

Regional Board Members

Joyce and Ron Ghen, Regional Directors	Judy & Diego Oyhenart, Tournament Directors
Mary Beth Pilipczuk, Treasurer	Jon Radel, Judge Coordinator
Andrew Buchheit, Coordinator Liaison	Sarah Tate, Member at Large
All Problem Captains listed below	

Important Dates:

Coaches' Training	October 29, 2016, Liberty MS
Balsa Prob Info Session	December 4, 2016 2:00-5:00 Chantilly Regional Library
Balso Crush-a-thon	February 11, 2017 Progeny Systems, Manassas 10:30-Noon
Coaches Q&A	TBD (Usually Late January)
Spontaneous Workshop	January 21, 2017
Judges' training	February 28, 2017, Stone MS
Regional Meet	Saturday, March 18, 2017 Manassas Park MS & HS, Manassas Park
State Meet	Saturday, April 1, 2017 John Champe HS, Aldie
World Finals	May 20, 2017 Michigan State University, E. Lansing MI

Others.....Watch the "Important Dates" page on the regional website

Websites:

NoVA South(regional): www.novasouth.org
 VOICES (state): www.vaodyssey.org
 CCI (national): www.odysseyofthemind.com

Problem Captains:

Problem 1 –Vehicle: Catch Us If You Can	Jon Buttram
Problem 2 –Technical: Odd-a-Bot	David Tate
Problem 3 – Classics: It's Time, Omer	Judy Oyhenart
Problem 4 – Structure: Ready, Set, Balsa, Build!	Steve Graham
Problem 5 – Performance: To Be Continued: A Superhero Cliffhanger	Vacant
Primary – Movin'Out!	Michelle & Mark Crabill
Spontaneous –	Nancy Pickover & John Walker
Scorerroom –	Frank Kaleba

Directors, Board Members, and Problem Captains may be reached by email using the Contact Us page of the regional website.

Where to find answers ---

1. The Problem Statement. **No, really, read it again.** 😊
2. The Program Guide. A searchable e-copy can be useful, since some topics are 'hidden' (e.g. info on membership signs in the 'Penalties' section).
3. This Handbook!
4. The Regional 12 Website, www.novasouth.org
5. The VOICES Website, <http://vaodyssey.org>
6. The National Website (CCI), www.odysseyofthemind.com
7. Your School Coordinator
8. If your question is specific to a long-term problem:
 - read the Clarifications published on the National Website
 - email the Problem Captain (Regional Website, "Contact Us" page)

If those don't resolve your team's question, they may request a Clarification of their own. Note that CCI does not appreciate clarification requests that are already answered in the Program Guide, the Problem Statement, or previously-published Clarifications, so do your homework first.

To submit a clarification request, go to the national website, click "Clarifications" select the appropriate problem, enter your membership number and membership zip code at the bottom, and click "log in". Remember – the membership zip code is the zip code submitted with your membership request, and might be different from the school's zip code. Ask your coordinator for this information.

9. If your question is about Judging/Judges/Judges' Training, ask our Judges Coordinator (via "Contact Us" at the regional website)
10. If your question is about ordering team T-shirts, ask the T-shirt Coordinator (via "Contact Us" at the regional website)
11. If your question is about Region 12 tournament sites or Region-specific rules, or if you are volunteering to help with one of the many little tasks that have to happen to make the Region run, then email the Tournament Director (via "Contact Us" at the regional website)

AN INTRODUCTION TO ODYSSEY OF THE MIND™

The Odyssey of the Mind Association is a private, non-profit organization founded by Dr. Sam Micklus and Dr. Ted Gourley of Glassboro State College (Now Rowan University), New Jersey, in 1978. The program now includes member schools from every state and from more than 35 countries.

The foundation of the program is the creative solution of one of five long-term problems that students work on for three to five months. These challenges are designed with specific goals, guidelines, judging criteria, and monetary limitations. New long-term problems are created every year. Examples of past problems include designing a vehicle powered by a mousetrap, creating a new final chapter of Moby Dick, and building a tower of 1/8-inch balsa wood strips that can hold weights stacked on top.

Before 1988 just two schools, Springfield Estates, and Thomas Jefferson elementary schools competed in Odyssey. In 1988-89, the Northern Virginia Region was formed. The teams held an exhibition of their solutions, and all teams competed at the State Meet. The next year, Northern Virginia teams traveled to Winchester's Regional Meet to compete and to be scored separately, but by the same judges, as that region's team. Northern Virginia held its own Regional Meet in 1991 at Hayfield Secondary School. In 1994, NoVA Odyssey had over 150 teams at our Regional Meet (one of the largest in the US at the time) and we split into two regions, 8 (NoVA East) and 13 (NoVA West). In 1999 Region 13 had 242 teams at the Regional Meet in 1999, (again being one the largest meets in the US) so split again, forming regions 13 and 15 in June of that year. The 2014 season found all three Northern VA regions (8,13 and 15) holding tournaments with over 230 teams each, so the region split again and became who we are today: Regions, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 16.

The Region 12 tournament will be held in April 18th, at Manassas Park MS & HS. The winning team in each division of each problem (not including Primary) and Ranatra Fusca winners continues to the State Meet in April. The winning team in each division of each problem at State Meet, plus long-term Ranatra Fusca winners, will continue to the World Finals Competition at the end of May. The thrill of being part of an international

group of award winning problem solvers has been a remarkable experience for many Northern Virginia teams in past years. We hope to see a (or more than one) Region 12 team experience that thrill this season.

