Odyssey of the Mind®

2026-2027

Program Guide

This guide is intended for use by coaches and teams in Odyssey of the Mind. It contains the general rules for competition and will help them understand the program. **This Guide is updated each year, so please read it carefully, especially the General Rules.**

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Introduction

Odyssey of the Mind™ was founded by Dr. C. Samuel Micklus, known as Dr. Sam, in 1978. Dr. Sam was a professor at Glassboro State College, now Rowan University, and used a creative problem-solving activities to teach his Industrial Design students to think Beyond the Box™. That is, taking your knowledge and mixing it with your imagination to build, fix, and create what might have been unimaginable. Teaching creativity is Dr. Sam's passion and to help share his love of creativity, he founded the parent company of Odyssey of the Mind, Creative Competitions, Inc. (CCI). CCI writes the long-term problems and works with dedicated volunteers from every country to help bring creative problem solving to students and institutions all over the world.

The mission of Creative Competitions, Inc. is to provide creative problem-solving opportunities for everyone and to foster original and divergent thinking. Through the Odyssey of the Mind program, we promote creativity by challenging teams to solve divergent problems, that is, those with more than one solution. By working in teams, participants learn teamwork, the appreciation and understanding of others, and that a group is a more powerful thinking force than an individual. They develop a sense of self-respect and respect for others through preparatory activities such as brainstorming and role-playing. In fact, the most successful teams are those with participants with a wide difference in interests such as dance and sports, math and poetry, etc.

While the goal for most teams is to present their problem solutions in official competitions, this is not a requirement of participation. The purpose of the program is to provide students with an exciting learning experience that promises to be challenging and fun.

Chapter I

Welcome to the Odyssey of the Mind

Thank you for joining the worldwide family of creative problem solvers in Odyssey of the Mind. Whether this is your first experience with OM™ or if you're a seasoned OMer, it's important that you read this guide thoroughly. This guide is updated annually so please pay close attention to all sections, especially the General Rules section since those rules pertain to every team.

What is Odyssey of the Mind?

Odyssey of the Mind is a creative problem-solving competition for students and community group members of all ages and learning levels. Teams of students select a problem, create a solution, then present their solution in a competition against other teams in the same problem and division. There are many nuances of the program that are explained further in this guide, but here are some of the basics of participation:

1. Students work in teams of up to seven members under the guidance of an adult coach.
2. Teams spend weeks or months, at their own pace, working together and creating solutions to long-term problems. Every year, there are six long-term problems designed for vehicle, technical, classical arts and literature, structure, performance, and primary categories.
3. Team members come up with all the ideas for their solution and do all the work themselves. Coaches may help teach skills and educate the team on ways of approaching the problem and of evaluating their solution but will not solve the problem for the team.
4. To solve a problem, teams must follow the general rules in this guide, limitations in the problem, and clarifications issued during the year at the Odyssey of the Mind website.
5. Teams work within the cost limit stated in the problem. This will teach the teams to work with a budget and foster a life-skill that is essentially priceless.
6. Competition is not required; it is an option. Teams are solving OM™ long-term problems all over the world and we provide a platform for teams to compete outside their school or organization, if desired. If a team would like to compete, here are a few things to know:
    a. Teams have 8 minutes to present their long-term problem solution in competition.
    b. If a team participates in a competition, it will be scored for how well it met the requirements of the problem and for creativity in categories specific to that problem. Teams should be sure to reread scoring before finalizing their solutions.
    c. Teams are encouraged to do their best and Style score is awarded for the quality and impact of portions of the team's solution.
    d. Teams in competition are presented a spontaneous problem to solve on site. Spontaneous problems are unknown to the teams and coaches prior to competition and are explained in

the Rules portion of the Program Guide.

e. A team's standing in competition is determined by combining its Long-Term score, Style score, and Spontaneous score and calculating those based on the scores of the other teams in that competition.

7. The rules in this guide pertain to all the problems; any conflicting problem limitations supersede these rules, and clarifications issued throughout this program year supersede the rules and the problem limitations.

Getting the Most Out of Your Odyssey of the Mind Experience

The Odyssey of the Mind program is based on the premise that creativity can be taught. Not only can creativity be taught, but learning can and should be fun. Can you think of anyone who fits any of these descriptions . . . the talented student that is "naturally" creative; the student whose talents require nurturing; the student who does not think of themselves as creative, but feels they are "different" than their peers; or the student with untapped potential but no outlet for it to thrive? Odyssey of the Mind provides that outlet in an environment where almost every type of student will thrive. In fact, Odyssey of the Mind provides an educational benefit to all students at all learning levels.

Coaching an Odyssey of the Mind Team

In OM™ the coach plays a limited, but Important, role. Each Odyssey of the Mind team must have at least one adult, 18 years of age or older, registered as its head coach. Having an assistant coach will lessen the demands assumed by one person. OM™ does not assign coaches. The coach of a team is determined by the membership organization.

Who Can Coach?

Coaches come from all professions and from all walks of life. Although teams must have the support of the member school or organization, coaches do not have to be teachers. Frequently, a child's involvement in the program will generate the interest of the parents. Oftentimes, parents will start the Odyssey of the Mind program in their child's school and assume a coaching role to get involved in their child's education.

Role of the Coach

Coaches must remember that the Odyssey of the Mind is a "hands-on" activity for students and a somewhat "hands-off" for adults. It's important that teams create their solutions without using the ideas and assistance of others. There is value in letting teams succeed and fail on their own merits, especially when achievement is rated on effort, as much as on results. The coach will offer guidance

and encouragement, and teach team members how to explore possibilities, listen to others, learn from failures, and evaluate solutions effectively. They can teach the team skills, such as sewing, painting, drilling, etc., but not to direct the lesson to be a part of the solution. However, no one, including the coach, may give the team ideas or assistance in developing the solution to the problem. It is amazing to see what the teams can do on their own and, in the end, the coach will be proud of their team for doing it themselves. And the students will amaze themselves and build self-esteem from knowing they did it on their own.

The coach or coaches will provide supervision and handle logistics such as scheduling meetings, making sure paperwork is done properly, getting the team to competition, teaching them how to solve differences, and so on. They may be responsible for recruiting and selecting team members. The coach will make sure the team understands the limitations of its long-term problem and oversee brainstorming and spontaneous practice sessions. When team members get an idea, the coach or coaches can make sure they obtain the skills required to carry out that idea. The coach will provide moral support. And… if something goes wrong, the team might need to rely on the coach's guidance to *help them* make things right without actually fixing the problem for them. The coach will make sure to read and re-read the problem and clarifications. The team members should be given a copy of the materials to ensure they understand the problem and how it will be scored.

Being a Coach

You, as the coach, can provide the experiences for your team to reap the full benefits of participation in OM™. You will find many exercises in the following chapters that will help you to teach critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills, but the program can provide much more than teaching students how to think: it augments the lessons taught in the classroom and allows students to apply what they've learned to different situations. In this time of budgetary cutbacks in the arts and other important areas, students can continue to learn art, music, creative writing, acting, and just about whatever else they're interested in through incorporating those subjects into their long-term problem solution.

It is important that coaches recognize the wealth of opportunity that comes with coaching a team. Your time spent with the students will make a difference in their lives. The team will learn more from their time in OM™ than they imagined – and they will remember the good times they had in the process. And you, the coach, are the one to make that happen. Good luck, and congratulations on becoming a coach!

Getting Started

Sometimes, students will organize a team and then find an adult to coach. However, if you're a coach, a parent, or someone who believes that students or club members could benefit from participation in OM™, there are a few steps to take when introducing OM™ to the pupils in a school or an organization.

First, Generate Interest

Make sure you are familiar with the current year's long-term problems so you can present the ideas to the students. Duplicate and hand out the synopses found in the membership materials found online in the Members Area located on www.odysseyofthemind.com.

Odyssey of the Mind should be available to all students. Ask teachers, school administrators, and/or parent groups to help identify students who are creative thinkers, who might benefit from being on a team, or who might appreciate a hands-on approach to learning. You may also choose to present an Odyssey of the Mind awareness session to the entire student body in an assembly, or club fairs, and ask those interested to sign up to participate.

Another way to stimulate interest in the program is to ask teachers to conduct classroom lessons using Odyssey of the Mind materials. This will introduce a large number of students to the creative problem-solving process and bring new methods of learning into the classroom. One type of activity to share are our past Spontaneous problems which can be found online and can be downloaded by anyone from www.odysseyofthemind.com.

Second, Form a Team

Ultimately, each membership is controlled by the school's or organization's administration, but the coach is responsible for selecting the best students for the team under the guidelines set by the administration. It's important to recognize that all students can benefit from participation in Odyssey of the Mind, and that performance in the classroom does not directly correlate with success in the program.

Many students have highly developed creative problem-solving abilities but do not have the opportunity to apply them in the classroom. Participation in Odyssey of the Mind removes the apprehension and self-consciousness that may inhibit students from becoming more involved in their education. Students who are not high achievers often discover, through solving Odyssey of the Mind problems, that the knowledge attained in school can be applied to many real-life situations, and they become more involved in the classroom as a result. In other words, they take the knowledge that is in the Box and take it "Beyond the Box®"!

It's a good idea to involve students with different skills and abilities, so the team has a wide talent base to draw upon. This helps to build teamwork, because the members will learn to recognize and appreciate the abilities of others.

Whether you're trying to generate interest in the program or choosing from a well of eager students, here are a few suggestions on making that final decision of who should be on your team:

- Recruit as many students as possible and allow them to form their own teams. When tournament time comes around, have teams compete against each other to determine who will represent the school. Of course, you can always purchase additional memberships and send all your teams to your tournament. In tournaments, each membership can support one team, per problem, per division.
- "Compose" each team with a selection of students with varying skills — for example, an artist, musician, computer expert, writer — depending on the nature of the problem.

Third, Meet the Parents

It's always a good idea to hold an initial meeting of team members and their parents. Most likely, the parents will support their child's involvement in the program and will want to help. It is very important, however, that you let them know their limitations. Make clear the rules for outside assistance. Stress that their children will reap the full benefits of creative problem-solving if they create their solution themselves.

Parents need to understand what will be expected of them regarding money, time, transportation, and so on. Find out what days and times are convenient from a family perspective and develop a practice schedule accordingly. Make sure you inform the parents of the competition dates well ahead of time so they don't schedule activities that conflict with those dates.

Getting to know the parents is a way to learn about the resources, skills and facilities that they have to offer. Parents may be willing to teach skills that team members need to execute their solution — carpentry, sewing, dancing, etc. Parents can also supply general information on subjects such as engineering and scientific principles, and they are a good resource to serve as judges, scorekeepers, or tournament assistants.

