, "How many different ways are plays presented?" This will encourage the team to think creatively and not indicate that the coach thinks the way the play is presented should be changed. By asking broad questions, the coach stimulates the team members to think. This is the heart of the OotM program.

Because coaches want to do their job, do it well, and never place a team in jeopardy due to their own misinterpretation of what Outside Assistance is or isn't, it is important that they know just what does and does not qualify as Outside Assistance. Excerpted below are sample questions posed by coaches and OotM's response.

**Scenario A:** For a Division I team a parent plugs in a power tool for one of the students because it is a rule in their house that no children are allowed to plug in any appliance.

Question: Is it Outside Assistance (OA) for any non-team member to plug in a power tool that the team uses to complete its solution to the problem?

*Answer: No, it is not OA for a parent to plug a cord in an outlet for practice. (The parent may not use the power tool to work on the problem solution.) However, it is OA if someone other than the team plugs a cord in during the team's performance time.*

**Scenario B:** Kids try to assemble two boards (fourth graders) using screws and nails, but they keep falling apart.

Question: Is it OA for the team to ask an adult who is familiar with carpentry how to fix the problem?

*Answer: An adult can tell and show the team members various ways to connect boards. He/She must not show the team one specific way to connect the boards in the team's solution. An adult should give the team many possible ways to assemble the boards and must allow the team to determine what it will do in its solution. There is a principle that if information can be found through research, an adult can tell the team.*

**Scenario C:** A team decides it will center its skit on a CELL theme. The coach gives the team members a homework assignment to come up with as many words as possible that contain the word CELL, such as cellophane, cellular phone, etc.

Question: Is it OA for a coach to give a homework assignment that gets the kids to think more creatively about an initial idea that they came up with?

*Answer: Although the coach should not give the team any examples, the assignment is one of the types of things the coach should do to help the team develop its creativity.*

**Scenario D:** Team members decide to narrate a good deal of the solution.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to ask them if they can think of other ways to tell a story, rather than reading a piece of paper?

*Answer: Inspiring the kids to generate ideas is part of coaching. As long as the coach is not instructing the team to change its solution it is allowed. For example, a coach may not say, "You need to think of a different way to tell the story." A coach may say, "What are the different ways a story can be presented?" This way, the coach is trying to stimulate their thinking as opposed to guiding the solution.*

**Scenario E:** As the team deliberates on what its solution will be, the coach asks questions to make sure that the solution is well thought out.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to ask questions as the team is developing its solution?

*Answer: No – that's exactly what a coach is for! (Just don't ask leading questions.)*

**Scenario F:** Four of seven team members on a team in one OotM year build some backdrops for use in their presentation. These same four are on a team the following year with three new members.

Question: Is it OA for the new team to use the backdrops built in the prior year? May a team use props from prior year in any situation without incurring an OA penalty?

*Answer: Any material that was part of an Odyssey of the Mind solution from a previous year can be used by the team. If the materials were created by the **exact** same team, that is, there are no members from the original roster missing from the current roster, they will be considered team-created. Otherwise, they will be judged commercially produced. These items, such as props and backdrops, will be considered the same as items found in a thrift shop, school theater department, etc. In no case may a team use anything created by anyone who is not on the team's roster to specifically aid in solving the current problem. In other words, if the team uses anything that is produced or provided by a non-team member during the process of solving the problem, it will be considered Outside Assistance.*

**Scenario G:** An OotM team wants to paint some props. There is some paint that was left over from last year, but the colors were mixed by last year's team.

Question: Would it be OA for a team to use something that was made by someone else even though essentially the same thing could easily be bought by any team.

*Answer: No. The decision to paint a prop a specific color is a team decision. It does not matter if the paint used came from a store, the school, a garage, etc., as long as it is selected by the team and included on the materials value form.*

**Scenario H:** A Division I team is spray-painting a prop.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to hold a team member's hand for about 2 seconds (out of a 30-minute job) to help show the proper way to spray paint?