Much of the success and growth of the northern Virginia Odyssey program is due to the commitment of parents, teachers, and others who volunteer hundreds of hours to coach our teams. Small stipends, materials, transportation, and membership dues are sometimes provided by the PTAs and schools, but often it is the coaches who finagle resources and juggle schedules with unselfish dedication to the goals of the program. You coaches contribute more than time and energy: you ladle out huge portions of self-confidence and enthusiasm to the members of their teams and our very special thanks go out to you!

Odyssey, A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

Who *wouldn't* want to be an Odyssey coach? I can't imagine why anyone would turn down the prospect of seven additional children (in an already overcrowded house) once a week - even two or three times or more as March draws near! Just think of the excuses you can use for having a messy garage or basement. "Oh, that's what the Odyssey team is working on," or "I'm saving that for Odyssey." If you are not a coach, you couldn't say that! ...

Remember the "Thrill of Victory and the Agony of Defeat?" Being an Odyssey coach lets you experience both of those. No, I am not referring to winning at competition. (Although that would be fun!) The thrill of victory is similar to landing that really big fish. The thrill isn't in the prize, but in the battle. I know you are saying, "What's the connection?" Well, have you ever tried to drag an idea out of a fourth grader? That is a very long, protracted battle and the victory is finally the "Eureka" moment. Of course, the agony of defeat covers many areas: structures that don't hold their own weight, props that won't stay together, and teammates bickering amongst themselves. But never fear, the coach is here with those reassuring, well-rehearsed words, "Can you think of another way to do that?"

Think of an Odyssey coach as combination rocket scientist, UN negotiator, and taxi driver. The fruits of your labor aren't always appreciated, some don't want to hear what you say, and the tips are few and far between! However, when the kids come up with the novel ideas and then turn their group from seven individuals into one synchronized unit, you feel really great.

We aren't coaches because we like to go to competition or win awards; it's for the special feeling we get when those seven little minds begin working together and become a problem-solving super machine!

REASONS TO COACH ODYSSEY OF THE MIND (by Lisa Love)

No other activity offers all of the following options in one wonderful package:

- ❖ A chance to help children implement their own unique ideas
- ❖ A time to learn to think more divergently ourselves
- ❖ A method for teaching the concepts of true teamwork to children
- ❖ An opportunity to interact with children in a special and unforgettable way
- ❖ An exciting way to teach unlimited lifelong skills to children
- ❖ An exciting way to learn lifelong attitudes towards creativity
- ❖ A means to make a difference in the future for your own child and many others

Creativity, teamwork, self-confidence, persistence, and problem solving: all these are fostered in Odyssey. All of these also engender some mess, some chaos, some experimentation, some learning through failure. But what more glorious way to teach such important lessons than by having fun and feeling part of a unique and supportive group of creative people?

What is Expected of Each Odyssey Teammate

1. Have fun and contribute to an atmosphere that will allow others to have fun.
2. Attend every meeting unless it is absolutely necessary to miss one.
3. Come to meetings with a great attitude. We have only two hours per week to meet so we'll want to get as much done as we can.
4. Contribute to the script.
5. Practice **Spontaneous Problems** as often as you are able.
6. Meet all of your deadlines. Expect to work on your own or in small groups at your house. Your team depends on you.
7. Speak up. Your team wants to hear your opinions.
8. Be supportive of your teammates.
9. Practice your part of your team's presentation.
10. Get a good night's sleep the night before **Competition Day**.

What is Expected of Each Odyssey Parent

1. Absolutely no **Outside Assistance**.
 - Normally, this means you are limited to providing guidance to your child by asking questions rather than giving direction. "What different methods of attaching felt to papier mache can you think of?" rather than "Masking tape will never hold that felt on to the paper mache!"
 - You can teach skills like sewing or drilling, but not on the Odyssey project itself – use scrap material as a teaching instrument.
 - On Competition Day, you cannot apply makeup or arrange their hair, etc. Teammates must help each other with these tasks.
 - Each idea must be the child's idea.
2. Encourage your child to think about Odyssey and the team's presentation.
3. Ensure that your child has the time and resources to meet his/her team obligations.
4. Ensure that your child arrives to meetings on time. If he/she must miss a meeting, arrive late, or leave early, let the Coach know as early as possible.
5. Keep an open line of communication with the Coach.
6. Volunteer to be a "Volunteer" on Competition Day. Usually this means two hours of Registrations or Concessions on the day of the competition. We will need one or two volunteers.

"Top 25 Things Coaches Should Know"

RELAX! This isn't your problem to solve and if you keep the kids working and having fun, you are doing fine. Many people are out there to offer help if you need it (other coaches, school coordinators, regional directors, state directors).

BE SURE YOU KNOW THE BIRTHDATES of all your team members. Be sure you check those birthdates against the age requirements for divisions to be certain your team is in the division you think it is in (and doing a problem open to them)!

A CALENDAR with meetings scheduled and dates marked is useful for all teams and coaches. Adjust as necessary, but make sure everyone knows what the minimum time commitment is.

CONSIDER WORKING ONLY ON SPONTANEOUS until you are certain all team members are committed. If a team member drops out before the team discusses the Long Term problem, he or she may be replaced. Once Long Term is discussed, those team members must remain on your roster all year, even the ones who quit.