You might want to have parents solve a hands-on spontaneous problem during the meeting to "break the ice" with each other and to demonstrate what their kids will be doing.

Fourth, Make a Schedule

After you've met with the parents and discussed time constraints and what they're willing to

contribute, set a schedule of team meetings that you'll stick to as best as you can until the competition date approaches. You might want to meet one day during the week and on Saturday mornings for a couple of hours. As competition season draws near, you'll probably want to increase the frequency of your practice sessions. Try not to have your meetings conflict with any of the team members' curricular activities.

If you can meet as a team only once a week, make this a planning session where all team members give input into the solution, then assign different tasks to specific team members that they can work on at home. Make sure each team member has equal responsibilities. For example, one could write one scene of a skit and another team member could write another. One could make a costume, another could build a prop, and still another could create music.

Fifth, Train Your Team

Once you get the logistical matters in place, it's time to start training your team on what the program is all about. Because students work in teams, they'll need to learn how to work cooperatively. They will solve problems using their creativity, so teach them how to think more creatively. The following section gives an overview of teambuilding and creative-thinking techniques that you should employ in your team meetings and practice sessions.

Training Your Team

An important benefit of Odyssey of the Mind is that students learn to work with others. Oftentimes, to encourage creativity, talented individuals are given free reign to "do their own thing." They may be accustomed to having their own ideas recognized, but now they have the ideas of their team members to consider as well. It is natural for new teams to take time developing into a cohesive group. You may have to help that process along. Ultimately, you'll find that team members will form lifelong friendships and develop a deep respect for one another's talents.

Teaching Teamwork

It is the coach's responsibility to provide stability and to ensure that each team member has equal input to the problem solution. Everyone's opinion counts, so avoid allowing one or two team members to "overpower" a meeting. If this happens, you may have to be the one to draw out the ideas of the quieter students in the group. You may find that team members will not agree on one solution and will work against each other at first. You may have to be the one to initiate the process of reaching a consensus. In time, the lessons you provide will become natural behavior.

Here are suggestions to help ensure fairness and equal input for all team members:

- Rotate team captains and have them take turns conducting the meetings.
- Have members come to an agreement on issues that are impeding progress. They should do this by listing the pros and cons of the issue so they see both sides of the argument. If a consensus cannot be reached, have the members vote by secret ballot.
- Schedule meetings where all team members work on only one aspect of the solution. This way, all team members will contribute to many aspects of the solution to some degree.
- Form committees with each team member in charge of one group responsible for a team--determined contribution (e.g., artwork, costumes). This will help develop leadership skills.

Teaching Creativity

Coaches must prepare teams for three phases of competition: Long-Term, Style, and Spontaneous. (More about these later.) Many teams will work on their own to develop their long--term problem solution but may need guidance in building creative-thinking skills or practicing solving spontaneous problems.

To prepare team members for the mental rigors of competition, training should include exercises based on basic creativity principles. The coach can help improve a team's divergent thinking ability through brainstorming sessions and exercises that involve the restatement of a problem, functional fixedness, removing mindsets, and role-playing. These will help build self-confidence and divergent thinking ability.

In addition to these types of exercises, the coach should teach discipline, and management and organizational skills to the team members. Oftentimes, generating ideas to solve a problem is easy, but selecting and executing a solution is much more difficult. Following are exercises to help build creative-thinking skills.

Brainstorming

Many people, when trying to solve a problem, will develop a mental block. This may be a result of "thinking too hard." Then, later, without conscious effort, a solution will come to mind. One way to overcome a mental block in the problem-solving process is to hold a brainstorming session.

The purpose of brainstorming is to generate as many ideas as possible. The more ideas a team has to choose from, the greater the chances are of finding one that is successful. Ideas are generated rapidly, which prevents individuals from dwelling on why an idea might not work. Evaluation of the ideas comes at a later stage of solution development. Coaches should teach students how to hold brainstorming sessions, and they may serve as moderators of the sessions.

Following are some guidelines to follow for brainstorming:

1. **Allow no criticism.** Some people become self-conscious when they feel they may be criticized, which inhibits them from offering ideas. For this reason, it is important to not judge ideas at this time. Present examples of "wild ideas" that were successful such as walking on the moon.
2. **Encourage outrageous ideas.** This often results in team members going beyond the normal thought process.
3. **Encourage piggybacking of other ideas.** One idea often stimulates a better one.
4. **Evaluate the ideas** at the end of the session or after a day or two. Eliminate those that are not feasible.

Teach teams the difference between critiquing — offering constructive criticism — and criticizing, which tends to be negative. Stress that team members are to critique each other's ideas in a positive manner. Rather than simply saying they don't like an idea, ask them to state why and offer ways to improve on the idea. Most important, let the team know that while brainstorming is meant to be productive, it should be fun, too. Remind them that decisions made at this time are not always final; ideation is an ongoing process.

Besides having the coach as moderator, each brainstorming group should select a leader to direct the discussion. If a leveling off of ideas occurs, the team leader for that session should encourage new ideas by asking "what if" type questions such as,

- "By altering the materials how could we . . .?"
- "What might happen if we changed its shape?"
- "How could we adapt it to make it move faster?"
- "How can we make it smaller, lighter, etc.?"

Have one team member serve as secretary of the session and record all ideas and useful comments. Team members should take turns in these roles.

Restatement of the problem

How a problem is stated often influences how a problem is solved. Essentially, there are two types of problems: analytic and divergent. An analytic problem is convergent in nature; that is, it has a single correct answer. Divergent problems allow for many possible solutions. Many problems can be stated in a way to either encourage or discourage creative responses. A common trait among creative individuals is their ability to redefine a problem without changing its objective. For example, consider the problem, "Design a new toothbrush." To most people an obvious solution would be an adaptation of a utensil with a handle and fibers at one end. If you restate the problem to "find a better way to clean teeth," the more creative individuals would go beyond the preconceived idea of the typical

toothbrush. A brainstorming session could help in coming up with many different solutions. Coaches should train team members to redefine the problems presented to them and stimulate and nurture this thinking approach.

Be careful, however, when restating problems and make sure the objective is not changed or reinterpreted. For example, if you ask a team to "Design a baseball glove," an image, concept or solution that will most often come to mind is a typical fielder's glove, catcher's mitt, or two or three fingered glove with a large web. The problem could be restated as, "Think of different ways to catch a baseball," which encourages creativity and allows for an array of usable solutions. However, stating the problem as, "Design a new glove," will result in solutions that do not serve the intended purpose of catching a baseball.

Functional fixedness

Functional fixedness is a mindset, or the tendency to perceive an object as being able to carry out only the function for which it was designed. The tendency to apply only one function to an object limits the number of possible resources an individual can use when faced with certain tasks. Although not designed for these functions, a toothbrush can be used to clean golf clubs, a coin can be a screwdriver, an old sock can be a rag, or a rubber band can be used as a hair band. Similar to redefining a problem, redefining an item's function allows individuals to go beyond preconceived notions.

Role-playing

Having students assume different roles or the personae of other characters allows them to go "outside of themselves." It helps to get them to look at things from different points of view and opens their minds to possibilities other than what they are used to. Having team members act out fictional experiences in a make-believe setting will help them to think more imaginatively. It will also help hone their acting skills and get them to feel more comfortable performing in front of others.

You can set the parameters for what the students will do in their assumed roles, or you can encourage them to improvise. Provide feedback on how they could improve their performance to be more convincing, humorous, dramatic, and so on.

Channeling creativity

It's not enough to be creative for creativity's sake. Creative processes should be productive, too. One way to "channel" a team member's creativity is to pose limitations to the problem. This will stimulate ideas while focusing on the task at hand.

Asking someone to invent “something” is too broad and may cause an individual to feel overwhelmed. On the other hand, asking someone to design a red ride-on toy fire truck is too restrictive. Taking a middle ground and asking someone to design a pull-toy leaves a great deal of latitude for creative thinking. Including limitations for cost, size and safety will offer further direction and help to keep the ideas practical.

Putting it all together

Consider the problem, “Design a boat.” This statement inhibits creativity because of preconceived ideas of the characteristics of a common boat. To encourage creativity, you could restate the problem as, “Build a device to transport one person across a pond.” To further encourage creativity, impose certain limitations.

This problem and the following limitations were presented to students at Rowan University in New Jersey in the 1970’s. Below is the solution developed by one group of students. The solution was not successful in that it did not get the individuals across the pond without getting wet, but it certainly was creative. In fact, it was the inspiration for the Odyssey of the Mind Ranatra Fusca Creativity Award. *Ranatra Fusca* is the Latin term for “water strider” and, in Odyssey of the Mind, is synonymous with exceptional creativity. The rules to the challenge were:

1. No gasoline engines may be used.
2. The value of materials used may not exceed $5.
3. The project must be completed within three weeks.
4. The device must keep the individual safe and dry.
5. The device must navigate over a given course.

Chapter II

About Your Membership

We welcome all students to participate in Odyssey of the Mind. However, to enter official Odyssey of the Mind competitions, teams must be covered under a current membership and abide by certain rules and requirements. All school memberships may enter one team per problem per division it houses into competition. Homeschool and community groups may enter 5 teams per membership, provided they are not in the same problem and division. The primary division is allowed to have multiple teams in one school/organization. The grade of the team members determines the division in which a team is eligible to compete. For example, consider a school of grades K-6. Generally, this would be made up of Division I and II students. This membership could enter a total of ten teams in competition — five in Division I and five in Division II.

If a membership wants to enter more teams in the same problem and division it may purchase an additional membership at a reduced rate. All teams that fall under the second membership would be considered "Team B." If a third membership is purchased, those teams would be considered "Team C," and so on. If purchasing additional memberships is not feasible, a school district may hold an intramural competition to determine which teams will participate in official competitions.

School Memberships

In most circumstances, all team members come from the same school. However, multi-school teams — those made up of students from different schools — are permitted as long as all the schools have a current membership. If the schools contain the same division, multi-school teams may choose which school name they wish to use for registering; otherwise, teams must compete under the school name that houses the division that they are competing in. Multi-school teams may only compete at one regional tournament, even if multiple schools may be located in more than one region. Furthermore, each team is allowed one student that attends a different school without a membership. However, the team members must agree and must have permission from principals from both schools involved. If a team member transfers to another school, he/she may remain on the team until the end of the competition year, provided both school administrations approve.

Community Groups

Established community groups and businesses that have sponsored an Odyssey of the Mind Team, such as Rotary, church groups, libraries, etc., may purchase a membership under the group's name. If the community group contributes money to a school to sponsor a team or to enable students to participate, the membership would be in the school's name.