*Answer: Yes. The coach may not help spray paint anything used in the solution. However, the coach may teach the team member how to spray paint by using something that is not part of the solution such as a scrap piece of wood.*

**Scenario I:** A Division I structure team has a sheet of paper describing the order to put weights on (smaller diameter first, then larger, to allow hand grip space). Team members composed the form (came up with the idea) but the coach actually wrote it.

Question: Is it OA for a non-team member to write down the instructions used by team members during their presentation? Is this any different than the coach completing the Style Form for Division I?

*Answer: As long as the team members provided the information, it is okay for the coach to write it out. It is not different from the rules for the Style Form regarding Division I teams.*

**Scenario J:** A Division I team is brainstorming its solution.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to write down the team members' ideas for later review?

*Answer: This is a good idea. The only rule surrounding this is that the coach may only write down what the team members say.*

**Scenario K:** A coach interprets an "engineering practice" to make it applicable to the current problem. For example, the engineering practice of material quality assurance could be translated into inspecting and sorting balsa prior to its use in a structure.

Question: Does the interpretation of how to apply a general engineering practice to a problem represent OA?

*Answer: Not enough information is provided. The ruling would depend on how the information is presented to the team. If the coach (or any non team member) guides the team by providing a single idea or practice that the team otherwise would not have sought, it would be OA. For example, if the team never even considered that there might be a difference in the quality of strips of balsa wood, it would be OA to tell the team there is a difference, which wood to use, and to show the team members how to pick wood. It would not be OA if the team asked about the properties of wood and how to inspect strips. That information can be found using research and may be communicated by the coach. The coach should direct the team to test different pieces of wood.*

**Scenario L:** With proper training, it is possible to examine a structure and determine which element failed first and why.

Question: Is it OA for someone other than a team member to examine a failed structure and provide this information for the team?

*Answer: Not if the team asks the person and all he/she does is tell the team members what part failed. He/She cannot tell the team why it failed or what to do to keep it from failing in the future.*

**Scenario M:** A coach presents the team with a simple, generic demonstration of an engineering concept that the team immediately applies to its solution (e.g. a simple demonstration of how a truss withstands lateral loads better than a frame).

Question: Does the presentation of an engineering concept represent OA in this circumstance?

*Answer: As stated, yes. The coach would have to present several options of construction and demonstrate how each fails, but the team members must draw their own conclusions.*

**Scenario N:** A division I team needs to move a 4' x 6' sheet of plywood from the garage to a workshop area.

Question: Is it OA for non-team member to move the plywood for them?

*Answer: No, this is okay. Non-team members may move items except during the team's performance time.*

**Scenario O:** A goal for a team is to learn how to take a complex problem apart, test each component in a controlled manner, then reintegrate the resulting solution and validate if it performed as expected.

Question 1: Is it OA for the coach to encourage the kids to approach the problem this way?

*Answer 1: No. The coach may encourage the kids to approach the problem this way.*

Question 2: Is it OA for the coach to build jigs or testers to facilitate testing the alternatives the team came up with in its sub-components?

*Answer 2: No for testers and yes for jigs. Anyone may make a tester but only the team may make jigs because they are construction aids.*

**Scenario P:** A younger sibling has been following with interest the experiments, designs, and "tricks of the trade" on an older sibling's team.

Question: Can the younger sibling adopt the many "lessons learned" from following an older sibling's team around for several years without incurring OA?

*Answer: This is okay to do as long as the younger sibling does not produce exact thematic copies.*

**Scenario Q:** A Division I coach asks each team member to read one of the elements of the problem and explain what it means.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to write each element on a piece of paper and ask the team to group the elements so that it now has a bubble diagram that organizes the elements? Once the team organized the elements, can the coach copy them down, make copies, and distribute them to each team member?

*Answer: (Any Division) No. It is okay for the coach to write down the elements, ask the team to group them and then copy the grouping and distribute copies to the team members. The coach may not add or change anything, however.*

**Scenario R:** A team is brainstorming about all the things that make you think of tropical islands.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to put those ideas on a flip board for everyone to see?

*Answer: This is okay provided the coach writes only the team members' words.*

**Scenario S:** Team members are creating the script (Div. 1).

Question: Is it OA for the coach to write down what they say so that they can look at what they already have?