TEAMS MAY HAVE UP TO 7 MEMBERS. Up to seven may perform in the long-term portion of competition; only five may do the spontaneous part of the competition.

OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE: Remember, this ISN'T your problem to solve ... ideas and their implementation must be entirely the teams! Teams are capable of much more than you may believe at first.

CHAOS is ok sometimes ... enormous creativity may emerge from what seems like randomness. Let the kids explore options as much as safety limitations, time, and your "house rules" allow.

READ the long-term problem and then read it many more times. Encourage the team to do the same, and to discuss a section at a time. Re-read and refer to it often.

CLARIFICATIONS may help a team understand some of the limitations of a problem ... have them send for one if they cannot understand the meaning of the problem. Be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

SPONTANEOUS is just as important as Long Term Problem-Solving. There are three kinds of spontaneous problems - verbal, hands-on and combination. You should practice some at each meeting.

RESPECT is the basis of a good team. Insist that all team members respect each other and you. Insist that they accept all ideas as possibilities and avoid negativity.

TEAMBUILDING is also the basis of a good team. Teambuilding activities may be as simple as an outing to the hardware store or may be a specific exercise. But all teambuilding should be fun and promote recognition of each member's strengths.

QUESTIONING techniques will help a team get past blockades, but always keep questions broad and open-ended so ideas will be the team's own. Ask, "What are ways to put things together?" not "how can you glue this?" Never ask questions that steer a team to a solution in YOUR mind!

BRAINSTORMING is important in Odyssey of the Mind. Remind the team there is no such thing as a bad idea, and encourage them to brainstorm solutions and to write them down!

COMMUNICATION to the team of your "house rules" and expectations at the very beginning is essential. Enlist parental support in enforcing those policies.

PARENTS should be informed of the process, especially Outside Assistance rules, and kept informed of the team's progress. Communication encourages parent support and assistance.

FORMS are a necessary part of preparing for competition. Make sure you read what paperwork is required for your regional meet and teach the team to fill it out. (Division I teams may dictate to the coach.) Make sure registrations and fees are mailed on time.

PRIMARY TEAMS have different rules than competitive divisions. Make sure you know what the primary guidelines are for your region.

A SENSE OF HUMOR will keep you sane and keep your team happy, too. Just be sure that if you have a valuable rug or a dog you don't want painted blue, make sure the kids work in an area that allows some mess and then "go with the flow."

STYLE is a part of the team's requirement. Be sure you know what is required for your team's problem, and be sure your team chooses an exact element for each "free choice."

ALWAYS be a "guide on the side" not a "sage on the stage" (and cleanup should be part of the team's responsibility each week, too!)

YOU are a special person for being willing to coach Odyssey of the Mind! Parents and team members should respect your right to schedule meetings and activities at YOUR convenience, and should divide the costs incurred by the team.

FOOD is a magical substance for Odyssey of the Mind teams. It not only encourages teamwork and creative thinking, but also makes work into fun. Be sure you know how to order pizza!

COMPETITION encourages teams to work their hardest, but remember that it is the PROCESS not the product that is important. Showing off their solution and their creativity is a much better goal for team members than winning a prize.

RELAX! If you and the team are having fun, you are 90% of the way to success.

16 Things That Have Worked Well

Thanks to Coach Bill Moore

1. Get Commitment from your team members (and their parents) – first meeting should include team and their parents and should include a review of what you expect from each.
2. Understand, and ensure your team understands, the problem – very well!
3. Have a good supply of building/prop materials in the house – collect all year long – one box, two boxes → a room!
4. Encourage members of the team to get together on their own.
5. Have the team identify what they want to get done at the beginning of a meeting and how long it should take.
6. A change of venue for meetings is often helpful.
7. Meet in a place with few distractions – they'll create their own.
8. Have the team develop a signal that, when used by the coach, means to “come to order.”
9. “Coach is Coming to Your House Nights” – it’s amazing how much gets done when they know they have you one on one for ten minutes. (It’s also a good opportunity to talk with parents).
10. Friday Night Sleepover Meetings – an “endless” team meeting can be very productive.
11. Super Sundays – for “big” props and messy activities.
12. Divide your team into small manageable groups when developing props – a co-coach is a real asset.
13. Get obligations from the team for what each individual will do at home between meetings.
14. Pizza Meetings – for a change of pace.
15. Delegate non-coaching responsibilities (T-shirts, end-of-year parties).
16. Enlist parental help on tournament day (van and prop movement) so that you can concentrate on your team.

2 ½ Things That Have Not Worked Well

1. Voting – Build Consensus Instead.
2. Too many chefs in the kitchen (don't have seven kids decorate one mural at the same time).
3. Mixed feelings on “getting it out of your system” breaks – works for some teams, riles others!

Advice for Teaching Spontaneous from a First Year Coach

Thanks to Coach Randy Hartnett

Plan on doing 4 or more spontaneous problems per meeting

- Spend an hour before each meeting planning the spontaneous problems—mostly verbal and verbal/hands-on, with occasional hands-on
 - Good sources: OM books, www.odysseyofthemind.com/practice/ and va.odysseyofthemind.org/weekproblemarchive.html
 - Invent your own. (Kid-invented are not always successful)
- Keep a good supply of materials on hand
 - Deck of numbered cards, dice
 - Timer that doesn't beep
 - Paper, pencils, marshmallows, straws, clay, toothpicks, scissors, tape, etc.
- Problems are like jokes, multiple repetitions get stale. If the team thinks they handled a problem poorly, talk about strategies to improve, then repeat the problem a week or two later.