If the Community Group organization is new, never sponsoring an Odyssey team before and they are a business, a copy of its ByLaws or a web address with a mission statement must be submitted. For-profit businesses must submit a copy of their Business Registration or a letter written on their business letterhead stating that they will be sponsoring an Odyssey of the Mind team in name along with their Tax ID number.

Home-Schooled Students

Home-schooled students can purchase memberships under a home school name. Each home-schooled team must include a majority of homeschool students. For example, for a team of seven, a minimum of four homeschooled students must be on the team and each team may also include up to three students from other schools that would not have to purchase an additional membership.

If school administrators permit it, homeschooled students may compete on a school team sponsored by the public school that they would normally attend if they were not home schooled.

Age Divisions

Teams are formed by division and compete against teams in the same division and problem. Grade level determines the division for teams in the U.S. and in countries with an educational structure that corresponds to the U.S. Except for Division IV, teams from countries with a different grade system ("Other International") and U.S. students who are not assigned a grade will have their division determined by the ages of the team members. In competition, each membership may enter one team per problem for each division it covers.

The team must compete in the lowest division for which it qualifies. For example, if a team qualifies for Division II it cannot compete in Division III. The team member in the highest grade (U.S.) or the oldest (Other International) determines the team's division as follows:

- **Primary** – Non-competitive but may showcase at a tournament for feedback. Grades K-2 (U.S.). Less than 8 years of age on May 1, 2027.
- **Division I** – Grades K-5 (U.S.): Less than 12 years of age on May 1, 2027 (Other International).
- **Division II** – Grades 6-8 (U.S.): Less than 15 years of age on May 1, 2027 (Other International).
- **Division III** – Grades 9-12 (U.S.): Oldest team member does not qualify for Divisions I or II and is attending regular school—not a college or university or anything similar (Other International).
- **Division IV** – Collegiate for ALL TEAMS. All teams must have a majority of members who are high school graduates and registered for at least one class at a college, university, accredited technical school, or member of the military. Team members do not have to attend the same institution.

***NOTE:** *In general, the USA standard is that children begin school in kindergarten at 5 years old. There are 12 subsequent grades (1-12) before graduating from high school. Students are usually 18 years old when they graduate from high school. Ages can differ based on individual school retention and promotion*

policies.

Team Member Participation

Up to seven members may participate on any Odyssey of the Mind team from Primary through Division IV. There is no minimum number of team members required but we recommend each team has at least five, preferably six or seven. In competition, seven team members may participate in the presentation of the long-term solution **and in spontaneous**. Be prepared to go to competition with one or two team members missing in case of illness or other unexpected absence. Team members should practice sharing roles and covering for each other and all should be prepared for every type of spontaneous problem.

Team members may not be removed from the roster for any reason even if a team member decides to no longer participate. Once a team member has contributed to the problem solution, in any way and to any degree, they are part of that team even if they don't participate at a competition. A team with less than seven members on its roster may add to the roster, at any time and without penalty, until it reaches a full complement of seven. (See section titled Special Situations for Going to Competition.)

If there are seven members on the roster and the team needs to add to its roster for any reason, it must indicate it has more than seven on the team on its Outside Assistance Form and will receive a penalty. The judges at the competition will consider the circumstances when determining a penalty that is proportionate to the violation. For instance, a team with a late addition due to illness would have the contributions of the new team member considered, whereas a team that had a member drop in the early stages will have that person's contributions considered. The level of penalty will vary but will be less severe than if the team does not indicate this on its form.

Membership Identification

Once logged into the Membership Portal, and the Head Coach has created their team by picking their Problem Number and Division, the name listed in the Organization field indicates the official team name and how it should appear on the membership sign required for each team's performance. The name is the only required information for the sign (see "Penalties" Missing Membership Sign for more info). This information is how teams are recognized at tournaments. Teams must use it when registering for official competition.

When a school/organization purchases additional memberships, OdysseyHQ must approve each new membership before it is active. The new memberships will be under the same name, but their identification will say "B," "C," and so on. The first membership purchased for the school/organization

will always have an "A" listed after it as part of their name to distinguish it from the subsequent memberships and will be the official membership name for that team. You will be able to view all of this in the Membership Portal under Teams once the Head Coach has created the team.

Since each team usually registers separately at tournaments, and they may arrive at different times, each team within the membership should know its membership information.

All memberships must be paid in full in order to compete in regional or state tournaments. A purchase order is not considered payment. If, after 30 days, your status remains unpaid, please check with the business office of your membership organization to be sure payment was sent.

Chapter III

Odyssey of the Mind Problems

Creative problem solving is the basis for all Odyssey of the Mind problems. In competition, teams are scored in three areas: the **long-term problem** solution, the **Style** component of the long-term problem solution, and how well they solve the **spontaneous problem** given on the day of competition.

Long-Term Competitive Problems

Each year Odyssey of the Mind provides five competitive long-term problems, whose subject matter varies from the technical to the artistic to the classical. Teams choose the problem they wish to solve and create a solution to present in competition against other teams in the same grade range. Long-term problems require teams to begin preparing their solutions weeks or months before competition. Each problem includes one or more objectives, a set of limitations and requirements, and specific scoring categories. The problems offered are different each year, and the requirements and limitations change, but the types of problems are as follows:

- **Problem 1:** *Vehicle* – Teams design, build and operate one or more vehicles. Sometimes they're small, other times they're big enough to ride on and transport other items. Generally, the vehicles are scored on their propulsion system, and for traveling and completing different tasks.

- **Problem 2:** *Technical/Performance* – Teams are scored for performance elements as well as for some type of technical achievement. Usually, this problem requires the team to create one or more devices that perform certain functions or tasks.

- **Problem 3:** *Classics* – This is a performance problem based on something "classical." It could involve mythology, art, music, archaeology, or anything else that is classical in nature.

- **Problem 4:** *Structure* – Teams design and build a structure out of only balsa wood and glue. They test the structure by adding Olympic-size weights until it breaks. Each year there is an element of the problem that sets it apart from other years. For example, having the structure endure the impact of a ball propelled down a ramp.

- **Problem 5:** *Performance* – This is strictly a performance problem, where scoring is based mostly on the performance and elements within the performance. It sometimes requires a specific character, sometimes humor, sometimes an original story, but it's always fun!

Long-Term Scoring

The team earning the highest score for each long-term problem and division in a competition is awarded 200 points unless the problem states otherwise. Every other team receives a percentage of 200 based on its raw score in relation to the highest raw score. Any penalty points are deducted after scores are calculated. No team will receive a score below zero for its long-term score. There are two types of scoring categories for the long-term problems:

1. **Subjective** scoring categories are generally based on creativity, quality, effectiveness, humor, and other areas that are qualitative and an opinion of the judge. These are scored on a sliding scale, such as 1 to 15 points. An example of a subjective scoring category is, "Creativity of the vehicle's appearance," and each problem judge would rate it somewhere within the stated point range, depending on how creative they feel the look of the vehicle to be.

2. **Objective** scoring categories are based on whether or not the team completes certain requirements of the problem. These scores are absolute, such as 0 **or** 5 points. An example of objective scoring is, "The vehicle crosses the Finish Line." The team would receive zero score for not crossing the line and 5 points for crossing the line.

Each problem lists its own set of scoring categories. Generally, if a team does not complete one of the scoring categories, it receives a zero score for that category. Other scoring categories that depend on the first one to occur will still be eligible for score. For example, a problem requires a scene set in a specific time period that includes a poem. If the time period for the scene is wrong the scene gets zero score for that category, but the poem is still eligible for full score. Also, if a problem has required scoring elements, such as an original poem, the team can include several original poems in its performance but must designate one to be scored, and only that poem will be scored for that category. Elements in the solution that do not fall within a scoring category will not receive score unless the team lists it as a Style free choice.

Long-Term Style

Style is an added element that enhances the presentation of the solution. The Style portion of the competition gives teams an opportunity to further showcase their talents and creative skills and to elaborate on their long-term problem solution. Each problem has its own required Style elements, as well as Free Choice Style categories that are determined by the team. These provide incentive for creativity in different areas because teams can choose the elements they want to include and have scored. Style score is in addition to the long-term problem score.

Scoring Style

Each long-term problem lists five Style categories. Categories one through four are either specific scoring elements or "Free choice of team." The fifth category is always "Overall effect of the four Style elements in the performance." All Style categories are scored subjectively, and each is worth 1 to 10 points, for a maximum of 50 points. The team awarded the most Style points receives a score of 50; every other team receives a percentage of 50 based on its raw Style score.

To receive score for Style, the team should complete a Style Form (see Appendix) and present four copies to the Staging Area Judge. The team must list the first four areas to be scored and explain how they relate to the long-term problem solution and how they contribute to the overall effect of the performance. Teams must be specific when explaining their Style categories.

In technical problems, a team may present its Style elements even if the technical components of its solution are not successful. A skit or performance is not necessary to receive score for Style.

Defining Style Categories

1. **Mandatory Style categories:** Usually each problem will include one or two mandatory Style categories. These are categories that are scored in every team's solution for that problem. However, a different element, or a different aspect of that element, may be scored from team to team. For example, if a specific Style category is "Costume of one team member," it's up to the team to decide which costume and which aspects of that costume are to be scored. One team may want a clown's costume scored and another may want a cowboy costume to be scored. Additionally, the first team may choose to have the overall appearance of the clown's costume scored, while the other team may want only one aspect of the cowboy's costume scored, such as a hat.

   If a team wants a specific element of a costume scored, it must state on its Style Form *exactly* what that element is and identify the team member wearing the costume. Getting back to the cowboy costume, this team might list on its form "Appearance of the cowboy's hat," or, it could choose other aspects and list them, for example, "Construction method of cowboy's costume," or "Materials used for cowboy's costume." In any case, the team would provide enough information on the form, so judges know precisely which part of the cowboy's costume is to be scored. If the team lists "The cowboy's costume," the judges will consider everything about the costume.

2. **Free choice of team:** For these categories, teams cannot select anything that is already being scored; however, they can list a different aspect of something already being scored. For example, a vehicle scored for how well it functions may be selected to be scored for its appearance and a mandatory character scored for its performance may be scored for something else.

   Free choice categories should be what the team feels to be the most creative aspects of its problem solution. The team must be careful to list on its Style Form exactly what it wants scored. Following are some ways to list categories, using a clown as an example:

   - If the team would like the clown's overall appearance to be scored — costume, makeup, hairstyle, etc. — it should state "Appearance of the clown."
   - If a team would like a specific aspect of the clown scored, it might list on its Style Form, "Appearance of the clown's costume," or "Appearance of the clown's makeup."
   - If the team used items in a unique way to make the clown's costume and would like this scored, it should state "Materials and technique used to make the clown's costume."
   - If the team states "The clown," the judges will consider all aspects of the clown, including its performance, which could result in a lower score than having specific elements scored.

