



# Coach Training

Long-Term and Style

# Agenda

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## 1. How do we coach?

- a. Coaches Bill of Rights
- b. Tips and Advice
- c. Teambuilding

## 2. Long-Term Problems

- a. Getting Started
- b. Solving the Problem
- c. Clarifications

## 3. Style

- a. Mandatory Style Categories
- b. Free Choice of Team
- c. Outside Assistance

# How do we coach?

*"Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration."*

*- Thomas Alva Edison*



# Typical Timeline: Sept-Dec

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- September/October:
  - Membership Coordinators purchase memberships
  - Teams formed and coaches recruited
  - State team fees paid
- November
  - Teams begin work on LT solution and practice Spontaneous
- December
  - Coaches attend Coaches Training (✅ You are here!)
  - Teams should (ideally) have a plan for LT solution nailed down and props/sets started

# Typical Timeline: Jan-May

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- January
  - Deadline for coach to sign up for tournament (ideally should be done earlier)
  - Teams should be practicing LT skit
  - Team appointed judges attend Judges Training
- February
  - Regional tournaments
- March
  - State Tournament
- April
  - Teams polish and fundraise for World Finals
- May
  - World Finals

# Important Dates

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- **Jan 10:** Deadline to register for competition
  - Deadline to register Judges & Volunteers
- **Feb 8:** Regions 1, 3, & 4 Tournaments
- **Feb 22:** Regions 2 & 5 Tournaments
- **Mar 15:** State Finals
  - Thornapple Kellogg (Middleville, MI)
- **May 21-24:** World Finals
  - Michigan State University

# Coaches “Bill of Rights”

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You have the right to...

- Expect appropriate behavior from all your team members
- Expect team members to attend scheduled meetings
- Expect help from your team members' parents
- Expect parents to share the costs of creating the solution
- Remove a child from a meeting if they can't behave
- Call a child's parent's if a problem occurs or recurs
- Remove a child from your OM team if attempts to modify their behavior fail
- Have a life outside of Odyssey of the Mind

*Written versions of this agreement are available to print and sign if desired.*

# What is the role of the coach?

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- Schedule meetings & organize snacks—Busy minds need fuel
- Help team to:
  - Set goals, develop a timeline, track tasks & deadlines
  - Understand problem including scoring and clarifications
  - Take notes—without making suggestions or directing
  - Lead brainstorming sessions—without injecting ideas
- Teach basic skills or bring in experts—Sewing, carpentry, painting, make-up, etc ...
- Ask open-ended QUESTIONS (to help team focus)
- Guide team in Spontaneous practice at every meeting
- Guide team through forms



# Coaching Dos and Don'ts

## DO

- Do help students to see and recognize the abilities of each team member and encourage team members to capitalize on the individual strengths of ALL.
- Do help students to understand that winning is not the goal. The process of getting there is the most important thing -- not the competition.
- Do help them give and take constructive criticism of IDEAS.
- Do relax and enjoy seeing these young, creative minds at work!!

## DON'T

- Don't tell them how to solve the problem, but rather ask questions which help them think it through.
- Don't limit creativity by setting restrictions which are too tight or which reflect your own, perhaps limited, vision.
- Don't get disturbed when teams make mistakes along the way. This is part of the OM learning process.
- Don't allow any criticism of teammates' personalities or physical attributes -- no cutting remarks.

# Team Meetings/Practices

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- How often?
  - Most teams choose to meet weekly, sometimes bi-weekly.
- Meeting Structure
  - Snack
  - Team Building
  - Brainstorm
  - Work on Problem Solution
  - Spontaneous

# Teambuilding

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- It's important your group comes together and functions as a team. Decisions should be made together!
- Incorporate some team-building games into each practice session, especially early in the season to build team trust.
- No criticism of people or their ideas! It is okay to evaluate ideas on their merits, but it must be done constructively.
- Celebrate milestones, breakthroughs and accomplishments.
- Once an idea is generated and discussed, it is no longer owned by the originator...it is the TEAM'S idea.