*Answer: This is okay in any division provided the coach writes only the team members' words.*

**Scenario T:** A Div. 1 team is reading the OotM Program Guide and cannot figure out what will happen if they have printed materials for judges to read.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to help them figure out what the rulebook is trying to tell them? Is it OA if the kids ask what the coach thinks it means? Is it OA if the team asks the coach what he/she would do if he/she were them?

*Answer: The coach should help them interpret the rulebook. The coach may tell the team what he/she thinks it means. The coach cannot tell the team members what he/she would do unless the answer is “write for a problem clarification.” However, he/she should encourage the team to think about what it means first.*

**Scenario U:** A Div. I team has decided to use what it thinks is tasteful bathroom humor in its skit. The coach has made sure everyone is aware of the rule about vulgarity.

Question: The team doesn't think it's vulgar but does not have a clue what adults think is vulgar (TV examples abound in the arguments as examples of what adults think is acceptable). Is it OA for them to tell other adults what their jokes are and to ask if they think it's vulgar?

*Answer: No, this is okay to do. Even a clarification will not be able to state what any particular judging team will deem acceptable versus vulgar.*

**Scenario V:** The performance has been taped. Four kids think they need to schedule an extra practice; three think they do not and the performance cannot be done with just four.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to make the decision? Is it OA for the coach to say “Majority rules?” Is it OA for the coach to say they must come to a consensus (meaning every person but one must agree)?

*Answer: It is up to the coach to make the decision or to decide on how the decision is to be made. Practice schedules are entirely within the coach's purview. The coach should create this structure when the team is first assembled.*

**Scenario W:** A judge stops a team's performance in long-term because its vehicle is marking the floor. At end of the performance parents standing outside the taped area lift the car to protect the floor.

Question: Is it OA for any non-team member to help with the props after the performance has ended.

*Answer: No. The team may have help with prop movement at any time except during the timed competition period.*

**Scenario X:** During check-in the coach hands the paperwork to the judge.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to hand the paperwork to the judge?

*Answer: No. Although it is always good to have the team members hand in the paperwork, there is no rule against the coach handing it to the judge.*

**Scenario Y:** A team member tells the adult who is helping to stack weights that he is going to go help resolve a problem with a prop. The adult verbally acknowledges that statement with the affirmation, “Sure, go ahead.”

Question: Does this represent OA?

*Answer: No. The team member has made the decision to do this. It would be OA if the adult said something like, “Weight placement is more important, just stay here and continue with this” or if the adult initiated the conversation by telling the team member to go help with the prop.*

**Scenario Z:** A team is preparing for its spontaneous competition. The coach picks problems for them to practice with that he/she thinks represent the type they will get in competition. The



coach tells them whether they made a creative response or a common one. The team is given constant, direct feedback on the quality of their spontaneous solutions.

Question: Is it OA for the coach to prepare their team for spontaneous competition in that manner.

*Answer: No, preparing teams is one of the primary roles of the coach.*

**Scenario AA:** Kids get to World Finals and are uncrating their scenery and props (unscrewing crates).

Question: Is it OA for the coach to tell the team in what order to do everything? (We know they can help do it but does a team member have to tell the adult to do it?) Can the coach point out things that broke and ask if the team is going to repair them?

*Answer: It is okay for the coach to tell the team what order to uncrate things. It is also okay for the coach to point out things that broke and ask if the team wishes to try and repair them. However, from that point on it is up to the team members to decide whether and how to make repairs.*

**Scenario BB:** A Div I team is having major problems figuring out how to keep track of information for its Materials Value Form.

Question: Can the coach ask what information the team is trying to track and how they intend to track it, and then prepare some sheets for the team members to use to write down all the information as they go?

*Answer: Yes, the coach may do this.*

**Scenario CC:** It is summer time and the synopsis of next year's problems have been published, but the full version has not been published.

Question: Since the problem has not been completely specified, is there anything the coach can do in this scenario that he or she couldn't do (with respect to OA) after the problems have been published?