When practicing

- Include all the kids, not just five. Near the end, use 5 but rotate so kids can decide who should participate on tournament day
 - A coach can participate, but beware—we think differently
- Read the instructions every time – and vary them, to practice listening and understanding
- Give lots of feedback on which responses were creative (after the problem, not during)
 - Provide a team score – they like to track their progress
 - Having kids judge gives them good perspective on creative vs ordinary responses
- Cheat on the time—2 minutes is too short
 - Don't limit their response time, especially if they are on a roll
 - Don't use an audible alarm
 - Near tournament time, stick to the limits

Seek to develop teamwork, creativity, and speed

- Use “think-ahead” or “follow-on” style problems
 - Alphabetical or numbered responses – “Name colors in alphabetical order”
 - “A is good because B, B is bad because C, C is good because D...”
- Have each team member write responses during thinking time, then give them as fast as possible without repeats
- Invent convoluted scoring schemes, so certain responses maximize points
- Use food problems: “Choose a Cheetos™ and name an animal that resembles it, then eat it in the style of that animal”
- Try no-thinking-time responses, to practice getting un-stuck
- Practice every possible timing scheme
 - Dice, cards, stand-up-sit-down are common
 - Practice without a problem – how fast can they do it without responding?

KEEP IT FUN!!! Do whatever it takes to make spontaneous fun for your team!

What Do I Do With These Guys for an Hour and a Half?

Hit the Ground Running! – A Guide to Planning Odyssey Meetings

A common complaint coaches have regarding their teams sounds like this:

“All they do is goof around at meetings.”

If this sounds familiar, read on.

Left to their own devices it is unlikely that 5, 6, or 7 elementary, middle or high school students will accomplish much at an Odyssey meeting. Making the most out of that hour and a half depends on how you structure it. Here are some suggestions.

Primary Teams (kindergarten through grade 2)

Elementary school teachers know that young children have teeny-weeny little attention spans. Plan your meetings so that from the moment they begin, you have more (fun) activities than you need so that there is little or no “down” time.

TIPS:

- Allow 10-15 minutes per activity. Remember that attention span.
- Start with Brainstorming, and wait until they’re really warmed up before you work on the long-term problem.
- Keep the meetings fairly short, especially at the beginning.
- Try to end each meeting with a silly, just-for-fun, activity that has nothing to do with the long-term problem. This way they will leave the meeting feeling great about Odyssey and about their team. (That’s why they joined Odyssey, after all.)
- Above all, remember that these are kids. Kids do not do things the way grown-ups do. That’s why we don’t call them “adults.”

Division I Teams (up through grade 5)

The biggest difference between Primary Teams and Division I Teams is the “Competition Factor.” Now that they’ve hit the big leagues, there are real, honest-to-goodness” deadlines and the work they do will be judged. So, Competition + Deadlines + Judges = BIG TIME STRESS for some kids. The key with these kids is Perspective. As a coach, your biggest job is to help the kids keep their perspective. After all, this is supposed to be FUN. The world is not going to end if things aren’t letter perfect. Whatever they create will probably not really look like they envisioned it and this will disappoint some kids. If you have ever worked with perfectionists (and there are a lot of them in Odyssey), you know that they are never satisfied with their creations. Your job is to help them maintain the playfulness and fun that is so important in Odyssey.

TIPS:

- Plan your meetings much as you would for Primary Teams. The attention spans are only marginally longer.
- De-emphasize the competitive aspect of the program, and don’t forget the fun.
- Work on team building by going on field trips, having pizza together, choosing an item for team identity (a team hat, pin, etc.)
- As the Regional Meet approaches, try to exude confidence that everything will be done in time, they will be wonderful, etc.
- Communicate with the parents. They can be invaluable, but they can’t read your mind. Tell them what you need.
- Meetings should be tightly structured so that time is not wasted.
- Make a special effort to draw out the strengths of the quieter kids, and insist that everyone is involved and mutually respected.
- The last two weeks before the Regional Meet can be very intense. Help them relax by holding a dress rehearsal for their parents followed by a celebration. Tell them they’re wonderful. Let the inconsequential stuff go – it’s not important.
- Above all – Never let them see you sweat!

Division II Teams (grades 6-8, with an occasional younger child)

Take all of the above, add a liberal dose of hormones, and a couple of broken hearts, and you have Division II in a nutshell. The key term to keep in mind that applies to nearly all Division II teams is **lack of focus**. These kids tend to “take the long way” to the Regional Meet, but they do get there eventually. No matter how well you plan your meetings, they probably won’t accomplish anywhere near what you would have liked them to. That’s OK, because what *they* can do that the younger teams can’t is *punt*. When the clock on the scoreboard is about to run out of time, they come to life and put together truly astonishing things. So the most important thing for you to do as coach is relax, buy stock in a pizza company, and keep the aspirin handy.

TIPS:

- If you want to get a lot accomplished at the meetings, keep them short, just like Primary.
- To keep conflicts to a minimum, consider dividing the team into specialized work groups for some meetings. These “sub-groups” meet to work on one specific thing, such as costumes or script development.
- Team building is a must – get away from the usual meeting place once in a while. Go somewhere completely different.
- Read them the “Coaches’ Bill of Rights” and have the team write its own Bill. Then *enforce it*.
- If you coached them when they were younger, forget how dedicated and excited they were. These are different kids now, with different priorities. Recognizing that, and accepting it, are the keys to long life and happiness as a Division II coach. (They still get excited – just not about anything *you* say or do.)

