

ODYSSEY OF THE MIND



The “Unofficial” On-line Coaches’ Training

by

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BEFORE WE GET STARTED...

This online coaches training is intended to be used as a brief introduction to the [Odyssey of the Mind](#)[™] Creative Problem-Solving program. It is not an official document. The BEST source of information is the current-year Program Guide.

There are many other resources available to coaches, some are referenced here as hyperlinks (shown in [Red](#)), others you will have to locate on your own. There are numbers in the lower right corner of some pages. These refer to pages in the Program Guide where you can find more information. You may wish to explore these resources, either as you go through this site, or at a later time.

This training can in no way fully substitute for a live Coaches' Training with an Odyssey of the Mind trainer. It is intended only to help get you started if you are unable to attend a training session, or if training is not available in your area.

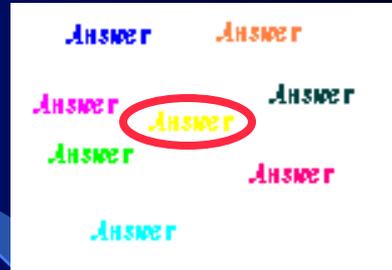
What is *Odyssey of the Mind (OOTM)*?

- International Creative Problem-Solving Program.
- Based upon the idea that creativity is a skill that can be taught and further developed with practice.
- Focus is to develop divergent, independent-thinking abilities (thinking outside the box, taking the path less traveled) through a challenging, but FUN, learning process.
- Team-effort, based loosely upon a sports model.
- Teams usually demonstrate their solutions at a tournament. Every team presenting a solution is a WINNER!
- Participants are K- College, but compete within age Divisions
- OOTM develops real-life communication and brainstorming skills, and rewards creativity and “calculated” risk-taking in the solution of complex problems.

What is *divergent-thinking*?

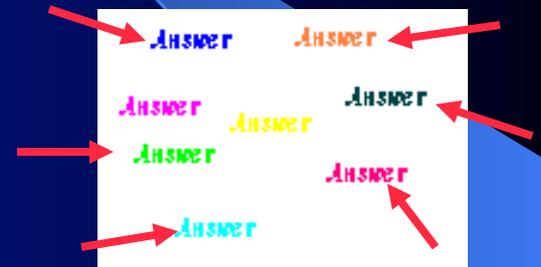
Convergent Problem Solving

- for every problem, there is just one correct answer



Divergent Problem Solving

- for lots of problems, there may be many correct answers



Odyssey of the Mind encourages young people to explore many possible answers and to be creative in finding a solution

Because there are no wrong solutions, teams are free to take calculated risks in attempting to solving the problem

Odyssey of the Mind allows kids to use their imaginations to interpret and solve complex problems in a FUN way!

History of *Odyssey of the Mind*

The program was started by a NJ College Educator, [Dr. C. Samuel Micklus](#) (Dr. Sam). Dr. Sam challenged students in his Industrial Design courses to solve assignments in unusual and creative ways. At the end of the semester, students presented their solutions in a competition.



The program expanded to NJ High Schools and in 1978-1979, the *Odyssey of the Mind* program began. Originally it was called Olympics of the Mind. New problems are written each year.

Non-profit organizations in individual states and countries run the program in their local areas. *Creative Competitions, Inc.* was formed to develop the problems and administer the program at the national, and later, at the international level

Program Structure -- Memberships

Memberships are from: schools, clubs, churches, libraries, community groups and home schools. A membership in Odyssey of the Mind costs \$135. An application can be found [here](#)!

For each “Membership”, there is a Membership Coordinator. This person serves as the conduit through which information flows. They receive the problems from the international organization, and communication and information from their Regional, State, Provincial, and International Odyssey of the Mind organizations.

To participate in a tournament, memberships often have to:

- Register and pay a small fee for each team
- Supply volunteers who can serve as judges or officials.