*Answer: No, the rules are the rules all year.*

**Scenario DD:** A team observed another team dressed up in chicken costumes that did very well. The next year the team decided to dress up as chickens.

Question: Is it OA to observe successful performances in one year and copy facets of it in the next?

*Answer: No, it is not OA but the coach should try to motivate the team to be original.*

**Scenario EE:** A local group of several different OotM teams are convened for the purpose of practicing spontaneous problems. The coach of each team has prepared a different spontaneous problem to give to each of the teams.

Question: Are the coaches in this instance providing OA? If not, and the coaches score the teams, is this OA? If not, and the scores are provided back to the teams, is this OA?

*Answer: None of these circumstances is OA.*

**Scenario FF:** Same as the above, but the purpose is to practice each team's long-term solutions and present them to all of the other teams.

Question: As described, is anyone in this instance providing OA? If not, and the teams are scored, is this OA? If not, and the scores are provided back to the teams, is this OA?

*Answer: The teams may present their solutions to each other and may be scored. They may be given verbal comments. (Verbal comments would tend to give the team more specific direction in not only what category should be improved (indicated by the score), but what specific items or changes should be made (e.g. "Costumes were colorful, but all were alike so little creativity was exhibited."))*

For general information: The only practical Outside Assistance in spontaneous is if, during the competition, one of the non-participating team members joins in to help the team members who are solving spontaneous. (Or if someone obtained a copy of the problem(s) in advance and gave them to the competing team.)

What are the penalties if Outside Assistance is present? Here is how an Outside Assistance penalty should be considered:

First, you must consider the amount of assistance given. For example, in scenario H, where the coach holds a team member's hand for 2 seconds out of 30 minutes to show how to spray paint, if this is done while painting the prop, then a very small Outside Assistance penalty should be given. The questions the judge should ask are, "If the coach did not help spray this part of the prop, would my score have changed? How much did it help the team?" The assumption is that if the coach did not spray the part, he/she would have taught the team member to spray paint using another item. The answer to the question is obviously that the score would not have changed or not have changed significantly. (The bigger issue would be if the coach helped make the determination to use spray paint and/or which color to use.)

If the coach helped paint the entire prop, a larger penalty would be assessed. If the coach made the entire prop, a larger penalty would be assessed. If the coach made the entire prop, a larger penalty. And, if the coach had the idea for the prop as well as made it, an even larger penalty.

However, there is a second consideration. How much is the prop worth to the team? If the team did not have this prop, what difference would it have made? For example, assume the coach designs and makes an elaborate background set for the team. The team is in the structure problem and the set is one of the "free choice" Style categories. The greatest number of points that the team can earn for this set is 10 plus whatever of the 10 overall effect points it might add. In any case, no more than 20 points total. Therefore, the penalty should not be the maximum. However, suppose that the team is in the *Classics* problem. The set is paramount to the play. Its set is the focal point for the performance. The penalty should be much greater. In the first instance, the structure problem, the judge should say to him/herself, "If I give this amount of penalty for a Style item, what penalty would I give if the coach designed and made the structure?" This obviously would be a maximum penalty since it is the entire long-term problem solution.

Remember: A coach helps the team members to grow. This means providing a good environment, maintaining discipline, and stimulating – not influencing – its thinking.

**I don't know whether it is sill or not, but when my team went to its first competition years ago, we didn't know we needed to fill out the different forms BEFORE we got to the competition area. We were a bunch of 8<sup>th</sup> graders at the Eurofest in Berlin in 1994 and we thought we had to fill out the forms there. You can believe the hurry we had when we had to fill it out in English! Today as a judge I still meet teams that do not have enough forms. I certainly can understand, but my advice would be to bring enough forms; if you have too many, it's okay.**

**When I coached a team I always kept one set of completed forms in out "problem binder" ( a sort of journal of our journey to the solution plus permission and membership forms, required forms, other forms, member list, etc). I always brought the problem binder with me to competition. In order to plan for the worst, the kids usually had me keep another full set of completed required forms in case of emergency (like the time they all blew away!). The full set was an exact replica of the submission packet they'd prepared complete with appropriate numbers of copies.**