   Some common "Free choice of team" categories include special effects, artwork, costumes, music, dance, poems, or the integration of a specific dramatic or humorous element. Anything may be selected by the team for free choice Style categories including drawings, a model of the solution, the unveiling of a model of the solution, costumes, or other special enhancements of the solution itself. Teams can choose to be judged on the creativity of a specific element in the problem, even though they are judged for overall creativity of the performance. For example, if a team reads a poem during its performance, and it is not specifically scored for creativity, it may select creativity of the poem as a free choice style category.

3. **Overall effect of the four Style elements in the performance:** For this category, the team is scored on how well all of the Style elements come together to enhance the presentation of the long-term solution.

Requesting Long-Term Problem Clarifications

Long-term problems are written to provide just enough guidance to solve the problem without limiting creativity. 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. Anyone requesting a clarification must cite the rule in question. Abuse of the clarification system may result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty. Read and reread the problem and this Program Guide completely before submitting a clarification request. If the information is clearly presented in the problem or Program Guide you will be instructed to read them again. There are three categories of problem clarifications:

1. **General clarifications** amend or further explain a problem's limitations without revealing information about a team's solution. All general clarifications are posted on www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications. When teams question a problem limitation, before requesting a clarification, they should first check online to see if their concern has already been addressed. Clarifications take precedence over limitations listed in the problem and the rules in this guide, so it's important that teams keep current on all general clarifications issued throughout the year.
2. **Team-specific clarifications** pertain to an individual team's solution. These are *confidential* and *are not published* since teams must describe details of their solution to receive an accurate reply. In some cases, the answer to a team-specific clarification may be distributed to judges; however, they are never made available to other teams unless the answer is "no" and other teams will benefit by knowing that specific action is not allowed. If a team receives a clarification allowing an element but the performance does not match what was approved, the judges will disregard the clarification. Be sure the request is specific to a part of the solution. Teams can request a clarification using the clarification system in the Members Area at https://www.odysseyofthemind.com. You can view all general clarifications at https://www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications/. All clarifications are answered by CCI within seven days of receipt. Copies of all clarifications are sent to the International Problem Captain for the long-term problem in question and the Association Director for the association from which the question came.

3. **Judges clarifications** are limited to Odyssey of the Mind association representatives and may

be submitted at any time.

If a team receives a clarification, it is important that it presents the printout of the email to judges at competition to avoid scoring discrepancies. Only clarifications issued by CCI are official. No one else is authorized to issue problem clarifications. Do not submit questions about a specific competition site, for example, floor type, scheduling, and so on. You must contact your Tournament Director for this information.

February 15 is the cutoff for submitting team clarifications. Since the problems are new every year and teams are using their creativity, events at the first level of competition may require clarification. This is to ensure all teams are working within the same general parameters. Therefore, even though clarifications that are emailed after **February 15** of the program year will not be answered, new clarifications might be posted beyond that date. **Please check for new clarifications before each level of competition.**

The Primary Problem

Each member receives a noncompetitive primary problem, whose intent is to introduce younger children to the creative problem-solving process. To prepare students for Odyssey of the Mind competitions, the format of the primary problem is very similar to that of the competitive long-term problems — complete with examples of scoring and Style categories. Although there is no competition at the primary level, teams may be invited to display their solutions at an official tournament. This is a decision of the individual Tournament Director. Schools must purchase a membership to have access to the Primary Problem, but there is no limit to the number of teams that can participate.

Spontaneous Problems

In competition, every team solves a spontaneous problem. This part of the competition is called "Spontaneous" because teams don't know what they'll have to do until they enter the competition room. Solving spontaneous problems teaches students to "think on their feet."

Spontaneous problems are "top secret." Teams participating in the same long-term problem and division will solve the same spontaneous problem, so, to ensure fairness, it is critical that no one discusses the problem outside of the room until *all* teams have competed. Even then, you may only discuss it within your group until OotM competitions throughout the world are complete. Letting

other teams know the problem they may receive could give them an advantage in a tournament. Anyone who reveals a spontaneous problem to others is subject to disqualification and/or disciplinary action taken against the entire team.

The nature of the spontaneous problems varies, with each having its own set of specific rules that are read to the team in the competition room. Teams will have to solve only one type of spontaneous problem in a competition.

To prepare, teams should practice for the three common types of spontaneous problems as listed below. However, they should also be prepared for the unexpected. (See Member's Area for sample spontaneous problems.)

- **Verbal** spontaneous problems require verbal responses. They may incorporate improvisation or dramatization. Teams are scored based on whether their responses are common or creative responses.
- **Hands-on** spontaneous problems require teams to physically create a tangible solution, such as build a structure or complete a task. Each hands-on problem has its own specific scoring categories.
- **Verbal/hands-on** combination spontaneous problems require teams to create a tangible solution *and* include some type of verbal component, for example, creating a story about an object the team builds. Teams are scored for both the tangible solution and the verbal presentation.

All seven team members are allowed to participate in the spontaneous portion of the competition. Every team member should practice verbal skills as well as hands-on.

Scoring Spontaneous

In competition, the spontaneous problem is worth up to **100 points**. The team with the highest raw spontaneous score in each long-term problem and division will receive 100 points for spontaneous; every other team receives a percentage of 100 based on its raw score. Spontaneous scores are the decision of the judges in the room.

In **verbal** spontaneous problems, creative responses are scored higher than common responses. However, if a creative response is slightly modified by another team member, it will be scored as common. For example:

- The judge reads the problem to the team: “Name different kinds of trees.”
- Responses include “Family tree” then “My family tree.” The judge will give “My family tree” the lowest possible score because it is so similar to “Family tree.” All other responses involving family trees are scored as common. Similarly, if the response is inappropriate or doesn’t respond to the problem, the judges will score it as common. For example, if the team is responding to “Name different kinds of trees” and a team member says “A Yellow Labrador”, the judge would award a common score as the response did not make sense for the problem.
- The only time a team will be interrupted or asked to repeat something during response time is if a judge cannot hear a response.

In **hands-on**, team members are scored for solving the problem and, oftentimes, for how well they work together and the creativity of their solution.

Verbal/hands-on problems usually require some type of scored verbal responses, combined with an application or technical component, which is also scored.

Practicing Spontaneous

Coaches should dedicate part of every team meeting to practicing the different types of spontaneous problems. There is an example of each type of spontaneous problem in the Appendix to this guide, and books containing practice problems are available from CCI. Following are tips to practicing spontaneous:

- Teach team members to listen. They should not “think ahead” and presume what the problem requires; they should listen carefully until the judge finishes reading the entire problem.
- Brainstorm verbal responses. Ask the students what made them respond the way they did, then develop that skill further.
- Improvise nontraditional uses for various items.
- Familiarize team members with various materials and their uses.
- Practice building structures out of common materials such as toothpicks, paper cups, and just about anything else you can think of.

Chapter IV

Going to Competition

In most situations, teams first compete at the **regional** level. Those who place at this level advance to **Association Finals** at the state/province/country level, according to qualification criteria set by the individual association. Teams that place here are eligible to compete in the annual **Odyssey of the Mind World Finals**. In 2027, World Finals will be held from May 26-29 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

Teams in areas that do not provide official competitions before World Finals may apply to go directly to World Finals and are approved on a first-come, first-served basis. These teams must apply to CCI by April 1 of the program year to be eligible. They may also be allowed to participate in a neighboring state's official competitions, with champions being selected from each state represented. If the team wishes to do this, they must contact the Association Director of the neighboring state to learn the details. Contact your Tournament Director for specifics regarding the competition. In most cases you will be emailed this information after you register or qualify.

On Competition Day

Teams may be required to register at a central location upon arrival. They are given a scheduled time to compete in Long-Term and in Spontaneous. Sometimes these are on different days, but often they're on the same day with sufficient time in between.

Teams should report to the area for their problem and division 15 minutes before they are scheduled to compete. A judge will then direct them to wait in the Check-In Area. Anyone may help the team move props there and to the Staging Area. When the competition has ended others may help the team remove items and clear the site. Parents and others should remember that if they carry an item for the team and it breaks, only the team may repair the item. Teams are welcome to look at the competition site before this but are not allowed to rehearse on site on competition day.

Either in the Check-In Area or the Staging Area, depending on the competition site, a judge collects the team's paperwork, and checks for footwear and other requirements of the problem. The team remains here with all its props and materials until the Timekeeper gives the signal to begin.

Checklist for Competing in Long-Term

In competition, each team must provide the following items for its long-term solution along with any forms required by the local competition's Tournament Director. The team members must fill out all of their forms on their own with the exception of Division I, where the coach may write for the team but the team members must dictate what is to be written. Teams should keep an extra copy of all their forms. Most of the following items will be examined and/or collected by the Staging Area Judge:

- Four completed copies of the Style Form.
- Four completed copies of the Team List Form (if required in the problem).
- One completed Cost Form.
- One completed Outside Assistance Form.
- One membership sign. The sign must include the team's membership name. It does not need a membership number. See "Penalties Missing Membership Sign" in Chapter 5 for more information.
- Problem clarifications specific to the team's solution.
- All props, costumes, etc. necessary to complete the problem solution, except those listed in the problem under "Tournament Director Will Provide."
- Any items listed in the problem under "Team Must Provide."

Special Situations

Once a team submits a roster for a competition, it may not change the roster for that competition unless first approved by the Tournament Director.

Any team member may compete in more than one problem; however, a team member may not enter competition in the same problem for more than one team.

Special requests will be accommodated in extenuating circumstances. If a team has a special request it **must submit it in writing** at the time of registering for a tournament and check with the Tournament Director two weeks in advance of competition to make sure the request will be honored. Some reasons to submit a special request are:

- When a team member is competing in more than one problem.
- If any of the members do not understand and speak the language used in competition.
- If the team includes a member who is disabled. The team must provide the nature of the disability and the areas (Long-Term and/or Spontaneous) in which the team member may be

participating. For some spontaneous problems, a disability, such as color blindness or a reading or learning disability, may affect the team's performance.

- Food allergies and other medical concerns that require special attention.
- If a team can absolutely not compete at a certain time of the day during the tournament.

Competition Scoring

The team that earns the highest raw score in its division and long-term problem is awarded the maximum score. All other teams receive a percentaged score based on the maximum raw score. The same percentage-based scoring applies to the spontaneous problem competition and Style.

The total **combined long-term, Style, and spontaneous** percentaged scores (with penalties deducted) determine the winners in each problem within each division. Final scores are carried to two decimal places. Ties are declared when a team's score is within one point of the highest score in that place. Example: final scores are 294.51, 293.57, 293.11. First place is 294.51; however, 293.57 is not a full point less than 294.51, so this becomes a tie for first place. The score 293.11 is more than one point less than the highest first-place score (294.51), so it is considered second place.