Teams in memberships not meeting these requirement are often not allowed to advance or must pay additional fees.

Check your [local association](#) to determine requirements

Program Structure -- Teams

Teams of 5-7 students participate in their choice of the current-year Long-Term Problems and practice Spontaneous Problems

- All Team Members may participate in the LT presentation
- 5 Team Members only may participate in Spontaneous (team choice). Others team members may observe.
- A maximum of 7 “Minds” can work on the problem

Teams participate within Age Divisions. In the U.S., these are based upon age of oldest team member and the grade level.

- Primary (Usually K-2)
- Div I (every team member in 5th grade or less)
- Div II (at least one team member in 6th-8th grade)
- Div III (at least one team member in 9th-12th grade)
- Div IV (all members with high school diploma and taking at least one college course)

Memberships & Teams

Each membership is allowed to send one team per Division in their school per Long-Term Problem they are eligible for.

Thus:

K-5 School – usually up to 5 teams + unlimited Primary Teams

K-8 School – usually up to 10 teams + unlimited Primary Teams

5-8 School – usually up to 10 teams

K-12 School – usually up to 15 teams + Primary Teams

9-12 Schools – usually up to 5 teams

Non-School Community Groups follow the same one team per Division per Long-Term Problem rule.

The purchase of additional (Team A, Team B) memberships allows more teams to participate in the same problem.

Outside Assistance

One of the most important parts of OOTM is that the Team MUST conceive, design, construct, and perform their own ideas. Help external to the team is termed Outside Assistance (OA).

~~OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE~~

The solution is the Team's design, their work, their performance, and their score. The Team is responsible for what they do, NOT the coach.

**OOTM is a Hands-On Program for Kids,
but a Hands-Off Program for Adults**

(It's Important that Parents Know OA Rules Too)

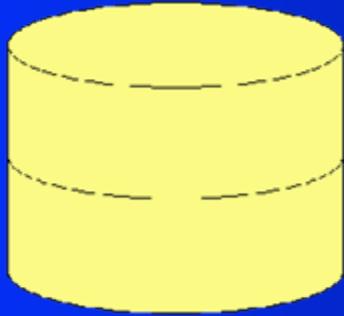
[Some great Scenarios can be found here](#)

So What Is the Role of the Coach?

- ✓ Scheduler (how often and where team meets)
- ✓ Facilitator (helps the team stay organized)
 - determine goals and the path to reach them
 - helps them read and understand the problem
 - helps team keep track of tasks and deadlines
 - takes notes (remind them of their previous ideas)
 - leads brainstorming sessions (without injecting ideas)
 - explains scoring
 - brings in “experts” to discuss & teach skills
- ✓ Teacher (teaches basic skills)
- ✓ Asks **QUESTIONS** (to help team focus, open-ended)
- ✓ Assists team in developing a timeline for projects
- ✓ Spontaneous practice (practice often, variety, strategies)
- ✓ Forms (helps Primary and Division I teams fill out forms)
- ✓ Go-fer (takes team members to store for supplies)
- ✓ Snack Organizer (fuel for busy minds)
- ✓ Mentor

The Three Components of OOTM

Long-Term



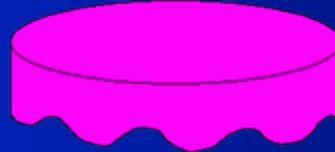
200 Points

- Specific Rules
- Open-Ended
- All Solutions Presented in Skit Form (8-min)

Style

50 Points

- Elaboration of Long-Term
- Pizzaz, Sparkle, Polish
- Team Chosen Elements



Spontaneous



100 Points

- On the Spot
- Anything Goes
- 3 Types
 - Verbal
 - Hands on
 - Hybrid



Long-Term + Style + Spontaneous = Total Score

Raw Scores are "Adjusted" so the team with highest raw score (for each component) receives the full possible score (200, 100, or 50 pts for the three components). Other team scores adjusted proportionally

