



Spontaneous – Teach, Develop and Demonstrate Creativity

[Spontaneous Resources](#)
[Creativity Practice Activities](#)



Unit 3 of 8

Suggested Materials:

See chart below and any materials needed for each spontaneous problem

Time	Activity
<i>Info for Coaches</i>	Spontaneous problems and the thinking behind them are at the core of Odyssey of the Mind. Practicing these types of problems will influence a child’s thinking and problem-solving skills for the future. Many people believe creativity is an innate skill, but creativity is like a muscle and needs to be flexed in order to get stronger. Practice spontaneous problems at every meeting with the team. Try to incorporate Verbal Problems and Verbal Hands-on for every meeting and aim for a Hands-on problem every other meeting. The Hands-on problems are so important, but take more time and materials to set up. Once the team gets going on their long-term problem, you might be able to let them work on it alone while you set up a Hands-on problem.

Spontaneous Kit:

It is very helpful to have a kit set up with a collection of materials that are typically used in a Hands-on or Verbal Hands-on problem. This will make it easier for you as the coach to set them up. Please see the list of common materials below that you can put into your spontaneous kit. This is a great way to get parents involved- ask them to contribute or help create the kit. A great place to peruse is the dollar store- they often have cheap items that you could put into your kit.

<p>Marbles Popsicle sticks Pipe cleaners Straws Plastic utensils Markers, crayons or colored pencils Aluminum foil String Tape</p>	<p>Toothpicks Spatulas Wooden spoon Plastic cups Mailing labels Construction paper Ribbon Buttons Cottonballs Qtips</p>	<p>Balls of all sizes Metal washers Scissors Paper plates Paperclips Binder clips Play doh or Putty yardsticks/rulers Takeout containers of different sizes</p>
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Time	Activity
<i>Info for Coaches</i>	<p>Spontaneous team “jobs”:</p> <p>It is helpful to have your team practice different jobs while they are completing spontaneous problems. Younger kids do well if you assign them jobs at first and rotate the jobs so that everyone has a chance to perform each one. Eventually the team will figure out who is particularly well-suited for the roles listed below.</p> <p>All team members should be encouraged to understand the points in each problem. Often teams get distracted and focus efforts on ancillary details that do not affect scoring. For example, sometimes the majority of the points are building a structure, but a team can get sidetracked on the items that they can hang from the structure, leaving the structure less sturdy and not likely to support itself. If the structure falls, it won’t matter what things the team tried to hang on it.</p> <p>Reader- One or two team members who read and reread the problem while the team is working. They focus on where the points are weighted for the problem and keep the team on track.</p> <p>Time-keeper- This team member keeps track of the clock, asks the judge what time is left and helps to keep the team on track.</p> <p>Leader- This team member helps organize ideas from all members, and quickly helps the team to decide on a plan. They might have the final team vote on ideas under consideration or they may just decide for the team.</p> <p>Story writers- Two or three team members work together to come up with a few ideas for a theme or general plot for the solution (when appropriate)</p> <p>Inventors- Two team members come up with a few ideas for the building or machine in the problem (when necessary)</p> <p>Creative forces- Team members who are good at building on the ideas of others... this role is to observe, encourage good ideas, and solicit each team member’s contribution.</p>





Time	Activity
10 min	<p>Verbal Spontaneous Problems:</p> <p>In a Verbal spontaneous problem, the team members generate as many creative verbal answers as they can in a short time period. Points are awarded for what is said. Creativity figures heavily in the scoring, as do humor and puns. Because these types of problems are timed, an emphasis on the quantity of answers is important. If a team member gets stuck, the timer still runs, so it is important for team members to understand that if they are not ready with a creative answer when it is their turn, they should produce a “common” answer rather than wait to form a creative one. Usually scoring is 1 point for a common answer and 5 for a creative one. Sometimes a team member can make a more common response “creative” by using a silly voice or acting out the answer. A tip for verbal problems is to have the team members use their fingers to come up with five different answers during their think time (one for each finger) so that they can start the competition with five answers. Teams are always given time to think to themselves before the judges begin scoring answers.</p> <p>Often teams are given cards or other objects that they must “pass in” while they are responding. You could cut up some index cards and give them out during your meetings to have the team practice putting a card into a container every time they respond to the problem.</p>
	<p>SPONTANEOUS CHALLENGES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suppose you have just cleaned out your closets and have a big pile of shoes that you hate to throw away. What would you do with them?• List something you can do with your feet that you can also do with your hands• List alternative ways to get from the mall (other than a car) to home• Who pushed Humpty Dumpty off the wall and why?• Give a reason why someone might come running from the woods, shivering from fright• List an item you might put into your locker and give a reason why• Why did the chicken cross the road?• Name different types of rocks





