

## *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?  
How might you fasten those things together?

Do you want some glue to put 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 last year 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 <http://va.odysseyofthemind.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, carpools, 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 O-of-Mwork.)

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 do 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 it's 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 rules, on pages 47-49, outline 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 injure 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, 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 18 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.