What is Needed to Solve the Problem

There are three major information sources that are required to coach an Odyssey of the Mind team

- **2014-2015 PROGRAM GUIDE** (a large download)
(available on the international website or through your school membership coordinator)
- The Team's chosen **LONG-TERM PROBLEM**
(available from your school's membership coordinator)
- **CLARIFICATIONS** (General and team, available on the web, through your coordinator, or through your State Association, released throughout the season)
- **OTHER RESOURCES THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL**
 - Other Coaches
 - Membership Coordinator
 - Printed Materials
 - Websites / OdysseyWorld chat group
 - Local Association** (AD, RD, State Coordinator, Problem Captains)
 - International Program Headquarters (**general info, videos, books**)
 - Problem Procedures (usually released in late-Fall in Newsletter)

The Long-Term Problems

Six new Long-Term problems are released each year (Sept)

The PROBLEM SYNOPSES briefly describe these

Vehicle – Problem 1 Runaway Train

Technical – Problem 2 Experiencing Technical Difficulties

Classics – Problem 3 Pandora's Box

Structure – Problem 4 Lose Your Marbles

Theatrical – Problem 5 Silent Movie

Primary – Demonstration Only Wacky Weather Warning

All problems (except Primary) are offered to all age Divisions

There is a cost limit to each problem (usually ~\$125-145)

- therefore solutions cannot be “bought”
- only the materials used in competition included in the cost
- duct tape & cardboard, lawn-sale value, scavenging
- some “standard” and safety items are exempt from cost or have “assigned values” as listed in Program Guide.

The Long-Term Problems Continued ...

Participation requires a commitment by:

- Team members
- Coaches
- Membership Coordinators
- Volunteer Judges and Officials

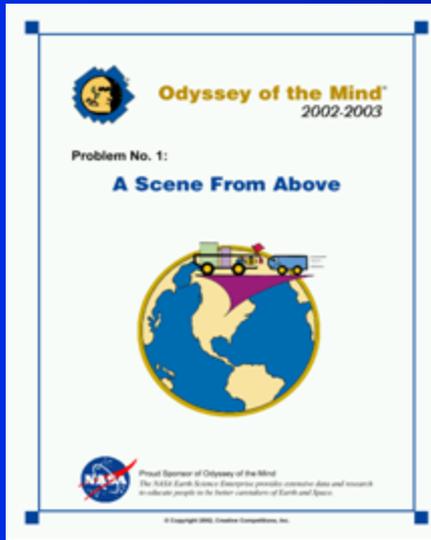
Teams generally work on their Long-Term Problems from November-March and present their solutions at Regional or State Tournaments.

If there is a question not answered in the [Guide](#) or [Problem](#), teams may request a Clarification via the [web](#)

