



Coaches' Corner

Tips from your CTOM Coach!

January 2020

Preparing skillful, team-playing, out-of-the-box thinkers!

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All the Little Things!

By Kim Kempton

In the world of Odyssey of the Mind, all the little things add up to **Big Impact!** Spending hours focusing on and refining a team's solutions, style elements and the little details not only lead to big scores, but to comradery, ownership and pride.

Start with a Setting

A good Odyssey performance will 'transport' the audience to a new location. It will invite the judges to join the team as they travel to a new destination, land or world. To start, encourage the team to think about how the solution can be presented visually. What is the size of the performance area? If there is room for a backdrop, what materials would be best? Every team should consider the size, stability, durability and practicality of transport. There have been teams who build beautiful sets, only to realize that they do not fit through a standard doorway (which is a requirement in the Program Guide). Does the team favor a four-sided box that can be turned with each scene change? A PVC frame on which to hang painted fabric? Or, are the costumes and props visual enough to set the scene? Encourage the team to take a step back and think about the stage from a judge's perspective. Do you maximize impact? Is it colorful? Is there texture? Is it visually

interesting?

Introduce Your Characters

Endearing and memorable characters can be created through costumes, acting and makeup. Working together on stage or interacting in a believable way will elevate the performance. Every problem has points associated with the quality, creativity and effectiveness of the performance. Take time to develop the blocking (movement), interactions (timing) and emotion (acting).

Invite the Audience to Join In

Bringing all the little things together, like a team coming together to solve a problem, creates an entertaining and impactful solution. Every part counts! The best solutions are those that share the team's enthusiasm and excitement. Winning teams invite the audience to join them as they laugh, smile and have fun presenting their solution!



Don't Forget the Sign!

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For More Information

*CTOM is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) organization
dedicated to Odyssey of the Mind in CT*

Please visit our website at www.ctom.org



Team Tips (*ESPECIALLY* for NEW coaches)

You ARE breeding GENIUS

Odyssey is about accommodating absurdity, and strangeness and new-ness... it is about breeding genius. Above all else, Odyssey is a creativity program. That's what it's all about. Thinking methodically, yes (there's an engineering process and a plan for writing a script for a reason), but also thinking a little bit crazy, searching for that out-of-the-box solution, in every situation. Think of Odyssey as a team sport that targets makers, do-ers, thinkers, and tinkerers!

It's ALL about the DRAMA

Bringing a group of like-minded (or perhaps not-so-like-minded) individuals together can sometimes be a challenge; especially, as the pressures and reality of preparing for a competition come to bear. Do your best to channel that nervous

energy for the positive. Build your team's self-confidence by encouraging their imagination and introducing them to theater practice, and the tricks associated with a great production. Encourage them to experiment with what it means to be 'over dramatic'. Help them to understand the importance of a stage presence. Spend part of a team meeting watching a movie or TV clips. How do the actors use sound, light or action to communicate with the audience? Challenge the team to use similar techniques to communicate with one another.

Critics are the WORST

No one likes a bad review, so as a coach reserve judgment. Beyond outside assistance, you don't want to discourage creative genius. Instead, ask the team to critique themselves. Perform in front of a mirror, or videotape a practice. What did they do well? Where is there room for improvement?



Remember to IMPROVISE

When things get challenging, stop and improvise. Dare to give up control. As a coach, you are focused on tasks and deadlines. Teams are often more focused on having fun. Sometimes it helps to take a step back and refocus. When a team meeting goes awry, try a quick improv game: stand in a circle and take turns demonstrating the "world's worst ____"... *police officer... parent... Odyssey performance.* Laughter can help you get back on track!

Signs, Signs...Everywhere There Are Signs

To ensure that the judges score the correct team, and to be recognized by the audience, every team must have a membership sign that is readable from a minimum of 25 feet away throughout the presentation of its long-term solution. The sign must be created by the team and must include:

- Membership number
- Membership name (as it appears on the membership card... any abbreviations must be recognizable by the judges)
- If a membership card contains any other information, such as Team A, Team B, and so on, that must appear on the sign as well
- Many teams choose to include their division and problem number

Beyond the above required elements, the team may add to its membership sign as it wishes. A sign can be used to establish a setting, enhance a performance through movement, or illustrate traits of a character or community.

The team sign must be visible during the performance and may be scored if it is listed as a free choice *Style* category.



Spontaneous Spotlight

Many teams develop a unique way to introduce themselves to the judges. Make them remember (and like) you!!!

Teams Should Ask Questions

ALWAYS ask if you can talk to one another. IF you have an idea, ASK if it is allowed.

- Can we put items inside of other items (consolidate)?
- Can we alter the items?
- Can we touch it / move it / etc.?

LOOK at all the options

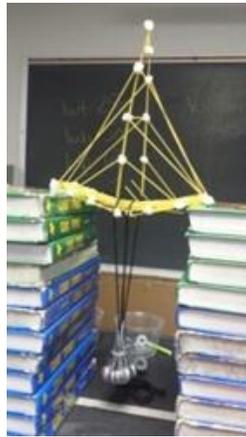
If the problem involves a ramp – does the item to be rolled have to start at the TOP of the ramp, or can you roll it from the bottom to control its speed and destination? If a problem involves large items (i.e. 2 chairs), ask if you can move

them closer / further to enhance your solution.

If there are various 'targets', look at the points awarded on each and focus on the higher scoring options.

Can items be combined to improve the score / make things more efficient?