**Besides, who can think straight enough during the excitement of competition day to correctly fill out and copy form? Not me, by a long shot!**

**I consider sportsman-like conduct towards the other members of the team an essential part of teamwork. Spontaneous can be nerve-wracking for members who have to sit patiently while a team member is stuck and the mind goes blank. Don't forget there is an award for competitors/teams who exhibit extraordinary "Omership," to coin a word. Those who exhibit all of the good qualities Odyssey of the Mind instills and/or draws out of a participant qualify to be nominated for the OMER'S Award. It breaks my heart to see teams who obviously just "don't get it" and try to perform at each other's throats. A relaxed attitude and a pleasant, heartfelt smile from a team member goes a lot farther towards breaking a brain cramp than glares and impatient sighs.**

**One thing I wish I had known as a first year coach last year was that the coaches should pick up their team scores one-half hour after they compete. I coached two teams last year. The first team competed, and then went to Spontaneous and then we moved to the other team's long term problem site. It was at the second team's competition that the head judge said something to me about coming back in a half hour to get the score sheet to review. I never thought of going back to the first team's site to pick up their score sheet. Well, I found a mistake in judging on the second team's sheet that the judges quickly corrected – a mistake that I also could have corrected if I had known about doing that. At least I learned from my mistake and won't be making the same mistake next year.**

**Knowledge of the scoring process (not only what is in the "rule book" but actually understanding HOW scoring happens) is one of the most critical things a coach and team can learn; you should know what you will be judged on.**

**Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me...** *a compilation of words of wisdom from Odyssey of the Mind coaches and team members who have been there...*

**I wish someone had told me that team members always pull through on the day of competition. They face any problem they encounter that day – as a team and with a maturity that makes you forget all the stress and all the bad moments you had. The way they behave themselves on competition day makes you, as a coach, so proud that you figure: “All these months were not so bad after all: I can do this again next year!”**

**I wish someone had told me there is nothing so mysterious about Spontaneous. It seemed so secretive and scary to the kids. The judges are all volunteers and folks just like the coaches. A copy of the problem is placed on the table for the kids to read and use as a reference and if a solution does not break the rules of conduct for Odyssey of the Mind and is not specifically prohibited by the problem go for it.**

**I wish I knew how important practicing spontaneous is. The difference between places at competition can be very directly related to how well a team does in spontaneous.**

**I wish I knew most of the actual work gets done in the last couple weeks. For years I gave up every Saturday until last year when I was coaching two teams. They each got every other weekend and both got done one time.**

**I’m a kid but I know coaches wish they came up with the idea of practicing spontaneous during lunch: it helped our team out from not placing at all to getting first.**

**I am a Spontaneous judge. It breaks my heart to see the kids so frightened to be in the presence of the “Spontaneous Judges.” As a judge I always do everything I can to get the kids relaxed before we start. At World Finals last year, I had a pink flamingo finger puppet sitting on my clipboard; if there were kids who needed a little reassurance, Phyllis, the flamingo, would give them a little peck on the cheek. (She got a work out). Judges are there because we love kids; we don’t get any pay except the joy of seeing so many creative kids doing such amazing things. For me, that is payment in full!**

**If I could suggest something for all new coaches and especially for Division I teams...Please don’t let the fact that you can’t be with your team during Spontaneous get you nervous and upset; The kids will pick up on that and go into the spontaneous area with all your worries added to their own. As so many people have said, you need to practice all types of spontaneous problems on a regular basis. Get your team comfortable with the idea of thinking on their feet and don’t forget that many Spontaneous problems have a score for teamwork. If they have never competed, be sure to tell them what to expect once they are in the room with the judges. When you practice don’t forget you’re; have 5 team members participating at the competition; Let the team members decide who will participate as they will figure it out from the practice sessions. (A hint about practicing: nothing builds confidence like success. When they fail to solve a practice problem let them try it again.) Assure team members that while Spontaneous is an adventure into the unknown that is just part of what makes it “spontaneous.” Please remember that as judges we want every team to do their best; we will do our best to be fair and consistent in our judgements. The best thing YOU can do is prepare them well and smile when they go!**