In general... if it doesn't say you can't do it ... you **CAN!**

The Parts of a Long-Term Problem

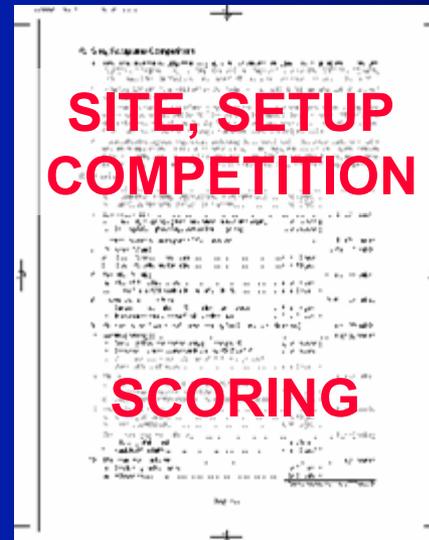
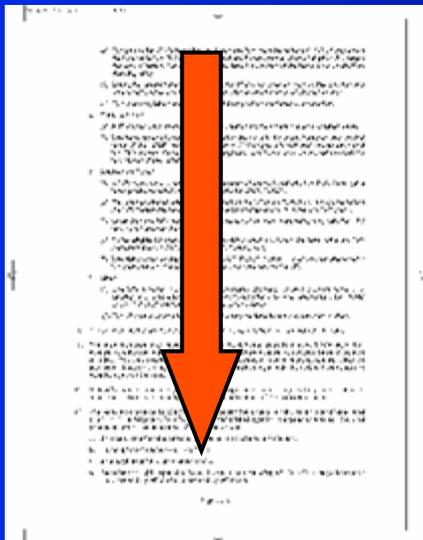
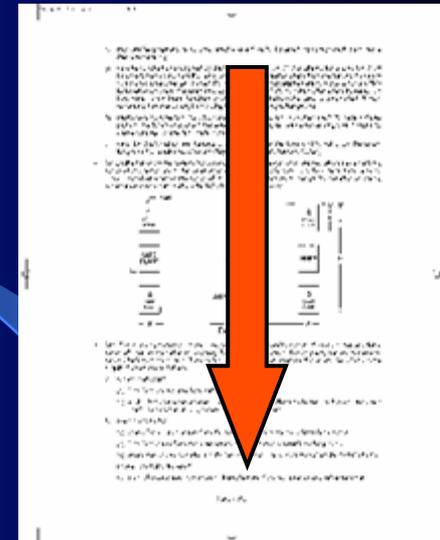
Need LT Problem + Program Guide + Clarifications



INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

LIMITATIONS



PENALTIES

STYLE

TOURNAMENT

DIRECTOR

WILL PROVIDE

TEAM WILL

PROVIDE

Spontaneous Problems

Spontaneous problems come in three types:

- Verbal – problems requiring verbal responses
- Hands on – problems requiring manipulation of materials
- Verbal/Hands On (Hybrid) – problems with both verbal and hands on components

PRACTICE... PRACTICE ... PRACTICE !

Do lots of different types.

Do at least two spontaneous problems each time the team meets.

Critique the teams performance (Coaches Hints are fine here)

Have each team member specialize in something.

Properties of materials ?

Fall back plans

Brainstorm ways
to get “unstuck”

Spontaneous Resources

[Odyssey of the Mind](#)

There are a variety of spontaneous practice books and kits [here](#).

Do it with Style !

Style is the elaboration of the Long-Term Problem. It is a place where the team can show the judges what they are particularly excited about or proud of? Style is presented during the Long-Term Problem Solution performance.

What makes this performance really shine?
Style is the place for the team to showcase their strengths and talents.

- artistic design, music, songs, choreography
- construction, creative use of materials
- humor, rhyme
- overall effect (theme)

BE SPECIFIC !

5 Categories (some mandatory, some team-choice, overall)



PENALTIES

Penalties are designed to prevent teams from bending or breaking the rules, creating a safety hazard, interfering with other teams, delaying competition, or misbehaving.

Spirit of the Problem - Aimed at preventing teams from circumventing the intention of the rules in either Long-Term or Spontaneous (-1 to -100 Points).

Unsportsmanlike Conduct - For impairing another team's solution, disruptive behavior, inappropriate language. Intentional (or unintentional) damage to facilities (-1 to -100 points).

Outside Assistance – If team receives help from anyone. This applies to audience as well. Thus teams shouldn't encourage audience participation (-5 to -200 points).

Incorrect/Missing Membership Sign – -1 to -15 points.

