



## Coaches' Corner

February 2024

### Show the Judges your Team's STYLE!

#### What IS Style?

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." According to the Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide, 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."

Simply put, Style 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

#### What is NOT Style?

Make a list of all required scored elements. Items cannot be scored twice, so these elements cannot be scored under Style (unless you separate the technical features from the creative presentation).

#### How Does a Team Find its Style?

Identify required Style elements and prioritize these items on the team to-do list. (i.e. creativity of a costume / artistic quality of a prop). Now look at the rest of your long-term solution. Is there an element that is extremely creative, but is not being scored? Is there a way to add an element that will reinforce the theme or creativity of the solution?

#### Prioritize the Paragraph

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! 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!



**PHOTOBOMB CTOM!**  
To be included in the 2024 CTOM video montage, email your team pictures to [photos@ctom.org](mailto:photos@ctom.org), or upload to your Instagram using [#ctom24!](https://www.instagram.com/ctom24/)



#### CTOM Office Hours

Login to Microsoft Teams for comradery, questions, and insights

**EVERY MONDAY 7-8pm**

Join us here:

[Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)



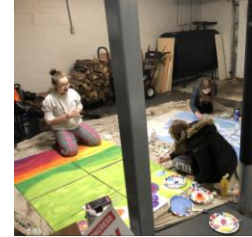
CTOM is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to Odyssey of the Mind in CT

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



## Is Everyone Happy with the Team's Choices?

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!



## Planning your Competition Day

The 2024 Connecticut Odyssey of the Mind Competition is rapidly approaching. Please be sure to review [www.ctom.org](http://www.ctom.org) for event details and to review the Competition map for competition sites and prop-drop locations. The Competition Schedule, including starting times for long-term

and spontaneous performances will be posted soon. Please plan on being at your performance site at least 30 minutes before your earliest time.

## Don't Forget the Set Up

By late 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 setting 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 take time to practice all parts of the solution: staging, skit and talking to the judges. Encourage the team to be prepared for ANYTHING!



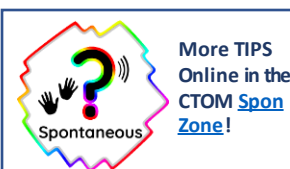


## Have FUN with SPONTANEOUS!!!

The CTOM Competition is just under 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. Work as a TEAM. If one member of the team is stuck, the team is stuck. Plan ways to help each other out!
8. LOOK at all the options and ASK for clarification.
9. STAND UP and be PROUD.
10. BE CREATIVE!!!!



**THIS JUST IN: to meet popular demand, odysseyofthemind.com posted Spontaneous Practice Problems #2 in their Member's Area**

### Verbal –Hands-on – Scary Stuff

Give each team member a piece of paper and some crayons. You have 2 minutes to draw a picture of something that is very scary. During phase 2, you will have 3 minutes to take turns describing your (or a teammate's picture).



Common Response: "an octopus"

Creative Response: "my mother's hair in the morning"

### Verbal –Night & Day

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 "Night" when 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:

Give each team member a dice. On each turn, have the team member roll the dice. 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."

## Send us your PHOTOS!!!

One of the favorite parts of our competition is sharing photos of our teams and the progress they've made throughout the year! Please submit photos (and videos) for consideration for inclusion in this year's Photo Bomb Video and Awards Video by sending attachments or file share link to [photos@ctom.org](mailto:photos@ctom.org), and/or use #ctom24 on Instagram.





**Get your team parents involved!** 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!

## Provide a Positive Environment and Foster Creativity

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!



Remember that 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?

## Don't Forget the TEAM SIGN

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 contains any other information, such as Team A, Team B, that must appear on the sign as well
- Many teams chose 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.

## Key Dates and Details:

### Key Dates

Saturday, March 2, 2024

### **Judge Training (SCSU)**

Mondays 7-8PM

### **CTOM Office Hours**

Saturday, March 16, 2024

### **CTOM State Tournament**

### **Southern CT State University**

Reach out if you have questions! CTOM is here to provide you with any information or guidance you may need as you proceed along your coaching odyssey!

