



Coaches' Corner

January 2024, Issue 2

KEY DATES

TEAM REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS JANUARY 15

After Jan 15, a \$50 late fee will apply.

Register for the 2024
CTOM Competition [HERE](#)

**JUDGE/VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION
DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31**

Judge registration [HERE](#)
Volunteer registration [HERE](#)

ALL REGISTRATIONS CLOSE JANUARY 31

The CTOM Competition will be
held on Saturday, March 16, 2024,
at Southern Connecticut State University.

RECRUITING A JUDGE

CTOM is run entirely by volunteers. Every team is required to provide a judge and a volunteer to help at the tournament. Judges and volunteers must be at least 18 years old on tournament day. Registration deadline for team judges and volunteers is Jan 31st.

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 fun and inspiring. Judges must be available to attend training on Sat, March 2nd from 8:30am – 1:00pm and the tournament on Sat, March 16th for the duration of the competition they are assigned to judge (between 7:00am – 4:00pm). Family friends, co-workers, grandparents, teachers, babysitters, 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 teams compete in other problems. Understandably, parents prefer watching their own children compete, so we recommend that you do not ask parents to judge.

Make finding a judge a team effort. Ask team members and parents to help you find that sometimes elusive judge. Parents can amplify your efforts by tapping their networks. Creative teams have recruited from senior centers, honor societies, civic groups, churches, and former Odyssey teams with great success.

FINDING A VOLUNTEER

Ask parents of team members! On tournament day the team is often with the coach, leaving parents free to work a 4hr shift. No training is needed, volunteer jobs include easy but necessary tasks such as door holding or passing out brochures. Volunteer parents are always allowed to see their child perform. One volunteer must work the entire volunteer shift. Parents cannot split one shift among themselves. Family friends, siblings, and others may also serve as the team-provided volunteer.

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





Don't Forget About CTOM 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 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!

Use Spontaneous Challenges to Build Skills and Teamwork

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

Team members perform better if they know what their role is. Assigning roles based on 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. The time-keeper keeps an eye on the clock.

Empower your tinkerers: Assign one or two team members to be the creative force. If the team is given a hands-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 to move on with.

Recognize the writers: If the challenge involves creating a story, have your strongest writers develop the story while others complete the hands-on challenge. Remember, spontaneous judges do not see your long-term solution, you can borrow from it to solve a spontaneous problem.

Ask Questions

Ask your judges specific questions!

SPON SCRIMMAGE

Madison Middle School, Trumbull
Spontaneous Scrimmage

Feb 3, 9:00am-12:30pm

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 advance registration is required.

To sign-up please contact:

Tara Figueroa

tarikanova@gmail.com





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!



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Bringing it all Together

A GREAT Odyssey of the Mind solution brings many little things together for one Big Impact! Focusing on and refining a team's solutions, style elements and details not only lead to big scores, but to comradery, ownership and pride.

Start with a Setting

A good Odyssey performance will 'transport' to a new location. It will invite the judges to join the team as they travel to a new destination, land or world. 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?

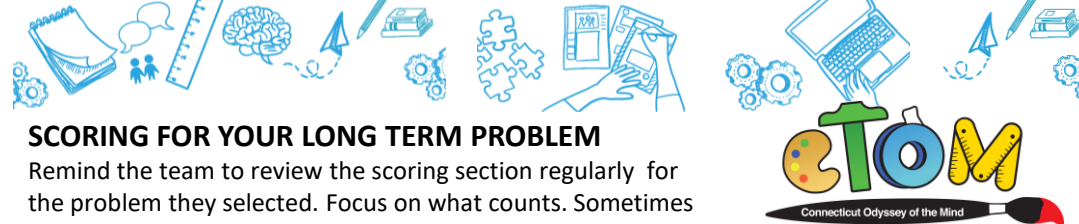
Introduce Your Characters

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!





SCORING FOR YOUR LONG TERM PROBLEM

Remind the team to review the scoring section regularly for the problem they selected. Focus on what counts. Sometimes great presentations are scored lower than expected because the team did not emphasize the work on the scored element.

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Working on your set? Find Inspiration in the *recycling bin*!

Finding the perfect material to build a set or 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?

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?