# Tips and Advice

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- **Arrange for a Co-Coach or back up person for the team.**
- Have the team develop a timeline and stick to it.
- Learn to recognize burnout and when to lighten up.
- Know the OM Long-Term problem and Program Guide inside out, upside down and backwards.
- Plan on mistakes, disappointments, and disagreements. Decide early how you, as a team, will handle them.
- Always answer a question with another question.
- Learn how to ask questions. Become an expert at this skill.
- Be a real resource person. Take the team on “field trips.”
- Teach skills and attitudes to help anticipate problems.

# Long-Term Problems

*"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."*

— *Maya Angelou*



# Getting Started

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There are 3 major information resources that are available to you as a coach of an Odyssey of the Mind team

**Program Guide** (available on the [official website](#) or through your membership coordinator)

**Long-Term Problem** (available from your membership coordinator or the official website)

**Clarifications** general and team (available on the Odyssey of the Mind website, through your coordinator, or through your State Association; released throughout the season)

# Solving the Problem

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## Step 1: Read the Problem, then read it again!

- Go through each section of the problem carefully.
- Figure out the requirements of the problem and the scoring elements.  
Make sure each participant understands what is required of the problem.
- Understand how each of the parts interact.
- General ideas are OK, but don't narrow your focus too fast

# Solving the Problem

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## Step 2: Brainstorm Possible Solutions

- Generate lots of ideas (keep track of them on paper, chalkboard, or whiteboard)
- Don't evaluate ideas yet... just list them.
- Break the problem down into manageable pieces
- Encourage wild, creative solutions



# Solving the Problem

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## Step 3: S.C.A.M.P.E.R

When the team has a general idea for their solution, work with them on rearranging, adapting, and combining their thoughts to create new ideas using the S.C.A.M.P.E.R. © technique.



# How to S.C.A.M.P.E.R

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- **Substitute:** What could be used instead?
- **Combine:** How can I combine this with something else to make it more effective or better?
- **Adapt:** How can this be altered to improve?
- **Modify:** How can the color, shape, or form be changed?
  - *Magnify:* How can it be made larger, stronger, or longer?
  - *Minify:* How can it be made smaller, lighter, or shorter?
- **Put to Other Uses:** What else can it be used for?
- **Eliminate** some part of the object to give you new ideas?
- **Reverse or Rearrange** the parts of this object to give you new ideas?

# Solving the Problem

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## Step 4: Refine and Evaluate Ideas

- Which ideas does the team like best? Why?
- Discuss and evaluate ideas, but don't criticize.
- Modify ideas to make them better.
- Select a preliminary solution.

# Solving the Problem

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## Step 5: Determine Tasks and Timeline

- What types of tasks, skills, props, contraptions, are needed?
- Who and how will they do these things?
- Determine a basic timeline for completing the solution.
- Continue to evaluate the solution and refine/revise as needed.
- Do the items decided upon fit the problem specifications?

# Solving the Problem

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## Step 6: Begin Construction

- Start building and writing.
- Evaluate new ideas as they arise.
- Test the solution. Does it work?
- Can it be made to work better?
- Continuously refine and revise.

# Solving the Problem

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## **Step 7: Put it Together (At least one month before tournament)**

- As props and tasks are near completion, or are completed, test them thoroughly.
- Continue to refine & revise your solution
- Does it work? Is there a better way?
- Does the solution still fit the problem?
- What problems need to be fixed?

# Solving the Problem

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## Step 8: Finish Up and Practice

- Test things out... do they work? Revise and refine.
- Can they work better?
- What happens if something goes wrong?
- Is there a contingency plan?
- Practice the whole performance and check the timing. Have team explain how they did it? Look for problem spots.

# Long-Term Tips & Advice

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- Look at the answer or solution. Have team members ask:
  - *Is it of high quality?*
  - *How original is it?*
  - *Is it the first thing you think of?*
  - *Is it the first thing others will think of?*
  - *If so, is it creative?*
  - *Will the judges understand your humor and references?*
- Remember that it is the team's attention to details that will differentiate good solutions from great solutions.



# Clarifications

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*“If a team questions the interpretation of a limitation or is not sure if an aspect of its solution is allowed or meets the problem’s requirements, it may request a **clarification**.”*  
(Program Guide, 23)

- General Clarifications

- Explain or amend problem limitations without revealing team solutions
- Posted on [odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications](https://odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications)
- These take precedence over problem limitations and Program Guide rules—check them regularly!

