

Coaches' Corner

January 2023

Bringing it all Together

A GREAT Odyssey of the Mind solution brings lots of little things together to create a Big Impact! 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 its set's size, stability and durability. There have been teams who built beautiful sets, only to realize that they do not fit through a standard doorway (a Program Guide requirement). 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? Are the costumes and props visual enough to set the scene without a backdrop?

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).

Have Fun on Stage

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!

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS THIS SUNDAY

Register for the 2023 CTOM Competition [HERE](#).

The CTOM Competition will be held on Saturday, March 18, 2023, at Southern Connecticut State University. **Teams MUST REGISTER for the tournament before Sunday, January 15, 2023.**



Trumbull Scrimmage

- Saturday 1/28/23
SIGN UP TODAY!!

Madison Middle School in Trumbull is hosting a Spontaneous Scrimmage on January 28 from 9:00-12:30pm!

The event is open to all registered CTOM teams. Spontaneous scrimmages are a great way for your team to garner competition experience and learn from others!

Don't miss this invaluable learning experience in preparation for the upcoming State Competition. Space is limited and the deadline to register is Friday, January 13.

To sign-up or learn more about this special opportunity please contact: Tara Figueroa at tarikanova@gmail.com.





Find Inspiration ... in the *recycling bin!*?!

Finding the perfect material to build a set or bedazzle a costume can be challenging and overwhelming. Before you pull your recycling bin to the curb, encourage your team to peer inside. Team members should look at each item not for what it is supposed to be used for, but for what it could be used for. What could be created with 10 of the items, what about 100? How could the item be altered to create a unique effect? 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?



Stop. Reset. Restart.

After weeks of working on a solution fatigue can set in (for both team members and coaches). 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!

Scoring Teamwork on a Scale of 1 to 10

One of the keys to coaching Odyssey is encouraging teamwork. All teams go through growing pains, but members will learn to work together in time. Everyone's idea is important to the group. Sometimes the best way to illustrate how well your team is doing is by giving them a score. To evaluate teamwork, start with 5 points. Add (+1) for a "yes" to any of the first questions. Subtract (-1) for a "yes" to any of the second questions.

+1 Questions:

- Did the team approach the problem with enthusiasm and cheerfulness?
- Was every team member listened to and fully involved in developing a solution?
- Has a team leader already emerged? Do the other team members respect this position?
- Did the team manage its time well? Did the team manage its materials well?

-1 Questions:

- Did anyone speak angrily to a teammate or use profanity?
- Was anyone ignored or did a team member choose not to participate?
- Did any team member try to impose their solutions on the team?
- Did the team use up or waste materials prior to planning or testing a solution?
- Did the team become flustered and panic as time ran out?





Is your Team Stuck in a Creative Rut?

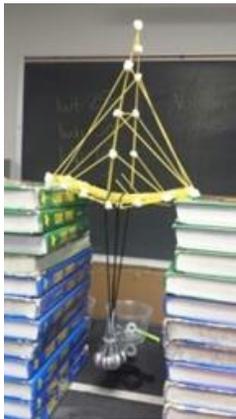
Check the [CTOM 8-Unit Curriculum](http://ctom.org/ctom-curriculum/) for Inspiration.. CTOM is proud to offer our 8 Unit curriculum to guide coaches in running meetings and support teams as they create their long-term solutions. Please use these as a guide. Units can be completed in a single meeting, or over a series of team events. Units do not need to be completed in numeric order.



- Unit 1: Odyssey Intro – Teamwork, Creativity and Starting the Journey Together
- Unit 2: Embracing the Long-term Problem
- Unit 3: Spontaneous – Teach, Develop and Demonstrate Creativity
- Unit 4: Brainstorming – Theme, Characters and Storyline
- Unit 5: Channeling Creativity in the Long-term Problem
- Unit 6: Simple Machines
- Unit 7: Bring on the Theater – Public Speaking and Developing Characters!
- Unit 8: Identifying Team STYLE!



<http://ctom.org/ctom-curriculum/>



Don't Forget About SPON ZONE

The Spontaneous portion of the competition (worth up to 100 points) requires that the team solve a problem it has never seen, before a team of judges. The coach does not go with the team into the spontaneous room. There will always be at least two adults with the team during the entire spontaneous process.

A team does not know beforehand what kind of problem it will face. All team members (up to 7) are encouraged to participate in the Spontaneous portion of the competition. For tips on teaching Spontaneous, sample problems and insights from CTOM's Spontaneous Problem Captain, Dave Schaller, make sure to visit the [SPON ZONE](#) section of our website!

Find Inspiration on YouTube

State Organizations and individual coaches from across the country post how-to and training videos on YouTube. If your team is struggling with or unfamiliar with a specific type of Spontaneous Challenge, share one of these videos during an upcoming team meeting:

- [Buckets - spontaneous hands on example problem Odyssey of the Mind - YouTube](#)
- [Up, Up, And Away - spontaneous hands on example problem Odyssey of the Mind - YouTube](#)
- [Perpetual Motion - spontaneous hands on example problem Odyssey of the Mind - YouTube](#)
- [Heads and Tails- spontaneous hands on example problem Odyssey of the Mind - YouTube](#)





Recruiting a Judge

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 January 31st 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 4th from 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and attend the tournament on Saturday, March 18th for the duration of the competition they are assigned to judge (approximately 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.). 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 recommend 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, 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 17th 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.





Remind the team to review the scoring for the problem it selected. Sometimes great presentations are scored lower than expected because the team did not emphasize the work on the scored element.

Use Spontaneous Challenges to Build Skills and Teamwork

Use Spontaneous Challenges to identify team member skills, foster teamwork and move their long-term solution forward.

REMEMBER: *There are no outside assistance rules in Spontaneous. Use your spontaneous time as an opportunity to teach your team skills and tactics. Encourage the team to always start by identifying WHAT is being scored and HOW points are awarded.*

Use your time **WISELY**

Every team member will perform better if they know what their role is. Assigning roles, based on member skills, is an ideal way to help a team bring out the best in each other.

Identify a team captain: A captain can organize the flow of discussion, testing, building, and scoring, especially when splitting up in smaller groups to solve the problem.

Designate a problem reader: Understand the exact wording of a problem. You only get points for what the judge is scoring!

Assign a time-keeper: Too often teams lose track of time while brainstorming or focusing on a specific task. The time-keeper keeps an eye on the clock and asks the judges repeatedly for how much time remains.

Empower your tinkerers: Assign one or two team members to be the creative force. If the team is given a hand-on or verbal hands-on problem, the role of the tinkerer is to come up with one or two creative ideas of how to solve the problem. The team can vote on which idea it wants to use and move forward, working together to enhance the idea and create its solution.

Recognize the writers: If the challenge involves creating a story, have your strongest writers work collaboratively to develop the story while others complete the hands-on challenge. Remember, the spontaneous judges do not see your long-term solution. Is there a theme or setting that can be used to tell a story in a verbal spontaneous?

Ask Questions

In Odyssey, if it doesn't say you can't, you probably can! Always ask the judges if you can alter items before you begin.

Key Dates and Details:

Key Dates

Sunday, January 15, 2023 Tournament Registration deadline (Fee: \$225, after this date, a late fee of \$50 applies)

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Closing of Tournament Registration, and Judge/Volunteer Registration deadline (after this date, \$250 fine for no judge / \$100 fine for no volunteer applies)

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Judge Training

Southern CT State University

Saturday, March 18, 2023

CTOM State Tournament

Southern CT State University



Due to the MLK Holiday, there are no Office Hours this month. If you need support, please email me at kkempton@ctom.org to schedule a call!