Division III Teams (grades 9-12, with an occasional younger child)

In Odyssey, there is a sort of unofficial motto: “We Can Do It All Ourselves.” The “We” refers, of course, to the kids (not the coaches or parents). When dealing with Division III teams, the coach’s role is far less evident than with younger teams. By the time they are in high school, we truly do want the kids doing every facet of the problem, *as well as the organizational tasks*, themselves. The more they accept ownership of the problem, the better. At this age, our kids are certainly capable of solving the problems themselves, but organizing the team into a cohesive unit is another matter. Learning when to lead, when to follow, when to delegate, and when to accept the authority of a peer is difficult work – adult work. They aren’t quite there yet, and that is where you, the coach, come in. Your job is to facilitate the team’s efforts. The idea is to intervene in the process as little as feasible, leaving every possible decision up to the team.

TIPS:

- Remember how very different a ninth grader is from a twelfth grader. Don’t expect the same level of ability and commitment from all members of the team. It’s called “diversity” and it really does make the team more interesting.
- These kids simply do not have the same amount of time to devote to Odyssey that they did when they were younger. Allow for that.
- Things that are important in a job – like being on time, being prepared, etc. – are things you should gently emphasize. If Odyssey is helping to prepare them for the real world, let’s get them used to the real world’s expectations.
- Be a good role model. There are far too few of these around. Any adult who is willing to spend this much time working with kids sets a wonderful example.
- Have them set their own agenda for meeting their own deadlines and delegating their own responsibilities. Then just sit back and see how they handle it. Avoid the temptation to make their problems your problems.
- Don’t forget to enjoy them. Marvel at their intelligence, wit, maturity and unlimited potential.

The SCAMPER Technique for Brainstorming

Idea Checklists are an easy way to improve your ideas during a brainstorming session. The acronym S.C.A.M.P.E.R. is designed to provide triggers for new ideas. Teach your team this technique, and they'll generate more creative ideas.

“Given the ideas we already have, is there a way to...”

- S** is for **Substitute** To replace one person or thing with another. Can we make a substitution in one of our ideas to make a new idea? What to replace? What to replace it with? Some other place? Some other time?
- C** is for **Combine** To bring together, add, or unite. Can we put solution features together? Can we blend ideas we already have? Combine goals? Combine items? Combine materials? Combine tasks?
- A** is for **Adapt** To adjust or modify in order to fit to a particular condition or purpose. Can we adapt any of our ideas to new conditions or purposes?
- M** is for **Modify** To alter in form or quality. Can we change the meaning, the color, the motion, the sound, the emotion, the shape, or the words, to get a new idea? Can we Magnify, to make it bigger or stronger? Minimize, to make it smaller or lighter or quicker? What can we add? What can we subtract?
- P** is for **Portion** A part of the whole. Can we take a piece of some other idea, and use it separately? Are there portions of our solution that are not contributing to the goals?
- E** is for **Exchange** To swap places or roles. Are there features in our solution that would work better if we swapped their positions, their roles, their colors, their order in the script?
- R** is for **Reverse** To face or move in the opposite direction. Are there ideas that we can turn around, to get new ideas? Turn them upside down? Inside out? Do them sdrawkcab?

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.

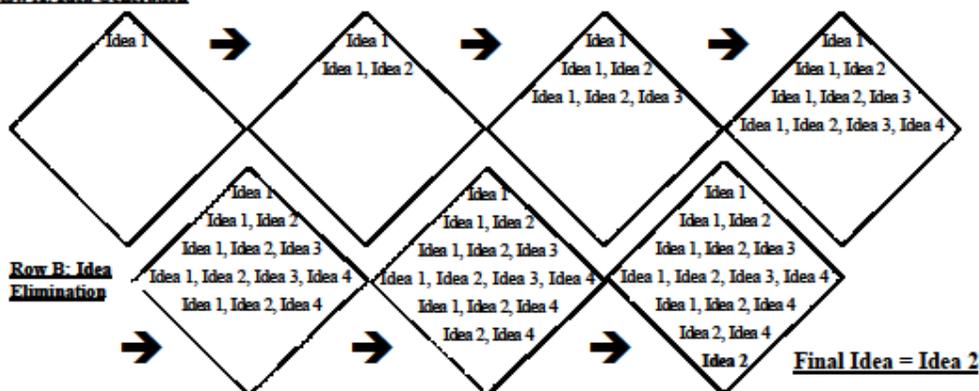
FORMAT: Team members sit in chairs or on the floor, with one person recording ideas. (The coach may record the ideas, but he/she must write down the teams' exact words.)