- Team-Specific Clarifications

- Address details of an **individual** team’s solution
- Confidential and never shared with other teams unless universally applicable.
- Teams must ensure their performance aligns with what was approved.

# Submitting Clarifications

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## Before Submitting a Clarification:

- Carefully read (and re-read!) the problem and Program Guide—most answers are already there.
- Abusing the system isn't a substitute for thoroughly reading the problem and can result in penalties!

## Submission Process:

- Clarifications can be submitted online in the [Member Area](#)
- Find complete directions and troubleshooting help [here](#)

# Style

*"Everything you can imagine is real."*

*—Pablo Picasso*



# About Style

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- Style is the ✨pizzaz✨ added to the solution. In Long-Term, teams are scored on how well they meet the requirements of the problem, but in Style, teams are scored on the special elements that make their solution unique.
- Style can be in the form of:
  - Costumes
  - Scenery
  - Props
  - Humorous dialogue
  - Sound effects...
  - and more!

# Mandatory Style Categories

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- Each Long-Term problem has two mandatory style categories
  - Example: Costume of one team member
- Teams can decide which costume or which parts of a costume will be scored
  - Example: Cowboy's hat
- Teams can further distill the style category by specifying which aspects of the element they want scored.
  - Example: Creative use of materials in cowboy's hat
- Teams should be careful to match the order of categories on their forms
  - Example: if first category is Costume of one team member, list that first on the form

# Free Choice Style

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- Teams can select anything that **isn't already being scored**
- However, they can list a different aspect of something already being scored.
  - Example: a vehicle scored for how well it functions may be selected to be scored for its appearance.
- Choosing free choice elements:
  - Have team evaluate what they've worked hard on
  - Look at areas that aren't scored in the problem that are particularly creative
  - Investigate many options like character portrayal, artistic quality, use of materials, and more
  - Encourage team to consider how all style elements come together to form the solution

# Style Category Examples

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- Costumes
- Script
- Music
- Background
- Dance
- Sound Effects
- Songs & Lyrics
- Membership Sign
- Appearance of Character(s)
- Dialogue
- Narration
- Interaction between characters
- Lighting
- Original Poetry
- Rhyming
- Movements
- Playbill Artwork
- An Original Effect
- Props
- Painting (things, people, backdrops)
- Use of Technology

# Outside Assistance

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- OM is hands-on for kids, but hands-off for adults!
- The team must conceive, design, construct, and perform **their own ideas**.
- It's **crucial** that parents know OA rules too!

Common examples of Outside Assistance:

- Giving the team ideas/making suggestions
- Doing something **for** a team member instead of showing them how to do it themselves
- Tying a tie, doing makeup, assembling sets, etc.



# Is \_\_\_\_\_ Outside Assistance?

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**Scenario:** A team decides it will center its skit on a CELL theme. The coach gives the team members a homework assignment to come up with as many words as possible that contain the word CELL, such as cellophane, cellular phone, etc.

**Answer:** Not OA – Although the coach should not give the team any examples, the assignment is one of the types of things the coach should do to help the team develop its creativity.

**Rationale:** It is not OA for a coach to give a homework assignment that gets the kids to think more creatively about an initial idea that they came up with.

# Is \_\_\_\_\_ Outside Assistance?

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**Scenario:** A Division I team is spray-painting a prop and the coach holds a team member's hand for about 2 seconds (out of a 30-minute job).

**Answer:** It is OA—The coach may not help spray paint **anything** used in the solution. However, the coach may teach the team member how to spray paint by using something that is not part of the solution such as a scrap piece of wood.

**Rationale:** It is not OA for the coach to teach a team member the proper way to spray paint on a **practice/scrap piece**

# References and Resources

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- Odyssey of the Mind Website
  - [Steps to Get Started](#)
  - [Member Resources](#)
  - [Odyssey Academy Videos](#)
- [Program Guide](#)
- [Coaches Manual](#)
- OM Passport: Must have membership to access
  - Found in the [Members Area](#)
- Your Regional, Association, and Association Tournament Directors!

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