



# Coaches' Corner

## Tips from your CTOM Coach!

February 2020

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

*In this Issue*

## Do it with STYLE!

By Kim Kempton

According to the dictionary, STYLE is defined as "a manner of doing something" or "a distinct appearance, typically determined by the principles according to which it is designed." In Odyssey of the Mind, Style is those elements that make a team stand out from the crowd. It is what makes a solution distinct and memorable.

### What is Odyssey Style?

Style is the elaboration of the Long-Term problem. It is what makes a particular performance really shine! Style showcases a team's strengths and talents:

- artistic design, music, songs, choreography
- construction, creative use of materials
- humor, rhyme, acting

STYLE is "that which is added to the problem's solution and relates to the theme of the problem or the solution, but is not scored under the long term problem".

### How Does a Team Find its Style?

1. List all of the required scored elements. These elements cannot be scored under Style (unless you separate the technical features from the creative presentation).

2. Identify required Style elements and prioritize on the team to-do list. (i.e. creativity of a costume / artistic quality of a prop).
3. Identify elements that are extremely creative, but are not being scored.
4. Brainstorm ways to enhance the theme and create a Style element.

### Style is Worth up to 50 Points

Each Long-Term problem has 2 mandatory and 2 "Free choice of team" Style elements. In addition, the team must write a paragraph that explains how well the 4 Style elements fit together and enhance the solution.

The paragraph is an opportunity to describe the Style theme, why it was chosen, and perhaps, point out props, actions, dialogue, or other elements which support the theme! The paragraph is an opportunity to point out the details that Style judges may otherwise miss!

Remember, a judge only has a few minutes to review the Style form, so keep it short, simple and specific! Each element receives a score of 1-10, with a total potential of 50!



### Is Everyone Feeling Proud?

Now is the time to review, revisit, refresh. Page 2



### What to do when something goes wrong... on STAGE!

Prepare your Team. Page 4

### 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](http://www.ctom.org)



# Team Tips (*ESPECIALLY* for NEW coaches)

## Overcoming Team Conflict

There is an old adage that says that there is no "I" in "TEAM". Spelling puns aside, it is true that the hardest part about teaching teamwork is getting a student to see beyond their own idea and begin to understand the importance of listening to others; of collaborating and working together. It is quite common for a single Odyssey team member to take over a meeting, or dominate a solution by repeating (loudly) an individual (and very specific) answer to a question. Odyssey tends to attract strong / creative personalities, who don't always understand the value of working with and learning from others.

As a coach, one of the hardest jobs can be teaching listening and response skills. While the outside assistance rules prohibit you from telling a team what to do, one of

your main jobs as a coach is teaching them the importance of listening to each other, and sharing the skills needed to positively respond and help the creative process move forward.

## Steps to Resolution

When conflict does arise within a team, follow the *Responsive Classroom* approach to quickly get back on track:

1. Calm down (invite everyone to take a quick lap around the room, count to ten, etc.)
2. Explain why they are upset (everyone has 1 minute to talk)
3. Discuss and resolve (coach led; everyone's voice is heard).
4. Acknowledge and move forward (handshake, combine designs, etc.)

## Take a Collaborative Approach

Encourage the team to create the best possible solution by combining multiple ideas or adding on to an idea to improve and enhance it. To force the issue, require that every team member comment (or add to) the idea being presented. Beyond "I agree" or "I like it", encourage every team member to support the decision with a reason. Ask them to explain



"Why?" For example: "Why do you like Sally's backdrop design?" "I like it because it is very colorful and helps establish our Under the Sea setting."

## Heads Down, Hands Up

If you still have a single team member who is dominating the decision making, introduce the democratic process. Revert to voting on decisions... should the backdrop be blue or red? Have the team vote, and encourage them to accept the response as a TEAM DECISION, in which all members take ownership. Make sure all team members understand that they have a voice and that their opinion is valued.



# Revisit... Refresh... Is Everyone Happy?

Updates and revisions often fall to the very bottom of the to-do list. Frequently, in the chaos of preparing for the State Competition, Odyssey teams will slip into the danger zone of "it is good enough." While it is OK to simplify and streamline parts of the solution, make sure that a team doesn't become complacent or overlook a sub-par element of their solution. Did the team build a prototype and then move on to the next challenge? Encourage the team to revisit every element of the solution. Does it need to be rebuilt for durability? Could it use some additional creativity to improve how it looks? Is there one area of our set (or a specific costume) that does not look as good as the rest? Use probing questions to make sure that the team feels confident, comfortable and proud of the work that they share with the judges.

If your team set goals at the beginning of the year, be sure to revisit them. Are they on track to reach them? If not, that's okay. The team needs to establish goals that are achievable. However, do not mistake this for aiming low. A team should always think big—big enough to get a little uncomfortable, but realistic enough that it can be achieved through hard work.

As your team's solution comes together, encourage them to read and re-read the problem. Review the to-do list one more time. Take the opportunity to praise and recognize their successes and accomplishments. Continue to encourage them to show their creativity and present their best solution!

# Spon Zone

The CTOM Competition is just over a month away!!! While the focus on the long-term solution heats up, spend a little time each meeting improving your spontaneous responses.

## Spontaneous Top 10

1. Introduce yourselves to the judges in a memorable way.
2. Select a captain / leader.
3. READ the problem as a group, then re-read the problem.
4. Where do you get the MOST POINTS?
5. Keep track of TIME.
6. ASK QUESTIONS.
7. Determine a THEME and stick with it.
8. LOOK at all the options and ASK for clarification.
9. STAND UP and be PROUD.
10. BE CREATIVE!!!!