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



COACHING TIPS

- Keep time management as a coaching priority. Make teams stick to schedules; encourage them to estimate how long things will take.
- The coach must be the rock, the motivator, the resolver of social conflicts.
- Learn to recognize *burnout*, and when to lighten up. Over the long season, morale and fun will be important.
- Make a commitment to the team. Ask your team members to make a commitment to each other.
- Learn how to ask questions that invite creativity without inserting your own notions. Become an expert at this skill.
- Be a real resource person. Teach your team how to acquire the skills they want, and put them in touch with the resources that can help them do that.
- Remember that the difference between good solutions and excellent ones is in the details and embellishments.
- Practice spontaneous as much as you work on long term and style.
- Teach contingency planning. Encourage your team to think about backup materials, tool kits, and how to recover from unexpected problems.
- Practice mistakes -- accidents often happen, but good teams recover.
- Plan on disappointments and disagreements. Decide early how you and the team will handle them.
- Help your team to know the long-term problem and the Program Guide inside out and backward. Try a trivia contest, with prizes for rules knowledge.
- Solve the social problems before they try to solve the Odyssey problems.
- Have the team set goals. Write them down and place them in clear view. Coach them on what kinds of goals are helpful.
- Be ready to be psychologist, parent, doctor, lawyer, referee, friend, co-conspirator, or counselor as needed.
- Set aside some fun time that has nothing to do with Odyssey problems.
- Keep teams on the *must do* list -- they tend to focus on the "maybe do" list.
- Simulate every aspect of competition and practice this frequently.
- Have a checklist for loading, staging, tasks, etc.
- Remember that "think time" in Spontaneous is generally 33% of the problem. Teach you team to use this time well, including asking questions.
- Get the team to continually verify that their solution meets the problem requirements, and is focused on the Spirit of the Problem.
- Encourage team members to do some thinking outside of meetings – at home, for example – and write down their ideas.
- Use Spontaneous practice to break up long practice/work sessions – this will help to prevent burnout and boredom.
- The team as a group has a personality. Learn how that personality works.
- Try to have each team member initially generate several possible solutions (or partial solutions). Help the team to see how pieces from the different solutions can be combined.

COACHING DO'S

- Teach your team the creative problem-solving process, and use it throughout the problem resolution.
- Help students understand that winning is not the goal.
- Help students to see and recognize the abilities of each team member and encourage team members to capitalize on the individual strengths of ALL.
- Help them get organized. Time management, record keeping, and planning skills are just as critical as painting and script writing.
- Try to answer a question with a question. Remember, any idea you say out loud is one they can't use.
- Help them give and take constructive criticism of IDEAS, but not of people.
- Help them learn to evaluate their ideas and progress continually.
- Set a good example of adult behavior; be a good role model for your team.
- Have team members write, illustrate, and design all details before beginning to build. Teach the team to "measure twice, cut once."
- Invite other adults to volunteer their time and talent to demonstrate skills for your team to learn. Try not to let these adults see the Long Term problem.
- Go over the score results with the team after a competition to help the team improve in future competitions.
- RELAX and enjoy seeing these creative young minds at work!

COACHING DON'TS

- Don't tell them a way to solve the problem. Instead, ask questions that help them find their own solutions.
- Don't allow any criticism of teammates' personalities or physical attributes.
- Don't step on their disagreements. Instead, let them work it out as part of learning to work as a team.
- Don't get flustered when the team makes mistakes along the way – this is part of the learning process.
- Don't allow them to be irresponsible. Help them to recognize that this hinders the entire team.
- Don't imply that they have failed if they don't win. Instead, help them to understand that it is only failure if they didn't try their best, or won't try again.
- Don't complain about judges, other teams, or other coaches.
- Don't allow the team to present a problem solution that clearly goes against the Spirit of the Problem or any of the limitations in the problem itself. Try to get them to spot problems themselves, but step in if time is running out.
- Don't dispute a judge's ruling unless the team members express a concern. Discuss their concern with them, and only go to the officials if the point they raise is valid and *the team* wants to pursue it.
- Don't get uptight. It's not your problem to solve.

SUMMARY

Coaching is a complex challenge. The challenge is for you to take this stepping stone to write your own master plan to become a master coach.

There are as many ways to coach as there are coaches, but the processes and principles remain basically the same. Stay motivated and enthusiastic. Work through difficult emotions and maintain a good relationship among the team members and yourself. Separate yourself from winning and losing, and focus on team development and ownership of their solution.

An important part of the coach's role is to be resourceful at keeping the organization and planning at top priority for all team members. You also need to provide a risk-free environment – physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally.

While there are not “wrong” answers in Odyssey, there are many “right” answers (and quite a few illegal answers). The team's job is to find a solution that is right for them, within the rules. This can only be achieved through listening, contributing, cooperating, refining, intense practice, and constant checking against the problem statement.

You must not inject your own solutions into the team's thinking, but you should certainly stop the team from going forward with a clearly illegal or unsportsmanlike solution. If you aren't sure whether to intervene, consult the Problem Captain or write for a Clarification.

Strive for perfection, but be ready and willing to accept the best that your team can offer, and congratulate and celebrate with them on a job well done.

Odyssey Coaches' Bill of Rights

Yes, even Coaches have rights!