Over Cost Limit – Materials over cost limit (-1 to -100 points)

Over Time Limit – For each 10 sec or fraction (-5 points)

Typical *Odyssey of the Mind* Calendar

Purchase Membership (One per school, sometimes two, \$135)

Establish Membership Coordinator (who the mail goes to)

Form Teams, Recruit Coaches

Attend Coaches Training

Teams work on Solutions (November – March)

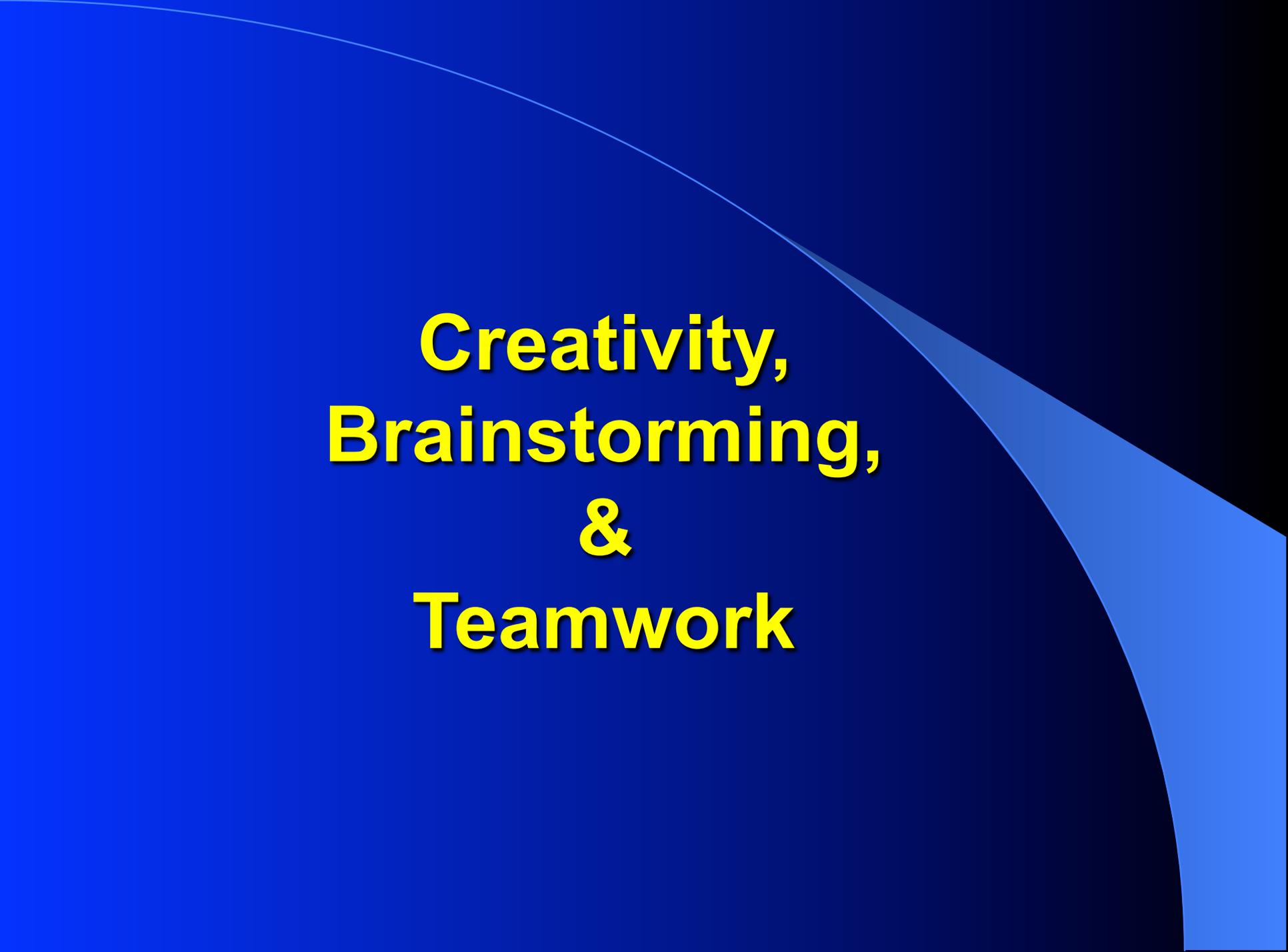
Register Teams for Tournament (check local deadlines)

Register Judge and/or Volunteer (if necessary)

Regional and State Tournaments (February - April)

OOTM World Finals (May 20-23, 2015)

at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI



**Creativity,
Brainstorming,
&
Teamwork**

HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Step 1. Read the Problem (First 2-3 meetings, As needed after)

Go through each section of the problem carefully.