Are there some items that are not helpful? Discuss options with your team.



Hands On Challenge: Spaghetti Span

Set two stacks of books 10" apart on the table. Give your team:

- 25 pieces of spaghetti
- 20 mini marshmallows
- 5 mailing labels
- 50 metal washers

Your problem is to build a bridge between the two stacks of books and 'float' as many metal washers as you can above the surface of the table.

*The books may not be moved.

Scoring will be as follows:

0 OR 5 points for creating a bridge between the two stack of books.

1 point for each metal washer 'floating' above the table.

0-5 points for originality.

0-10 points for teamwork.

Coach Note:

Some teams may use their bridge building knowledge to create a design like shown to the left, while other teams may choose to forgo the creative score to simply lay the spaghetti flat and add ALL washers to the bridge.

Trash to Treasures

Don't empty that recycling bin! Before you pull the can to the curb, allow the team to peer inside. Encourage the team to look at each item not for what it is supposed to be used for, but for what it could be used for. Consider those cardboard tubes left from wrapping paper. Marbles can easily roll through. Does the strength and weight make it a good material to build a sturdy yet lightweight structure? Take-out containers hold leftovers, but they can also be combined to create a robot costume. Ask a team parent to take your team on an inspiration trip... visit a local home improvement, toy or craft store... brainstorm five uses for each item that is picked from the shelves!

Inspiration... is Everywhere

By Kim Kempton

Finding the perfect material to build a set or bedazzle a costume can be challenging and overwhelming. Once a team decides on a material, figuring out what to do with it can be equally overwhelming. Just like in a hands-on spontaneous challenge, don't alter materials until you have a plan.

Encourage your team to look at the material in front of them from a different perspective. What happens when it's layered? Broken into pieces? What does it look like when similar colors or shapes are grouped together?

Whenever your team seems stuck, unable to think, create, complete a task, work together...DO A SPONTANEOUS PROBLEM or get up and move. Run a quick lap around the outside of the building. Most importantly - make it fun!!! If that does not work, look at your set from the perspective of an ant, an alien or a giant. Remember this should be an enjoyable odyssey for all, and inspiration can spark at any moment!

Don't focus on what it is... but imagine what it could be!

Recruiting a Judge

By Yolanda Preysner, CTOM Judge and Volunteer Coordinator

CTOM is run entirely by volunteers.

Every team is required to provide both a judge and a volunteer to help at the tournament. The roles are quite different, so please start thinking of potential candidates well before the February 9th registration deadline. Judges and volunteers must be at least 18 years old on tournament day.

Who would make a great judge?

Anyone who loves seeing creativity on display, can follow instructions, and can make a two-day time commitment would be an excellent judge. No prior Odyssey knowledge is needed. Our judges often find the opportunity both fun and inspiring. Judges must attend training on Saturday, March 7th from 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and attend the tournament on Saturday, March 21st for the duration of the competition they are assigned to judge (approximately 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.). CTOM provides judges with lunch on the day of the competition.

Family friends, co-workers, grandparents, teachers, principals, babysitters, and neighbors are excellent candidates. For a fair competition, the judging team for a problem must be consistent throughout the day. Judges are not allowed to leave their posts to watch other teams compete in other problems. Understandably, parent judges would be disappointed to miss watching their own children compete, so we recommended that you do not ask parents to judge.

Make finding a judge a team effort.

Ask both team members and their parents to help you find that sometimes elusive judge. Parents can amplify your efforts by reaching out to colleagues at work, using social media, and tapping their networks. Creative teams have recruited from senior centers, honor societies, civic groups, churches, and former Odyssey teams with great success.

Please see the Register as a Judge / Volunteer pages at www.ctom.org or for more information contact Yolanda Preysner - ypreysner@ctom.org.

Finding a Volunteer

Ask the parent of a team member! Tournament day is long. The team is often with the coach, leaving a parent free to work a shift of 3 – 4 hours. No special training is needed. Volunteer jobs include easy but necessary tasks such as door holding, passing out brochures and maps, delivering lunches or coffee, running errands, and selling merchandise. Often the volunteer job can be scheduled around the team performance. But if their job shift conflicts with their child's performance, the parent is always allowed to leave their post to watch their child perform. No parent volunteer will miss their child's performance!

One volunteer must work the entire volunteer shift. Parents cannot split one shift among themselves. There are also a limited number of volunteer openings on Friday, March 20th helping to set up for the tournament. For some parents, this may be more convenient. Of course, family friends, siblings, teachers, neighbors and others may serve as the team-provided volunteer if no parent is available to help.

Dates, Details & The Drill

Key Dates

Saturday, January 11, 2020
Coach Training

Sunday, January 12, 2020
Tournament Registration deadline (Fee: \$225, after this date, a late fee of \$50 applies)

Friday, January 31, 2020
Tournament Registration closes – No additional teams accepted

Sunday, February 9, 2020
Judge and Volunteer Registration Deadline (after this date, \$250 fine for no judge / \$100 fine for no volunteer applies)

Saturday, March 7, 2020
Judge Training

Saturday, March 21, 2020
State Tournament

Saturday, March 28, 2020
World Finals (Coach) meeting

Details

The deadline for submitting clarification requests is February 15, 2020.

Remember to check for newly posted clarifications, specific to your problem:
<https://www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications/>.

The Drill

CTOM is here to provide you with any information or guidance you may need as you proceed along your coaching odyssey! Please reach out, if you need something.