- 1. You have the right to expect school-appropriate behavior and language from your team, whether they meet at school or not. The rule of thumb is “If you wouldn’t do it around a teacher, you don’t do it at Odyssey meetings.” If you are a parent-coach, you may wonder how teachers keep their large classes “under control.” It’s simple: They expect school-appropriate behavior. You should, too.**
2. You have the right to expect your team members to be at their regular meetings. If a child doesn’t attend regularly, the whole team suffers. Give them a calendar of scheduled meetings, and expect them to attend.
3. You have the right to expect the parents of your team members to help. You are a volunteer coach, not a genie! You can’t be in two places at once, you don’t have four pair of hands, and you only have two eyes. Let the parents know when you need help, and what you need. They will respond.
4. You have the right to expect parents to share in the cost of creating the solution. How you go about it is up to you, but don’t feel obligated to pay for everything. This includes FOOD. When you make up your meeting schedule, include Snack Assignments along with meeting times.
5. You have the right to remove a child from a meeting if s/he is unable to behave appropriately. Find a safe place in the room for the child to sit, and insist that s/he stay there for the duration of the meeting (or such time as seems appropriate to you). Don’t leave him/her unsupervised.
6. You have the right (and the responsibility) to call a child’s parent(s) if a problem occurs or recurs. Do not let one child (or two) ruin the creative energy of the team. *You* would want to know about *your child’s* unacceptable behavior; so do other parents want to know about their child. Don’t be afraid to call.
7. You have the right to remove a child from your Odyssey team if all attempts to modify his/her behavior fail and it is clear that the team cannot proceed otherwise. This is a last resort, and should only happen with the knowledge and involvement of the child’s parent(s).
8. You have the right to have a life outside of Odyssey, especially during the last few weeks before the regional Meet. You can and should step back from your team and its travails and get some perspective. Is it still fun? Are you taking it too seriously? Don’t let *their* problems become *your* problems.

Parent Contract

Odyssey of the Mind™ teams and coaches need a supportive and encouraging environment as they work toward a solution of the long term problem and prepare for the Regional Meet. To show my support for my child's team and coach(es):

I agree not to interfere with or disrupt the team's operations. In the proper spirit of Odyssey of the Mind competition, I agree not to assist with the actual development or construction of the team's long term problem solution. **I understand "Outside Assistance"** and acknowledge that all ideas, creations, inventions, decorations, and handiwork must be the team members' own.

I understand that Odyssey of the Mind **is a long term commitment** and I will ensure that my child attends and participates at each team meeting. If there is a conflict, I will ensure that the coach is notified (in advance if at all possible).

I agree to support the Spirit of Odyssey of the Mind, including good sportsmanship, team cooperation, and proper behavior toward others and in all situations.

I agree to assist and support the coach in creating an environment where my child's team can do their best. I understand that this may include helping at a meeting, providing transportation, providing and supervising Spontaneous practice problems, providing team snacks, and helping at the Regional Meet.

I agree to remember that all teams, including my child's, have worked hard to do their best, and are proud of their accomplishments. I will encourage creativity, perseverance, teamwork, and divergent thinking. **I will remember that all** Odyssey of the Mind **teams are winners.**

I agree to discuss all items on this contract with my child.

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Student Contract

Odyssey of the Mind™ teams and coaches need a supportive and encouraging environment as they work toward a solution of the long term problem and prepare for the Regional Meet. To show my support for my fellow team members, coach(es), and other Odyssey teams:

I will encourage my fellow team members. I will **listen to** and **consider** their ideas and suggestions. I will show respect for the feelings of my team members.

I will respect my coach(es). I will remember that all coaches volunteer their time to help me and my team work toward our solution.

I agree to solve the long term problem with my team members. I understand that **“Outside Assistance”** is not permitted and agree to talk with my coach(es) whenever I am not clear about what assistance is permitted. I understand that all creations, inventions, decorations, and ideas must be my team’s own.

I will be supportive of other Odyssey of the Mind teams and team members. I will remember that good sportsmanship and proper behavior is expected of all Odyssey team members at all times.

I will remember that if a suggestion that I make to the team is not used, this does not mean that the suggestion was not valuable. It may be used at a later time.

I understand that Odyssey of the Mind is a long term commitment to my fellow team members and to my coach(es). I agree to attend and participate at each team meeting and to work toward all team goals. If there is a conflict, I will ensure that the coach is notified (in advance if at all possible).

Student Signature _____ Date _____

SAMPLE LETTER ASKING PARENTS FOR SUPPORT IN
DYSFUNCTIONAL TEAM SITUATIONS

To the parents of [list team members' names]

I am truly sorry to have to write this letter, but as our situation stands now, I see no alternative. I'll come straight to the point. Our Odyssey of the Mind team is not functioning in a satisfactory way. I have spoken many times with the children about this. I have explained that I could not and would not coach a team that continued to show disrespect for each other and for the team meetings. Odyssey is an organization for which I have a great deal of respect and to which I give a lot of time. The team members need to have an equal amount of respect.

This year I have seen a big split in the team. Some of them are eager to work, while others seem to be marking time. I don't have the time to spend several hours each week meeting with kids who cannot focus and work together as a team. This is not to say that I am not interested in them. I am. I care about each of them. It is because I care that I do not want to see this experience wasted. This group deserves better than what is currently happening.

Will you please talk with your children about their interest in Odyssey? Find out if they really want to participate. I am concerned about their commitment because [give examples of behavior that has been unacceptable]. This behavior is not fair to the team, and I will not be able to coach this team under these circumstances. They know that the Spontaneous portion of the competition is worth 100 points. Nevertheless, many of them are not willing to work on this. The acting may be the most fun, but the work behind the scenes, the stuff that no audience will see or clap for, is what makes a successful team. In fact, this is the work that gives the children the greatest lifetime rewards. I will make the final decision about who will do Spontaneous and who will perform in the Long Term skit, but your children need to be willing to do it all, to accept responsibility for it all, and to accept my decisions if they want to remain on the team.