Make sure each participant understands what is required

General ideas are OK, but don't focus on Brainstorming solutions yet

Understand how each of the parts interact

Figure out the requirements of the problem (and the scoring elements)

Step 2. Brain-Storm Possible Solutions (Meetings 2-5)

Generate lots of ideas (keep track of them on paper, chalkboard, or whiteboard)

Don't evaluate ideas yet... just list them

Break the problem down into manageable pieces

Encourage wild, creative solutions

Step 3. Organize (Meetings 4-6)

Use brainstorming techniques to come up with more ideas and build off those already mentioned. Change the ideas, generate even more

Step 4. Refine and Evaluate Ideas (Meetings 4-6)

Which ideas does the team like best?

Discuss and evaluate ideas, but don't criticize.

Modify ideas to make them better.

Select a preliminary solution.

HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Step 5. Determine Tasks & Timeline (Meetings 5-8)

What types of tasks, skills, props, contraptions, needed to complete this solution?
Who and how will they do these things?
Determine a basic time-line for completing the solution.
Continue to evaluate the solution and refine/revise as needed.
Do the items decided upon fit the problem specifications?

Step 6. Begin Construction (Meetings 6-)

Start building things and writing a script. Evaluate new ideas as they arise.
Test the solution. Does it work? Can it be made to work better?
Revise/refine (continuously) and as necessary.

Step 7. Put it Together (At least one month before Tournament)

As props, tasks are near completion, or are completed, test them out.
Continue to refine/revise. Does it work? Is there a better way?
Does the proposed solution still fit the problem? What problems need to be fixed?

Step 8. Finish it Up and Practice (2-3 Meetings Before Tourn)

Celebrate major accomplishments as they happen.
Test things out... do they work? Can they work better?
Practice the whole skit. Timing. Explain how they did it? Look for problem spots.
What happens if something goes wrong? Contingency plan.
Revise/refine.

First Five Odyssey of the Mind Meetings

(adjust to age and experience of students)

First Meeting

- Meet with team (and parents) to explain program and set team goals**
- Discuss the process, give dates for tournaments**
- Go over the time commitment and responsibility of being on the team**
- Stress regular attendance at meetings**
- Explain outside assistance**
- Review behavioral expectations**
- Talk about difference between “winning” and “succeeding”**
- Set a meeting schedule**

Second Meeting

- Incorporate team-building activity**
- Discuss working as a group. All ideas are valid**
- Review brainstorming rules (no put-downs)**
- Explain Spontaneous. Practice several at every meeting**
- Read the Long-term problem Synopses**
- Talk about skills and interests of team members and group**

First Five Meetings (continued)

Third Meeting

- Incorporate team-building activity
- Brainstorm how group can be a successful team
- Practice Spontaneous
- Have team decide on Long-term problem (vote?)
- Brainstorm on possible solutions to LT problem

Fourth Meeting

- Incorporate team-building activity
- Practice Spontaneous
- Read the Specific Long-term problem rules
- Brainstorm LT problem solutions and skills needed to solve problem

Fifth Meeting

- Continue team-building
- Continue Spontaneous practice
- Brainstorm list of tasks to accomplish and timeline
- Assign tasks and discuss team member responsibility
- Ask for help if you need it

Team Building

It is important that this group of kids comes together and functions as a team. Important decisions should be made together.

Incorporate some team-building games into each practice session, especially early in the season. This will build team trust, and teach students to work together to solve problems that they can't manage alone.

Do not allow criticism of people or their ideas. It is OK to evaluate ideas on their merits, but it must be done constructively.