## Verbal – Scary Stuff

You will have one minute to think and three minutes to respond.

Common answers will receive one point, creative answers will receive three points.

Your problem is to name things that are very scary. For example, you might say "a cyclops" or "my mother's hair in the morning".

## Verbal – Night & Day

You will have one minute to think and three minutes to respond.

Common responses are worth one point. Highly creative or humorous responses will receive 3 points.



You may have heard the expression "different as night and day." Your problem is to tell things that might be associated with NIGHT or things that might be associated with DAY. *You must say the word "DAY" or the word "NIGHT" before giving your answer.*

**Common Responses:** Things that happen, such as "the moon shines at night", "I go to school during the day", "my parents go to work all day".

**Creative Responses:** Answers that incorporate unusual ideas, for example, singing "Hard Day's Night" by the Beatles. I am a member of the "Knights of the Roundtable". My favorite book is "Good Night Moon".

## ALTERNATE CHALLENGE:

Place a die on the table. On each turn, have the team member roll the die. If the number rolled is odd (1, 3, or 5), give a word or phrase containing the word "DAY." If the number rolled is even (2, 4, or 6), give a word or phrase containing the word "NIGHT."

## "Stress Free" Environment

As the competition nears, anxieties may begin to emerge. Please remember to keep practices fun!!! Odyssey is about learning to think on their feet, and team members should see this as a fun challenge, not a stressful situation!!! At the tournament, the most successful teams are the ones who are having a lot of fun, are enjoying their skit and who see spontaneous as an opportunity to show off their creativity. The coach often sets the tone for this attitude, so if you're feeling stressed, mix it up! To change the dynamic, ask a parent to run a meeting, or put one of the kids in charge for a little while. Mix up the routine and lower the stress!

# Don't Forget the Set Up

By Kim Kempton

By early February teams should have a completed script and begin to run lines and rehearse their skit. The first few run throughs may be rough, but stay positive and encourage the team to keep trying. As a reminder, the skit must be completed in less than eight minutes, including set up time starting from the staging area. Judges hate to cut off students before they finish, and running long in some problems can garner a penalty. Help the team prepare by asking questions. What needs to be on stage when? How many team members are needed to move our backdrop? Are certain costumes more suited for transporting props onto the stage than others? Practice moving from the staging area to the performance zone from both the left and right side. You will not know the final setup until the day of the performance. Have the kids determine how they will set up their props, etc. in the staging area and how they can assure success. Lastly, make sure you make time to practice all parts of the solution: staging, skit and talking to the judges. Encourage the team to be prepared for ANYTHING!

***How did the OM Team advance to Worlds? Lots of Practice!***

# Did That Just Happen?!?

By Rachel Cunningham, CTOM Board Member

## The First Thing to Do... Breathe.

What you have feared for the last few weeks has just happened on competition day during your team's performance: One of your team members forgot their lines, a prop broke on stage, or the balsa tower broke a minute into the performance. The first thing that you must do is breathe! Mistakes can, and will, happen. The magic of Odyssey of the Mind is that the unexpected will happen, and your team members have a distinct ability to take any problem, and create an immediate solution.

## Second... Learn from Mistakes.

From experience, the best way to avoid issues on stage and to prepare for when something goes wrong on stage is to practice, practice, and practice! Allow your team opportunities to practice their performance over and over again. During these performance times, mistakes are likely to happen, and solutions will be created right then and there.

## Third... Always Stay Positive.

When something goes wrong during your team's performance, it is vital that you don't show your stress, even though you may be going through a plethora of emotions on the inside. Remember that your students are just that, kids who are doing Odyssey of the Mind as something fun and enriching. Coaches and parents need to be sure not to react when something goes wrong. The team will already feel disappointed in themselves if a mistake is made, and they do not need to see disappointment or disapproval from others. As a coach, model good behavior and teach them how to respond to a challenge with confidence.

## Lastly...Lead by Example.

Breathe! Have faith in your team, and remember that no one is perfect. Mistakes happen and things will go wrong on stage. But this is Odyssey of the Mind, and we must expect the unexpected!

*Odyssey made me a great problem solver. I'm always seeking a solution rather than dwelling in the problem. OM allowed me a great outlet for individuality, confidence, and creativity.*

➤ *Katrina Kiritharan, Past CTOM participant*

# Talk About It

By Rachel Cunningham, CTOM Board Member

After their performance, talk about any mistakes! Mistakes are part of being human, and it is vital that we teach this to our team members. Allow your team to talk through what went wrong on stage. What was the mistake? What could they do next time? And most importantly, how did they react to the mistake? Explain to the team that the reaction will have a much larger impact on the judges than any mistake ever would. Mistakes are teachable moments, and I encourage you to treat any performance mishap as an opportunity for improvement. As a teacher, I encourage my students to make mistakes and am sure to have productive dialogue with them once the mistake is made. I also make sure to discuss with them how a positive reaction can be more impactful and create a stronger outcome than the initial mistake.

## Dates, Details & The Drill

### Key Dates

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

**(snow day, Sunday, March 8)**

### Judge Training

**Saturday, March 21, 2020**

**(snow day, Sunday, March 22)**

### 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

If you have questions, need to vent or just need a little extra reassurance, don't hesitate to reach out to Kim Kempton at [kkempton@optonline.net](mailto:kkempton@optonline.net), another coach or a Problem Captain.

Don't forget to involve team parents. Ask them to attend rehearsals and provide ongoing encouragement or a team dinner to celebrate accomplishments. Create unique awards – best use of duct tape / most creative spontaneous response. **Most importantly, stay positive.** Continue to encourage the kids. They will amaze you in the end!