Getting Long-Term Scores

On competition day, before the awards presentation, judges will tell coaches when they can pick up the team's long-term raw scores. Teams will have the opportunity to get a copy of its averaged Style scores. The procedure for picking up scores will be determined by the Tournament Director. Coaches will be asked to initial their team's scoresheet to verify the time they received it.

Once coaches review the team's long-term raw scores with the judge, they have 30 minutes to raise any questions. All raw long-term scores become official 30 minutes after the review, even if a coach has not taken the opportunity to review the team's long-term score. If a coach is denied a review, they should report to the problem captain.

Only long-term raw scores and averaged Style scores are given to teams; individual long-term, style and spontaneous raw scores are not provided to the teams.

Questions About Scoring

Should a team question a scoring element, it should discuss it with the Head Judge and, if necessary, the Problem Captain. If the question involves an interpretation of the rules and if the team

is not satisfied with the explanation given, the team may ask that a tribunal be convened. A tribunal usually consists of three persons who have a thorough knowledge of the problem's rules. The tribunal will review the rule in question and, if necessary, talk with the coach, team members and/or judges involved. Once the tribunal makes a decision, its decision is final. Tribunals will not be convened for questions regarding subjective scores or questions in areas such as whether something or someone was across a line or within a certain area. In short, a tribunal is to be convened only when the question regards a rule infraction. Issues that arise as to whether or not something happened or did not happen during a team's performance are not eligible for a tribunal. In no case will a recording be used to make a decision. Results are official once the tournament has ended. If there is an objection, the concern must be submitted to the local Regional or Association Director. That person may pursue the inquiry or make a final ruling. CCI will work with teams and associations to help evaluate the situation. Remember, scores in subjective areas will be different for different people and at different tournaments. Getting a higher score at one level of competition does not guarantee it will remain as high at the next level of competition.

The Spontaneous Competition

The team should check in to the spontaneous area per the directions for their tournament. At that time, all team members and one coach will be directed to wait in a holding area until the judges are ready for the team.

When the judges are ready, a judge will enter the holding area and call for the team and ask them to verify their Long-term problem, division, and membership name. The team will then be escorted to the spontaneous competition room and the coach will be asked to wait for their team outside the spontaneous area.

Once in the competition room, the judge will state which type of spontaneous problem the team will be asked to solve. They will then direct the team as to where to stand and begin reading the spontaneous problem. The team will receive two written copies of the problem to follow as the judge reads the problem aloud. The team may refer to its copies throughout the competition. (See "Special Situations" regarding disabilities.)

In a hands-on spontaneous problem, teams may choose to designate one member to review the rules of the problem while the remaining members work on the solution. That person makes sure the

team understands the intent of the problem and is solving it properly. If judges are aware that a team obviously does not understand the problem's intent or rules, they will bring this to the team's attention and tell them to read the problem carefully. The judges will help the team understand the problem but will not help the team solve the problem. Here are some reminders that will help teams in competition:

- All team members should participate in spontaneous to the best of their individual abilities. Through practice, teams should learn how to utilize each team member's strengths in order to be as successful as possible.
- Listen carefully to the judge reading the problem and watch as judges will often point to items that may help clarify the problem's intent. Remember to refer to the provided Team's Copies often.
- If there is any uncertainty about an aspect of a problem, ask the judges questions. Time will not be stopped, but a misunderstanding or wrong assumption can lead to a low score.
- There are many possible skills that could be applied in hands-on problems, including building, strategy, measuring, communication, etc.
- In verbal spontaneous, speak loudly and clearly. It is best to take the time to think of something creative and earn more points for each response, rather than responding quickly with common responses, scoring low points and leaving time remaining.
- For all types of spontaneous problems, the teams who have practiced often and practiced many kinds of problems will generally be more relaxed and better prepared to think creatively and constructively.

Awards

Creative Competitions, Inc. encourages the Tournament Director of each competition to present every participant with a certificate of participation and to present awards to top-placing teams, that is, first, second, and third place. These awards may be trophies, plaques, ribbons, medals, or special certificates. At World Finals, first, second, and third place team members each receive a medal and the team receives a trophy.

Ranatra Fusca Creativity Award

The Ranatra Fusca Creativity Award represents the essence of the Odyssey of the Mind. It is presented to teams or individuals who exhibit exceptional creativity, either through some aspect of their problem solution, or an extraordinary idea beyond the problem solution. A successful problem solution is not a criterion for winning the award; rather, the award is a way to acknowledge and encourage creative thinking and risk-taking.

Ranatra Fusca is the term for a classification of water insect. Although this may seem a remote association to creative thinking, the name has a special meaning in Odyssey of the Mind. The Odyssey of the Mind was born from a college class taught by its founder, Dr. Sam Micklus, in which he assigned students to create a flotation device to transport them across a pond. One student designed a water strider-like contraption. The device did not solve the problem because of its inability to maintain proper balance; however, if given the time and opportunity to "go back to the drawing board," the student would have been able to correct this and cross the pond. Even though the device did not work properly, the idea was exceptionally creative.

Teams that earn a Ranatra Fusca Creativity Award at the state/province/country level of competition are eligible to advance to World Finals. If an individual is awarded a Ranatra Fusca, the entire team advances. Ranatra Fusca winners at the World Finals level receive a medal and have their team name engraved on the Ranatra Fusca trophy. This has been a tradition since 1981, and the trophy is on display each year at World Finals.

OMER's Award

OMER's Award is named for the Odyssey of the Mind raccoon mascot, OMER, in recognition of individuals or teams who demonstrate outstanding sportsmanship, exemplary behavior, or exceptional talent. Recipients of this award may be coaches, team members, parents, officials, or anyone else that tournament officials or directors feel exhibit these traits. This award is not intended to reward creativity.

Anyone may inform a tournament official of a possible OMER's Award candidate. That official will then determine if that person should be nominated. All nominees are reviewed by a panel that determines the final recipients. At World Finals, each OMER's Award recipient receives a medal.

Odyssey of the Mind Creativity Award

Each year Odyssey of the Mind recognizes an individual and/or organization for extraordinary creative achievement or exceptional endeavors. This award is presented during the World Finals Awards Ceremony. Past winners include **The Library of Congress** for its mission to preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity; **Peter Yarrow's Operation Respect**, for its "Don't Laugh At Me" program; **Blue Man Group**, for using innovative and artistic techniques to entertain others; **National Association for Gifted Children**, for supporting talent in children; rock band **OK Go!** for its innovative approach to music videos, and TV personality and artist **Bob Partington** for inspiring students with his art that combines STEM skills, sculpture, and more.

Odyssey of the Mind Spirit Award

Each year Odyssey of the Mind recognizes an individual involved in the program who, through personal action, demonstrates the encouragement and development of cooperation, self--respect, and the appreciation and understanding of others. At the Odyssey of the Mind 2026 World Finals, this award was presented to Paula Mittner.

Chapter V

Program Rules

Following are the general rules for official Odyssey of the Mind competitions. These apply to every problem in every division. Each problem has its own specific set of rules (limitations) that the team must follow as well. Problem limitations supersede the rules in this guide; however, problem clarifications supersede both of these. In addition to the rules listed below, teams must comply with local, state/provincial, and federal regulations, including regulations for specific facilities. If you have a concern, contact the person qualified to provide the information you need.

Rules That Apply to All Problems

(1) A team must be affiliated with a current member to compete in a tournament.

(2) A team must present a long-term problem solution to receive score for Long-Term and Style at a competition. A team may participate in Spontaneous without participating in Long-Term but will not be ranked.

(3) If a team does not complete a requirement of the problem that is scored in either Long-Term or Style, the team will receive a zero score for that scoring category even if it is scored on a sliding scale that begins at one. There is no additional penalty and scoring categories that rely on that portion taking place are eligible for score. For example, if a problem requires an outdoor scene that is scored for its appearance, creativity, and artistic quality, but the scene is portrayed as being indoors, the team will receive zero score for the appearance of the scene. However, it will receive score for creativity and artistic quality of the scene.

If the team has a scored item with them, but does not present it during the performance time, it can still be scored for categories that do not rely on it appearing in the performance. For example, artistic quality, creative use of materials, originality can still be scored; but, effectiveness or impact in the performance would receive zero.

If the team does not complete a requirement of the problem that is not scored under either Long-Term or Style, judges will assess a Spirit of the Problem penalty.

(4) No real animals may be used in any solution. This does not include manufactured items of any kind.

(5) Judges may not become part of the problem solution or Style presentation. During its Long--Term competition time the team may ask judges questions; however, the judges will answer only if they decide it is appropriate. The judges will only speak to the team members if they feel it is appropriate or it is required in the limitations of the problem. In Spontaneous, judges will always answer questions. The team may not involve the judges in its presentation in any way and any reaction or participation from the judges or audience does not count for score. Judges will not use anything provided by the team to view special effects, such as 3D glasses. Also, if playbills are listed as a Style category, the team must give it to the Staging Area judge with the rest of its paperwork. Nothing handed to the judges during the 8 minute competition time will be considered for score.

(6) During their competition time, teams may ask the audience for a reaction, such as applause, boos or laughter. However, if a team involves the audience in more than a general way, for example, specific dialogue or interaction between the team and a member of the audience, judges will assess an Outside Assistance penalty. Teams may not throw anything into the audience.

(7) Once competition time begins, team members may go into the audience and interact from there while the remaining team members are in the performance area.

(8) Nudity, profanity, vulgarity, violent acts, and ethnic/racial slurs are not permitted. This includes the inappropriate use of potentially offensive words or actions. Teams may simulate violent acts during a performance only, but they must be portrayed in an acceptable and obviously fictitious manner. Judges have discretion to determine additional situations, portrayals, or behaviors that may be deemed inappropriate for an Odyssey of the Mind performance and they may issue an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty. If the prohibited behavior or portrayal is recurrent, judges may stop a team's performance.

(9) National anthems or official pledges may not be used in the problem solutions. These require actions by others, such as standing or saluting, which may disrupt another team's presentation.

(10) All parts of a problem solution and the containers they are shipped in must be able to fit through a doorway that measures 28" x 78" (.71m x 1.98m), and they must be able to stand or be placed in an upright position in a standard room (ceilings 7.58 feet (2.282.43m) high). This applies to

all containers holding parts of the team's solution. A penalty will not be assessed if a part exceeds these dimensions; however, some tournament sites may not be able to accommodate them. Tournament Directors are under no obligation to provide time to disassemble and reassemble these items to bring them into the room and the team must not alter the building in any way.