Time	Activity
15 min	<p>Verbal-Hands-on Spontaneous Problems: In a Verbal Hands-on spontaneous problem, the team is usually given an object and asked to use it in a creative way or to say something about it. It can also be a two-part problem where during the first part the team is given some materials and asked to make something, and then in part two, they are individually asked to say something about what they made. Again, using onomatopoeia, silly voices, and acting usually generates creativity points. An easy way to practice these problems is to go through your kitchen drawers and pull out any item that kids may not know the purpose of (corkscrew, garlic press, grater, etc.). You can have the team pass the item around and ask what it is or what it could be used for.</p>
	<p>Verbal / Hands-On (When the team enters the room, tell them this is a Verbal Hands-on problem)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) You will have 2 minutes to think and 5 minutes to respond.2) Each of you has 7 cards. After each response, you will place a card in the box. You will respond in sequence. You may give responses until you no longer have any cards or until time ends, whichever occurs first.3) Questions count against your thinking time. You may not skip your turn, nor repeat, nor pass. If one member of the team is stuck, the team is stuck.4) Common answers will receive 1 point. Creative and humorous responses will receive 5 points.5) On the table in front of you are several items with obvious uses. Your problem is to pick up one of the items and improvise with it in a way different from its normal usage. For example, you might pick up the comb, pretend to throw it and say, "it might be used as a boomerang." <p>For Coaches Only</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Provide 35 cards. If you have colored cards or cards that are somehow marked, that works the best.2) Place several items that have common uses on the table. For example: an ink pen, a comb, a spoon, a fork, a straw, etc.3) Looking for unusual responses and always reward humor. <p>Other Examples: Breaking News (Skit type of problem including use of materials) New Location (Another skit based problem) Time Capsule (Scoring guide included for discussion purposes - More advanced problem)</p>





Time	Activity														
10 min	<p>Hands-on Spontaneous Problems: In a Hands-on problem, the team is usually given a specific set of materials and asked to make something or solve a problem.</p> <p><i>*Tip: Work with your team about staying focused on the problem. With Hands-on problems there are many different materials that are distracting and enticing that may get the team or team members off track. You can coach them to identify the distractors and practice ignoring them.</i></p>														
	<p>Hands-On Spontaneous: Hanging from a Tree (Div I, II, and III) *You may print this part here to give to the team to follow along as you read them the problem.</p> <p>COACHES: Before the team enters the room, have all materials they will use for the branches in a paper sack. Have the “tree trunk” set and ready for use on a table or countertop. Tree trunk could be a skinny bottle (like a 1L soda bottle, plastic champagne flute, anything tall and skinny that stands up straight, but will likely fall if weight is put on either side) The team may make vertical supports for branches (the problem doesn’t say the tree must stand ALONE: only that a TEAM MEMBER may not support it.) Do NOT TELL THEM this unless they ask!!</p> <p><i>*Tip: They may use the paper bag as part of the solution, but do not tell them this unless they ask. Be sure the "tree trunk" is on a flat, level, solid surface. Be sure the team members remove their hands when the buzzer sounds. Use a tape measure to measure the length of each branch (from the outside edge of the "trunk" to the end of the branch.)</i></p> <p>Give the team the following materials for building branches (or whatever materials are comparable that you have available):</p> <table border="0"><tr><td>1 8 ½ x 11" piece of paper</td><td>2 sticky labels</td></tr><tr><td>2 index cards</td><td>1 envelope</td></tr><tr><td>4 twist ties</td><td>3 rubber bands</td></tr><tr><td>4 paper clips</td><td>3 plastic funnels</td></tr><tr><td>2 unopened small cans tomato paste</td><td>6 coffee stirrers</td></tr><tr><td>8 straws</td><td>10 skewers</td></tr><tr><td>10 " masking tape</td><td>Scissors (not part of the solution)</td></tr></table> <p>### continued ###</p>	1 8 ½ x 11" piece of paper	2 sticky labels	2 index cards	1 envelope	4 twist ties	3 rubber bands	4 paper clips	3 plastic funnels	2 unopened small cans tomato paste	6 coffee stirrers	8 straws	10 skewers	10 " masking tape	Scissors (not part of the solution)
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Time	Activity
	<p>Hands-On Spontaneous: Hanging from a Tree (Div I, II, and III) ### continued ###</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. You will have six minutes to work on your solution. Your structure will be scored at the end of the six minutes.2. You will be given a bag of materials and a pair of scissors. You may use any of the materials for your solution but may not use the scissors as part of your solution. You may not use the sticky labels on the "trunk" of the tree.3. Once the time begins, it will not be stopped. <p>THE PROBLEM IS: You are to build a tree using the tall bottle for your support. This is the "trunk" of your tree. You may add materials in any way you wish, except that you may not use sticky labels on the "trunk" of the tree. Your tree must stand upright -- trunk must remain 90 degrees perpendicular to the work surface -- without any team member touching it for at least 10 seconds after your six minutes ends, in order to receive score. Once time ends, no one may touch the tree.</p> <p>You will receive points as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Each inch of length of a branch: 1 pointEach metal washer attached to a branch: 1 pointEach jingle bell attached to a branch: 2 pointsEach marble attached to a branch: 3 pointsEach funnel attached to a branch: 4 pointsEach notepad attached to a branch: 8 pointsEach can attached to a branch: 10 points <p>Other Hands-on spontaneous examples: Omer's Delivery Service Long Arm</p>





Time	Activity
10 min	<p>Closing Discussion: Always have a discussion after each spontaneous problem completed by the team. There must be dialogue about what they think worked well and what they need to improve upon. Sometimes it is a challenge to get younger children to be reflective in the moment, so it could be helpful to video the team doing a problem and then play it back for the team to reflect on it. Having open discourse will also help the team members realize each other's strengths and weaknesses, which is part of getting to know one another and participating in a team competition.</p>