Celebrate milestones and major break-throughs/accomplishments.

Once an IDEA is generated and discussed, it is no longer owned by the originator....it is the TEAM'S idea.

COACHING TIPS

READ THE PROBLEM, then RE-READ THE PROBLEM

If You Start Me Up

The Timekeeper will ask the team, “Team, are you ready?”

Many (especially experienced) teams come up with a clever response



What Setup Time?

Don't make the mistake of neglecting to figure in set-up time.

What happens if something goes wrong during setup?

Who handles what tasks during setup?

Is it better to have a complicated setup, or a simple setup and more performance time?

Is there something someone can do during setup to start the performance?

Time does not stop if the team encounters a problem (except for medical emergencies).

Wrapping it Up

In some (not all) problems, the team needs to signal the Judges that the performance is over.

Like the beginning, the end is important. Experienced teams find a “creative” way.

Tell it to the Judge!

After the performance ends, the judges will talk to the team and ask them questions about their solution. This is a part of the the solution. Let the team know to expect it and practice it with them.

Don't forget the Membership Sign... Contingency

STYLE FORM

Team members must complete this form. Adults may help fill it out for Division I team members only. A minimum of two copies are required for each competition. At World Finals, and in some other competitions, three copies are required.

Long-Term Problem _____ Division _____

Membership Name _____ Membership # _____

City _____ State _____ Country _____

Judge(s) _____

Style Category (Team fills in #1 to #4)	Possible Points	Points Awarded (Judge fills in)
<small>(If the category is "Free choice of team," do not include anything that is scored in long-term problem scoring.)</small>		

1. _____ 1 to 10 1. _____

2. _____ 1 to 10 2. _____

3. _____ 1 to 10 3. _____

4. _____ 1 to 10 4. _____

5. Overall Effect _____ 1 to 10 5. _____

To describe your Style presentation, briefly tell how the it enhances the long-term problem solution. Please print or type and use only the space below.

TOTAL STYLE SCORE =
(Maximum possible = 50)

STYLE FORM

- four copies for Staging Judge
- adds to the Long-term problem
- relates to the theme of solution
- team can showcase strengths
- cannot be items already scored as part of Long-Term
- Categories
 - Specific Scoring Elements
 - Free Choice Elements
 - Overall Effect
- be very specific

MATERIAL VALUES FORM

Team members must complete this form. Adults may help fill it out for Division I team members only.

Long-Term Problem _____ Division _____

Membership Name _____ Membership # _____

City _____ State/Prov. _____ Country _____

Name of Item (e.g. wood, fabric, etc.)	Used For (e.g. costumes, props, all areas, etc.)	Value (Used value)
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____
13. _____	13. _____	13. _____
14. _____	14. _____	14. _____
15. _____	15. _____	15. _____
16. _____	16. _____	16. _____
17. _____	17. _____	17. _____
18. _____	18. _____	18. _____
19. _____	19. _____	19. _____
20. _____	20. _____	20. _____

TOTAL VALUE OF MATERIALS USED =

COST FORM

- one copy for Staging Judge
- includes everything used during the LT & Style PRESENTATION
- doesn't include items not used during presentation
- garage sale value if used items
- combine value of small items
- exemptions (Program Guide p.46-48)
- be "creative" in acquiring materials, the art of scavenging
- cardboard & duct-tape
- even "donations" have value

OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE FORM

Long-Term Problem _____ Division _____

Membership Name _____ Membership # _____

City _____ State/Prov. _____ Country _____

We understand that it is against the rules for anyone other than the team members to design, build or present the long-term problem solution. We realize that we may get instruction in various areas of design and construction or in performance techniques, but know that these instructions may not be specific to the long-term problem solution. Our signatures below signify that we have followed all of the rules regarding outside assistance. If there are any exceptions, we have listed those.

WE HAD HELP WITH: (Please describe any assistance with your specific problem solution if you had any. State NONE, if none was received.)