Before we go any further, I need a firm renewed commitment from each team member. I really have been asking for this at each meeting and don't like some of the attitudes displayed at our meetings. I need your help. Please talk to your children and make a decision so that we can get to work. Odyssey means commitment, it means working as a team, it means being willing to do what needs to be done for the good of the group, and it means hard work as well as fun.

I am sorry that this comes to you as a letter. I don't have time to make individual telephone calls to talk about it, and I didn't want to take up your valuable time trying to schedule a meeting of all of the parents. I am very frustrated, but not yet ready to give up. Please let me hear from you by letter, e-mail or phone call by _____(date). Thank you.

Style Pointers

Successful Style Will:

- Be interesting to watch
- Be understandable
- Appeal to the senses
- Entertain the audience
- Add details that enhance basic ideas
- Tie in with the long-term problem goals

Questions You Can Ask (to elicit good style design):

- How is this related to the long-term problem?
- Can you use the long-term solution to draw attention to your style?
- What do you mean by _____ ?
- How does this improve your solution?
- Are there other possible ways to do this?
- How could you accomplish this?
- What materials do you already have that you could use in a new way for this?
- What new materials could you use?
- Can you explain how this idea will work?
- Can several people's ideas be combined in a useful way?
- What other details could you add?
- Will the judges understand that?

Coaching Tips for Successful Style:

- Use what you have! Have the team list talents before beginning to design for style.
- Check outfits and language for appropriateness.
- Use videotape or part-group performance so team can critique themselves.
- Make contingency plans, so that Style can work even if long-term solution does not.
- Encourage the team to prepare and bring an Emergency Tool Kit.
- Try to practice at least once in the smallest possible performance area, and in a very large performance area.
- Encourage loud, slow, clear speech!
- Practice the timing of your solution. Try to leave a minute or so of spare time for Style and for the unexpected.
- If the team is having *fun*, Style is enhanced.

Filling Out the Style Form

Specified Style Areas

Most problems specify at least one area of style that will be judged for all teams – for example, the creativity of the costume of a specific character. Be sure the team checks for what is required by the problem, and write or type it (word for word) on the style form in the appropriate area.

Free Choice of Team

All problems give the team at least one (and sometimes more) area of style that is the “free choice” of the team to pick. This can be almost anything; take advantage of that!

- Encourage the team to pick the aspect of their solution that they are most proud of.
- Don't wait until the last minute to decide, BUT
- Don't choose the free choice while the solution is still changing; the team's best feature might change as their solution develops.
- Be specific. Have the team describe exactly the part of the solution that they want the judges to focus on. Vague descriptions get vague scores.
- Choose areas that clearly stand out
- Remember that style is not talent or ability, but rather how those talents and abilities are put to use.

If your team is most proud of the cat's costume, is it the ENTIRE costume? Or just the face? Or just the makeup on the face? The team should focus in on EXACTLY what they think is most creative and stylish. (If it's the overall impersonation of a cat, that's fine too – but it's the team's choice!)

Many problems have long-term scoring categories that are “style-like” – they involved the creativity of a design, or the effectiveness of a presentation. These items may not be listed as “free choice of team.” Have the team double-check their choices to make sure there are no overlaps with any scored long-term area. The Staging Judge will ask the team to choose something else if there is overlap – and just before going on stage is a bad time to be trying to think clearly.

Overall Effect

All problems are also scored in Style for “overall effect.” This includes:

- The general impression the team leaves on the judges
- How the four specific style elements of the solution fit together and complement each other
- The smoothness and ‘polish’ of the presentation – it takes practice!
- How well the judges understood what the team was doing.

Idiom Inspiration
(Divisions I and II)

The team’s problem is to create and present an original humorous performance that includes a minimum of four idioms. Three of the idioms will be selected from a list (attached), and one will be created by the team. Two of the selected idioms must be acted out literally and figuratively – for example, literally letting a cat out of a bag, and figuratively giving away a secret. The third idiom must be incorporated into a team-created poem. The team’s performance will also show the origin of the team-created idiom.

The **creative emphases** are how the idioms are woven into the performance, the team-created idiom, and the team-created poem.

The **Spirit of the Problem** is to present an original humorous performance that includes the literal and figurative depiction of several idioms.

Section D. Scoring

1. Creativity of the overall performance 1 to 35 points
2. Quality of the performance (audibility, stage presence)..... 1 to 25 points
3. The first selected idiom
 - (a) is demonstrated literally..... 0 or 5 points
 - (b) is demonstrated figuratively 0 or 5 points
 - (c) Effectiveness in the performance 1 to 10 points
4. The second selected idiom
 - (a) is demonstrated literally..... 0 or 5 points
 - (b) is demonstrated figuratively 0 or 5 points
 - (c) Effectiveness in the performance 1 to 10 points
5. The team-created idiom
 - (a) Its origin is presented 0 or 5 points
 - (b) Effectiveness of the presentation of its origin 1 to 5 points
 - (c) Is demonstrated figuratively..... 0 or 5 points
 - (d) Creativity of its use as an idiom..... 1 to 15 points
 - (e) Effectiveness in the performance..... 1 to 15 points
6. The poem
 - (a) Creativity of the poem 1 to 10 points
 - (b) Effectiveness of the idiom in the poem 1 to 10 points
 - (c) Effectiveness of the poem in the performance 1 to 10 points
7. Humor in the performance 1 to 25 points

up to 200 points

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 than 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.