(11) **Check-In/Staging:** The Staging Area Judge will meet with the team in the Check-In Area. Generally, if a competition site requires doors to be closed when teams are performing, the Check-In Area is outside of the competition room. This is where the Staging Area Judge will meet the team to collect paperwork, check foot coverings, and so on. When ready, a judge directs the team to come into the competition room and wait in the Staging Area for its performance to begin. The team, and anyone helping it, will move all of its materials from the Check-In Area into the Staging Area. Any materials remaining after approximately 3 minutes may be moved by the judge to allow the next competing team to enter the Check-In Area. When the team is in the Staging Area and the judges are ready, the timekeeper will announce "Team Begin" and the 8-minute performance time will begin. The team may start its performance while setting up.

(12) With the team's permission, others not on the team may help to move problem solution items into the Check-In Area and the Staging Area. Others may also help the team remove items from the competition site when directed by the judges. However, until the team is dismissed, no one may enter the competition site.

(13) **Forms:** Required forms may not be altered. They may be photocopied or scanned into a computer, but lines may not be moved, spaces added, etc.

(14) No one, including the announcer or any other judge, may read aloud to the audience any introduction or description of the team's problem solution prior to the team's performance. If the team wants something read, it may do so during its competition time.

(15) Weapons are prohibited from the competition site and tournament venue. If an actual weapon is discovered, it must be removed from the site immediately or it will be confiscated. There is no point deduction. Team-created replicas of weapons that are easily mistaken for real weapons are also prohibited. They must either be changed to look less realistic or be removed

from the competition site or they will be confiscated. There is no point deduction. Props that appear and/or are used as a weapon in the performance are allowed provided, they are obviously not real and pose no threat. These include team-made props and toys that do not look like real weapons, such as water pistols, plastic swords, etc. If a team uses a fake weapon in its performance, it must confirm with the Staging Area Judge that it is allowed. It can only be used for practice and during the performance; it must be put away at all other times. This is subject to change according to rules at different tournament site locations. If there's a question about part of a solution, teams should ask the Tournament Director if something is allowed or disallowed at the venue.

(16) All solutions must be presented live (during the 8 minute performance time). Team members must be present to perform during the live performance. Remote performances are not permitted. Pre-recorded visual and audio may be a part of the problem solution. Allowed pre-recorded audio/visual includes team-recorded and commercially-produced items. To be considered for score they must be visible to both the officials and audience. The following applies to both:

(a) Completing required scoring must be done by the team members (their ideas and work) and be presented live (not pre-recorded). A recording of the team presenting a problem or style requirement would not qualify for score for that requirement. Scored problem requirements must be presented live.

(b) Commercially produced pre-recordings may include persons other than the team members, so long as it was not created to be part of the solution. Teams may use commercially produced and commonly available audiovisual materials if they alone are not fulfilling a required scoring category or, in the judges' opinion, they are not a major part of the problem solution or Style. They may be used in conjunction with team-created work to fulfill a scoring category.

(c) If specifically allowed by the problem, items that appear in a pre-recorded video will only be eligible for objective scores, i.e. if they did or did not appear in the performance. However, these items can be scored for subjective scores if they also appear live during the 8 minute performance. For example, a backdrop that appears

in a video will not receive score for creative use of materials, originality, etc. unless it is also presented as part of the performance. Subjective scores will be based on how the item appears and is used during the live performance.

(d) Any noncommercial pre-recording must be completely performed and recorded by the team members. Rules for outside assistance are the same for these recordings as they are for the performance.

(17) **Safety and damage control:** No part of the problem solutions may cause damage to the facility or injury to anyone. If judges deem any act or item as potentially dangerous, they may make a team demonstrate that it will not cause injury or damage. If not satisfied by the team's demonstration, the judges will not allow the team to include that part of the solution.

If an unacceptable risk of personal injury or a hazardous situation occurs, judges will stop that portion of the team's presentation. They may also assess a penalty. Teams must use safe chemicals at all times. If attempting to create a specific effect with chemicals, the resulting effect must be safe and clean. Unsafe chemicals and unsafe reactions are not allowed. For example: Combining Mentos candy with soda is not allowed. While they are safe ingredients, they create an unsafe reaction and are not permitted. If there's a possibility that a reaction is not self-contained, anyone in the area must wear goggles or protective gear. If Staging Area judges determine that the reaction is unsafe, unable to be cleaned quickly, or risks damage to the site, they will disallow that part of the solution.

The following items are not allowed to be used in the team's presentation of its solution:

- Lighter-than-air balloons (e.g., helium) that are not sufficiently tethered and/or weighed down. That is, those that will float uncontrollably upward are not allowed.
- Drones
- Items that are excessively hot or cold (including dry ice)
- Items that leave a residue (some types of fire extinguishers, some types of fog machines, etc.)
- Internal combustion engines
- Flammable fuels
- Smoke bombs or similar items

- Fires in any form, including lighted candles and sparklers
- Liquids that can stain or cause other floor damage
- Emergency response alerts, i.e. fire/smoke alarm.
- Hoverboards
- E-cigarettes/Vape Pens
- Capacitors for Batteries

(18) Teams may use strobe lights in their performance, but they must first inform the Staging Area Judge and/or Timekeeper. The Timekeeper will announce this to the audience and give anyone who would have a problem with them an opportunity to leave the room.

(19) **Foot coverings:** Due to health and safety regulations at many competition facilities, the bottom of the feet must be covered by a material that is generally non-penetrable. That is, the covering should prevent splinters and small shards of glass from penetrating the foot. If the foot covering comes off during the presentation, the team will not be penalized, as long as it is replaced. The member who loses it must stop performing until it is replaced, or the judge will make that member stop. Judges may help the team member retrieve the foot covering. The other team members may continue performing as usual.

(20) **Damage to the floor:** Teams must be careful not to cause damage to a competition site at any time. Remember, floor damage can occur when moving props as well as during the performance. Judges will examine the condition of the floor before each performance. If a team damages the floor, whether intentional or nonintentional, the team is **financially responsible for any repairs necessary and** subject to penalty in the following degrees:

- Scuff that is removable with soap and water will not be penalized.
- Scuff that cannot be removed with soap and water, but there is no other damage: 15 points.
- Stain on a carpet: 25 points.
- Damage to the floor that requires new varnish: 25 points.
- Carpet tear or damaged tile: 50 points
- Damage to the floor that requires sanding and new varnish: 50 points.

- If, during the presentation, the team causes damage to the floor and does not stop after being warned by the judges: 100 points and the judge will call “time” and stop the presentation.
- If, prior to the presentation, judges determine that a solution or part of a solution will likely cause damage to the floor, they may prevent the team from presenting its solution or that part of its solution.
- If the team causes intentional damage to the floor: 200 points and the judge will call “time” and stop the presentation.

(21) **Use of batteries:** Unless a problem states otherwise, only unmodified, commercially produced sealed batteries may be used. The combined measurement of any commercially produced battery, battery pack or battery charger is limited to 15". That is the length, plus height, plus width, all measured at the widest point (excluding battery terminals) must not exceed 15".

All batteries used must be available for checking by Officials during the Check-in process. Batteries in items such as cell phones and computers are excluded from this requirement. Since almost every battery-powered device does not use just one cell at a time, teams may group permitted cells together to form higher voltages or currents. Commercially produced battery packs that fall in the allowed battery types may be used. Teams must ensure that each battery system, including all interconnections, is safely designed for all conditions encountered during use and otherwise completely appropriate for the desired application. An assembly of materials that is only arguably functioning in a manner similar to a battery is not considered a battery. Capacitors are not allowed.

Battery charging

Be sure the charger used is the correct one for the battery being charged. Teams must use a commercially manufactured charger and follow the directions for its use. Adults should perform or supervise any battery charging. This is not considered outside assistance. Batteries may not be charged at the competition site.

A little common sense

- Wiring that conducts electricity and all connectors to batteries must be insulated.
- Regardless of what a battery is made of, keep it away from open flame and extreme

temperature variations. Explosion is a real threat for batteries that reach their boiling point. Do not let a battery get hot to the touch.

- Do not short circuit batteries.

  - Batteries should be kept isolated from each other and metal objects to prevent external short circuits. Do not store batteries loosely, and do not place them on metal surfaces.

  - Before batteries are inserted into a circuit, the circuit should be tested to avoid short-circuiting or charging the battery.

- Be environmentally conscientious: Dispose of batteries according to manufacturers' recommendations; e.g., NiCad should be recycled, as the cadmium in NiCad batteries is a toxic metal.

(22) **Membership Sign:** All teams are required to have a membership sign visible throughout the presentation of its long-term problem solution. (See Penalties for additional info.) If the membership sign falls down or is obstructed there is no penalty.

(23) **Copyrights:** Members may use current long-term problem titles and icons and may photocopy Odyssey of the Mind materials for distribution within the membership during the program year, but these materials are copyrighted and may not be distributed beyond the membership and without permission for future use. In all areas — music, visuals, written word, characters — it is the team's responsibility to avoid copyright violations. It is illegal to use and reproduce copyrighted material without the owner's permission. The team should find out if a work is copyrighted and obtain permission to use the work. Judges will not require teams to produce a letter of permission to use a copyrighted work, since they cannot ascertain who holds the copyright. Therefore, they will not penalize a team for not producing a letter of permission. However, teams must be aware that, in some cases, they could be
prosecuted by copyright holders if they use copyrighted material without obtaining permission. It is up to the team to determine what, if any, copyright laws apply to any nonteam-originated material it wishes to use. Neither CCI or its affiliates can assist teams seeking such information or permission.

(24) **Trademarks:** Current Odyssey of the Mind members are allowed to use the following copyrights and trademarks, which are federally registered to Creative Competitions, Inc., in their solution, for advertising or fundraising purposes within their membership area, and for program

awareness. Teams may produce tee-shirts and similar items bearing any of these marks for their own use. However, if they intend to offer any items for sale that bear the marks, they must first secure written permission from their Association Director or CCI and cannot sell the items online, e.g. ebay.

- Odyssey of the Mind®
- OotM™
- Creative Competitions®
- OMER®
- Current Long-Term Problem Icons
- OMER's friends
- Current Long-Term Problem cover art
- Odyssey Angels
- OM™

The team must assume responsibility for using any other registered trademarks such as the NIKE swoosh, McDonald's golden arches, etc. Teams must be aware that they could be prosecuted by trademark holders if they use registered marks without obtaining permission from the owner. No team is allowed to use *World Finals, WF* or the WF logo. Teams and/or any other group must obtain permission from its local association or CCI for the use of any other OotM trademark or copyright to be used at World Finals.