Coach #1 _____ Team Member _____

Coach #2 _____ Team Member _____

Coach #3 _____ Team Member _____

Team Member _____ Team Member _____

Team Member _____ Team Member _____

OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE FORM

- one copy for Staging Judge
- only 7 members can contribute to problem solution
- coaches are facilitators
- coaches can *assist* Div I teams in filling out forms, but must use team's own words
- if OA did occur, list on form, may result in a penalty
- penalty is proportional to amount and type of help given

1. Membership Name: _____

Number: _____ Division: I II III IV (circle one)

2. The chosen architectural structure, including where and when it was created:

SAMPLE

3. When in the performance the replica should be judged for resemblance:

4. A brief description of the three works of art to be scored: _____

5. A brief description of the characters that go on a quest:

Character 1: _____

Character 2: _____

6. When in the performance the required songs will be performed: _____

7. A brief description of the choreographed movement: _____

When it will appear in the performance: _____

8. The signal our team will use to indicate we have finished our performance is:

TEAM LIST FORM

- four copies for Staging Judge
- problem will indicate if it is needed
- lets judges know exactly what aspects of the solution the team wants scored
- no penalty if not used, but judges may miss a scoring element
- can be downloaded from the Member Area or written on a piece of 8 1/2" x 11" paper
- Staging Judge will have extras on hand if team forgot a list and time allows

Tournaments

Odyssey of the Mind tournaments are held in the spring of each year around the world at various levels

- Local
- Regional
- State / Provincial / Country
- World Finals

These tournaments provide an opportunity for teams to present their creative solutions, and to be judged against the problem criteria. Although the event is a competition, it is also meant to be a time for the teams to be rewarded and to have FUN!



Tournaments Continued ...

EVERY TEAM PRESENTING A SOLUTION IS A WINNER !

However, because a sports-based competition model is used, teams are judged for how well and how *creatively* they satisfy the problem criteria, and only one team is awarded 1st Place overall for each LT Problem and Division



1st and 2nd Place Teams and *Ranatra Fusca*

recipients are invited to attend the

Odyssey of the Mind World Finals

(the policies of your school and local association may vary)

What Happens at a Tournament?

Teams that wish to present their solution at a sanctioned Odyssey of the Mind tournament must register. Please check with your local state or regional association on deadlines, instructions, and fees for participating.

Teams registering for the tournament are scheduled for their Long-Term and Spontaneous performance times.

Typical Order of the Day (Varies Depending Upon Association)

Registration Desk Opens

Opening Ceremonies (morning)

Competition (throughout day)

Closing and Awards Ceremonies (early evening)

- CHECK YOUR LOCAL SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS -

What Should Coaches Do on Tournament Day ?

Pick up Your Registration Package. Take 5 minutes to check through it.

Get your Team to the Staging Area (for LT) at least 15 min before your scheduled LT competition time.

Bring your team to the Spontaneous Holding Area about 15 min prior to their scheduled Spontaneous competition time.

Parents and other supporters should not accompany the team.

Enjoy other performances

Enjoy your team...

Enjoy the day...

Start planning for next year... ☺



Odyssey of the Mind Recognition

OMER's Award

In recognition of teams or individuals who demonstrate outstanding sportsmanship, exemplary behavior, and exceptional talent

Ranatra Fusca

presented to teams or individuals who exhibit exceptional creativity, either through some aspect of their problem solution, or an extraordinary idea beyond the problem solution

Tournament Placement

determined by total score

Ties are awarded if there is less than 1 point difference



Contact Information

For more information, or to register, contact:

International Headquarters:

c/o Creative Competitions, Inc.

406 Ganttown Road

Sewell, NJ 08080

Tel: (856) 256-2797

Fax: (856) 256-2798

email to: Info@odysseyofthemind.org

<http://www.odysseyofthemind.com>

Or contact your

Local State and Country Associations



Odyssey of the Mind



Be Creative !