(25) Lights will not be dimmed at any competition site. If necessary, contact your Tournament Director for site specifics such as the size of the performance area, type of floor surface, etc.

(26) Internet connectivity will not be provided at any tournament venue. Any media being used in a solution must be saved to a device.

(27) Don't share your solution until after World Finals. This includes posting it online. Also, don't trust ideas, solutions, suggestions, etc. that others provide.

(28) Artificial Intelligence(AI) may be used by teams as a tool to help develop its solution to the problem. Scripts and dialogue must not be created solely by AI and it must not be mostly created, rewritten, or edited by AI.

(29) It is not considered Outside Assistance for a team to use something that was not created by a team. If a school has an "OotM closet" where it keeps materials used from past years, future teams may select and use those items without penalty. If the materials were created by the members of the current team, that is, there are no members from the original roster missing from the current one, they will be considered team-created. Otherwise, they will be judged as commercially produced and it must be listed on the cost form. These items, such as props and backdrops, will be considered the same as items found in a thrift shop, school theater department, etc.

(30) If real food is being used in the performance, it is limited to being portrayed as being eaten only. It cannot be handed out to the judges and audience at any time. Please check with your

Tournament Director for other restrictions specific to the competition site.

(31) **Assigning Cost:** To maintain an equal playing field among teams, each problem has a cost limit. This is the maximum allowable total value of the items used in the team's final problem solution at the competition. All materials used in the presentation of the team's solution, except those that are exempt from cost, must be counted in this value. **The team must include an item's value even if it is borrowed or donated; however, items may be valued at "garage" or "yard" sale prices.** This is a used, or secondhand, price. Items purchased new must be listed at full price, and the team should retain the receipt. If the team uses only part of an item, for example, half a can of paint or a segment of a 2 x 4, the team is required to list the value of only the portion used. If an item was used during a previous solution and re-used, cost is still assigned. Teams will fill out a cost form (see Team Resources) as follows.

Itemizing materials on the Cost Form

There are three basic categories for items: (1) cost, (2) assigned value, and (3) exempt. Most items fall under the heading "cost." For cost items, the general criterion for pricing is its standard value; that is, could any other team duplicate the problem solution for the same amount of money? This is subject to determination by the judges; therefore, teams should be able to verify an item's value through receipts and/or price lists if any questions arise. Sales tax and shipping costs do not need to be listed. If a kit, or component of one, is used exactly for the original intent the price must be listed at cost. If a kit, or component, is repurposed, garage sale prices apply. For example, if a rubber ball is made into a vehicle that is thrown and bounced into a required area — it is used as intended and full price should be listed for the ball. If the ball is altered or dismantled and all or part is used in a different application (not rolled/bounced), garage sale price is allowed.

On the Cost Form teams may combine items used in small amounts such as duct tape, glue, string, staples, crayons, paper clips, paper, paint and small hardware items (nuts, bolts, nails, screws, etc.), and calculate them as miscellaneous items. Anything that the team members wear that enhances the performance must be counted in the cost and listed on the Cost Form. However, the team may use garage sale or a used value for all items of costuming, including street clothes. Team-made t-shirts not considered a costume can be valued at garage sale prices even if all performing team members are wearing them. Any elaboration of foot coverings must be included in the cost as well.

The cost of items such as crutches, wheelchairs, etc. required by a team member are generally

excluded from cost. For example, if a team member breaks their leg and requires a wheelchair, the wheelchair does not have to be listed on the Cost Form. However, if the wheelchair is decorated, the cost of the decorations must be included. If the wheelchair becomes part of a vehicle or the wheelchair becomes part of a device used to rotate scenery, rather than just allowing the team member to move around the performance area, then the cost of the wheelchair must also be included.

Rental equipment, such as lights, used in the presentation must be counted for a one-day rental fee. Teams must present a receipt or price list for a one-day rental. Assigned value items are as follows with the assigned cost. However, if the actual cost is legitimately less than the assigned value the team may list the actual cost.

Assigned value items

The following items must be intact and used for their intended purpose. If they are decorated, the cost of the decorations will be in addition to the assigned value. The following list shows the categories of items and their assigned value.

(1) Commercially produced musical instrument and its case, including **required** peripherals such as a stand, amplifier, and speakers. VALUE: $5 or actual cost if less.

(2) Any type of audio or video recorder or player and speakers to hear the sounds if applicable. VALUE: $5 or actual cost if less. A phone playing sound through Bluetooth speakers is also $5.

(3) Audiovisual cart. VALUE: $5 or actual cost if less.

(4) Laptop or desktop computer system (including monitor, keyboard and connecting cables). Smartphones are considered computers. VALUE: $10 or actual cost if less.

(5) Projector of any type. VALUE: $10 or actual cost if less.

(6) Television set or monitor (not used in conjunction with a computer). VALUE: $10 or actual cost if less.

(7) 3D Printed Items: 50 cents for every ounce of printed plastic. Printers and programs used to create 3D printed items are not subject to the cost limit.

(8) Robotic controller: $20

Exempt items

Certain items are exempt from being counted in the cost as long as they remain intact and are used for their intended purpose. These are items considered accessible to all teams without a cost associated with them. They are limited to the following items. These must be listed along with everything else on the Cost Form but with $0 assigned to it.

(1) Extension cords and multiple plugs.

(2) Batteries.

(3) Chairs, stools, tables and desks.

(4) Jewelry, such as wristwatches, earrings, rings, etc., and street clothes that do not enhance the solution or contribute to a costume. Remember, if a team is wearing identical street clothes such as matching shirts, they would count towards cost because they appear to be a uniform, therefore enhancing the solution.

(5) Problem-specific shirts sold by CCI at www.odysseyofthemind.com/shop.

(6) Trash items — items that are usually discarded such as cardboard cartons, milk containers and scraps of wood that may be altered from their original state are exempt from cost. Used materials that are recyclable and have value such as a deposit are considered trash materials and are exempt from cost.

(7) Tool kit — Tools used as intended to build and/or repair any part of the solution that do not enhance the performance. For example, a screwdriver used to repair a prop is exempt unless the appearance of the screwdriver and/or the way the screwdriver is used enhances the performance. The tool kit must be in the Staging Area when time begins and may be used on the competition site for setting up the performance or for repairs. If, at any time, their appearance or the way they are used positively impacts the performance they are no longer exempt and the team will receive a Spirit of the Problem penalty.

Note: Items such as storage bins, casters, or dollies may be used to move props from the Staging Area to the competition site, as long as they are not used in the presentation. They must be removed immediately after the item they are moving is placed in the competition area. If they are not, their cost will count in the problem solution.

Safety items exemptions

The following safety items are exempt from cost:

(1) Personal prescription items of team members such as eyeglasses and hearing aids.

(2) Floor coverings, such as drop cloths, that are used only to protect the floor, or mats used to prevent injury to a team member.

(3) Required foot coverings that are worn as they are commercially produced. If anything is added to the foot coverings, the value of the additions must be counted. This exemption does not apply to shoes with built-in wheels. These must be counted in the cost and must also be approved for use in the competition facility by the Tournament Director.

(4) Safety glasses

Penalty Categories

Every problem has its own set of penalties, and the team must be aware of the penalties it could incur in solving its problem. The most common penalties are explained below. In most cases, omission of scored problem requirements carries no penalty except loss of score. No one is allowed to change the value of a penalty category or create penalties that are not listed in the problem or below.

"Spirit of the Problem" Violation (each offense, -1 to -30 points)

Each problem, under "A. The Problem," explains what is expected of teams to solve the problem. Each problem has infinite possible solutions. However, each has an underlying objective we call the Spirit of the Problem. If a team circumvents the basic objectives of the problem or violates rules that are not scored and for which there is no specific penalty listed, it will receive a Spirit of the Problem penalty.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct (each offense, -1 to -30 points)

Odyssey of the Mind teaches values such as teamwork, integrity, and respect for others. An Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will be assessed for the use or portrayal of profanity, nudity, drug use, sexual situations or whatever else may be considered by OM Officials to be unacceptable behavior at any time. This includes the derision of others, including fellow team members and Officials. Teams may be penalized for improper behavior in many regards including the behavior of a coach or supporter, complaining about another team, misbehavior around campus, etc. Penalties may be assessed retroactively and may be applied to future events.

Missing Membership Sign (-5pts)

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. If the team fails to provide a sign it may create one while in the Staging Area. If it is not visible part of the time, there is no penalty. The sign must be created by the team. It must show the team's official membership name. The name may be spelled out or abbreviated, as long as the abbreviations are recognizable by the judges. For example, George Washington High School may read George Washington HS or Geo. Washington HS, but GWHS is insufficient. If a membership contains any other information, such as Team A, Team B, and so on, that

must appear on the sign as well, either spelled out or abbreviated, e.g., Tm A. This required information on your membership sign must appear in the language of your tournament host at all times. Any other language that appears on the sign will be considered part of the sign's decoration. If the membership sign is scored there is no penalty if it is missing other than receiving a score of zero.

The team may add to its membership sign as it wishes, and the sign may change appearance during the presentation; that is, it may rotate, blink, etc. The team may have more than one sign but only one will be the official membership sign that must be visible during the performance and scored if it is listed as a free choice Style category.

Outside Assistance (each offense, -1 to -25 points)

Students learn best when they complete tasks on their own, and they develop a sense of pride and increased self-esteem when they go beyond what is expected. To ensure that team members get the full benefits of participation, and to ensure fairness, team members must design and create all aspects of their problem solution. This includes their membership sign, props, all technical requirements (vehicles, structures, etc.) and costumes. These must either (1) be made by the team members or (2) be put together by the team members from commercially produced parts. If team members are not able to make a solution, prop, costume, or sign that they have designed, or if a coach feels the tools they wish to use to make an item are too dangerous for team members to operate, then the team members must find another way to construct the item or redesign it so they can make it themselves.

Although no one may assist the team members in solving the problem, it is not Outside Assistance to use something that was created by someone who is not on the team — provided that it was not created to help solve the problem in any way. For example, any commercially produced kit that is assembled as intended by the manufacturer is not considered team-created. Using commercially produced kit parts in a way that is different from the intent is considered team-created. Teams must complete the Outside Assistance Form in the Appendix and give it to the Staging Area Judge prior to its performance. They must state whether they had any outside assistance and, if so, the nature of that assistance. The judges will assess an Outside Assistance penalty based on how crucial the assistance was to the solution.

Coaches act as facilitators, but they are not allowed to suggest how a team should solve a

problem. They may pose thought-provoking questions, but they should never hint at a solution. If the team asks for an opinion, the coach should respond, “You decide.” Unless a situation is deemed potentially dangerous, always let the team make the final decisions when developing a solution.

At competition, others are allowed to help the team transport props and other problem materials into the Check-In and Staging Areas. However, others may not help the team assemble backdrops or anything else, or apply makeup, fix costumes, etc. If they do, the team will receive an Outside Assistance penalty. Outside Assistance penalties are based on the judges’ observations and/or the team’s statements, not on hearsay from others.

Once the team begins working on its long-term problem solution, if a team member leaves the team for any reason, that person may not be taken off the roster, since he/she contributed to the problem. If a team member is replaced, and it takes the team over the seven member limit, the team will receive an Outside Assistance penalty.

Parents and other supporters may act as tutors or instructors, but they must not make suggestions on how to solve the problem. For example, a parent may teach the members how to sew if they ask, but cannot suggest that they sew and/or design a costume for the team’s solution.

Over Time Limit (-1 point for every 2 seconds or fraction thereof)

There are two types of time limits to Odyssey of the Mind Long-Term problems. First is the No Overtime Category. These problems provide 8 minutes for the team to do everything. This includes moving items out of the Staging Area and onto the competition site, setting up sets and props, performing the skit, completing technical requirements, and so on. When 8 minutes expires the Timekeeper will call “time” and all activity will end for that presentation. There is no overtime and no penalty will be assessed.

The second type is the Overtime Category. These problems provide 8 minutes for all activity as well. However, if the performance exceeds 8 minutes the Timekeeper will allow the performance to continue for up to one more minute and, if the team does not finish, will then call “time.” If the team goes overtime it will incur a penalty as described in the problem, but can still be scored normally for anything that occurs in that one-minute time period.

Each spontaneous problem has its own specific timing system. Sometimes it is one block of time to solve a problem and other times it is two time periods, one to prepare and one to work for

score. Overtime is never allowed in spontaneous. The judge calls “time” at the end of each period and the team must stop, so there are never any penalties for exceeding the time limit.

Over Cost Limit (-1 to -30 points)

If a team exceeds the cost limit, it will be penalized. If a team fails to list any of its items on the Cost Form, the Staging Area Judge will allow them to add the value of those items. If adding the value puts them over the cost limit, judges will assess a penalty.

Each team must give the Staging Area Judge a copy of its completed Cost Form (see Appendix) before it begins its long-term presentation. The value of materials used must be listed on the form in the currency used by the country where the competition is held. Cost limits are given in United States dollars. Associations will announce their official exchange rates no later than October 15 of that program year. If these are not published, non-USA teams must use the exchange rate for their country as of October 1 of the program year to determine material values.

Potential Reasons for Discipline

Disciplinary action may be taken against a team in certain situations. This is a decision of the judges and/or Tournament Director. Possible reasons for disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copyright violation — copying Odyssey of the Mind materials for nonmembers.
- Entering teams in competition beyond the number allowed for the membership.
- Failure to include all names of current team members on the roster, as well as the names of any other members who were on the team at any time during the program year.
- Entering a team that includes students not permitted by the rules to be on the team.
- Entering a team in the incorrect division.
- Having a performance recorded with the intent of using other people’s ideas.
- Excessive Outside Assistance.
- Serious or multiple Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalties assessed during a competition.
- Revealing the spontaneous problem in violation of the rules.
- Coaching misconduct or intentional violation of the rules.

- Violation of federal, state/provincial or local laws.

Possible Disciplinary Action

Teams and/or individuals will be disciplined according to the type and scope of infraction they commit. In some instances, the team will be given a written warning. This will come from the Tournament Director or the Association Director and be sent to the coach of the team and, if appropriate, the parents of the team members. Some behavior will result in immediate disqualification and removal from the event. This is at the sole discretion of the licensed association and/or representative of the tournament host site. For World Finals, CCI will also have authority to take action regarding inappropriate behavior. Possible disciplinary action includes:

Probation: Specific time period where repeat infractions will lead to automatic suspension and/or denial of participation of a coach, team member, team and/or membership.

Suspension: For a specific time the suspended party may not compete or be associated with a competing team, or a team may perform/participate only as a demonstration in an official tournament. This may be a one- to three-year period. The suspended party may appeal the decision to Creative Competitions, Inc. The suspended party has 15 days to file a written appeal from the time of receipt of a written discipline procedure from the licensed association. The appeal will be presented to CCI and will be reviewed in a timely fashion. CCI's decision is final.

Denial of membership or participation: A team, coach or team member may be denied participation in the Odyssey of the Mind program for a specific period of time. However, the team, coach or team member will be afforded the opportunity to defend any claims against them.

Disqualification: The team will be disqualified from the competition in which the violation takes place. If the decision to disqualify is made after competition is over, the licensed association, or the competition tribunal, has the right to declare a team ineligible to move to the next competition level and may send another team in its place. This effort should be coordinated through the Association Director.

Spontaneous problems cannot be revealed until the tournament is completed. At that time, team members may discuss the problem with the coaches and nonparticipating family members. No one may share the information with anyone else until that level of competition is completed around the world. For example, no one can discuss an Association Finals spontaneous problem until the last

Association Finals is completed. Violators will be subject to disqualification and/or other disciplinary action taken against the entire team.

Anyone who shares ideas and/or solutions with anyone who is not on their team will be subject to disqualification and/or other disciplinary action taken against the entire team. Those receiving ideas and/or solutions are also subject to penalty. For example, if a team member posts a description of its solution to a chat room, that person's team will be disqualified or suspended, and those who participate in that chat room must include the incident on their Outside Assistance Form to avoid disqualification.

Penalties for Unsportsmanlike Conduct, Spirit of the Problem and Outside Assistance are in each problem. However, Odyssey of the Mind reserves the right to penalize beyond those listed amounts if the situation warrants.

Chapter VI

Glossary

The following words and phrases are commonly used in OotM problems. If a word appears in italics in a long-term problem, it is defined in the Problem Glossary or it is defined below. If it appears in both, use the definition in the problem. These definitions are written for the purpose of solving OotM problems and may differ from what is found in a dictionary. Some of the terms are also used in spontaneous problems.

Appearance – How something looks, that is, its outward visual characteristics, not that it simply is included in the performance.

Appears – Something is visible and in view of the judges during the team's performance.

Artistic materials – Any media that are typically used in art forms, such as oils, acrylics, pencil, clay, watercolors, canvas, paper, wood, etc.

Artistic Quality – The distinctive characteristics, style, and effectiveness of the appearance of the visual attributes.

As portrayed in the performance – Any aspect of a solution without a definition in the problem or clarification is defined by the team via performance. For example, if community has no definition within the problem, the team may present the community as anything it wishes: aliens, living paperclips, etc.

Backdrop – Cloth, cardboard, large sheet of paper, etc. showing some type of scene or design, usually made with paint or other media, that hangs in the background of a stage set.

Boundaries/boundary lines – Boundary lines are considered on a vertical plane. Contact with the tape that marks the boundary line is not considered out-of-bounds unless stated otherwise in the problem; however, the team may not cover boundary lines in a way that completely obstructs the judges' view. Unintentional obstruction of part of a boundary, that does not prevent the judges from recognizing it, will not be ruled as obstruction. This is determined by the judges. An item is considered ***out-of-bounds*** if the outside plane of the tape marking the boundary line is crossed at any height unless the problem states otherwise. If a problem states that something must be ***within the boundaries***, every part of that item, whether it is touching the floor or not, must be completely within the boundary lines. This includes attachments such as wires, decorations, any team members riding on it, operating systems, etc.

Breaking the plane – Going beyond, but staying within the end points of, the imaginary vertical plane, for example, a boundary, or a start or finish line.

Character – **Unless the problem states otherwise,** characters do not need to be portrayed by team members. However, characters must be animated. That is, they must demonstrate one or more human characteristics. If a problem requires one or more specific characters, various team members may play the required characters. A required character must remain the same character throughout the presentation but may change in appearance. E.g., Superman was originally a comic book character. Although he has since been portrayed as a cartoon character or by different actors, he has retained the characteristics that make him Superman.

Characteristic – A distinguishing feature of a character or thing.

Commercially produced – Pre-manufactured and not team-created. A commercially produced part could be apart from a larger item, such as the handlebars of a bicycle or a wheel from a toy truck. It could also be an item that stands on its own such as a nail, a baseball bat, picture frame,

etc. Even though the parts of a team-made item are not original, when combined, the parts could form something highly original.

Completely (entirely) within an area – Nothing may touch or extend beyond the perimeter of the defined area. For example, a limitation that states that an object must be completely inside of a taped 4' x 4' area means that no part of that object may extend beyond the tape that forms the area. When an object is required to be completely within an area it is the same as it being enclosed by imaginary walls. This is rarely the case in spontaneous problems.

Creativity of overall engineering – Overall approach to the components including materials that make up a solution, the arrangement, assembly, and unique use of the materials.

Effectiveness of performance – Overall approach to the performance; anything not specifically scored in Long-Term or Style but adds to the performance such as transitions and timing, mood, elaborations, added enhancements, use of special effects/technology, etc.

Functional engineering – The mechanics applied to making something operate; the ability of a component to perform the function it is supposed to perform.

Human Power –

Direct: manipulating the intended object by hand so it functions without any other mechanism; for example: throwing, kicking, blowing, twisting, or turning the object to be moved/manipulated. For example, tossing a ball into a container.

Indirect: applying human power to something that directly manipulates the object that in turn moves/is manipulated; for example, hitting a ball with a golf club so it goes into a container. If human power is used to help cause a series of actions to take place in order to make something function that is considered mechanical and not human power; for example, turning a crank that winds a coil that releases an object is considered mechanically powered. Also, turning a crank by hand that is geared to pull back a device similar to a catapult and then releasing it so it moves a ball into a container is considered mechanically powered. This is allowed as long as human energy is not prohibited and the problem does not have different definition.

Human Character – a character as defined in this glossary but one that represents a human being with the general expected physical characteristics. It must not represent an existing recognizable human being or commercial character either living or deceased.

Incidental contact or touching – Unless the problem states otherwise, touching without gaining an advantage. It would have no penalty unless the incidental touching is repeated after a judges warning, or it is intentional.

Inside an area – Touching the floor only within the perimeter of a defined area including the material used to create the area. For example, a limitation that states that an object must be inside a taped 4' x 4' area means that object must touch the floor only within the area including the tape. It may extend beyond the imaginary vertical plane of the perimeter of that area, but it may not touch the floor or anything resting on the floor outside of that area. This is often the case in spontaneous problems.

Modified – To alter or change something in order for it to help solve a problem.

Music – The coordinated structure of sound produced by the team, unless a problem states otherwise.

OMER – The Odyssey of the Mind mascot. OMers are Odyssey of the Mind participants and supporters.

One or more team members – If something is required to be operated, driven, or portrayed by one or more team members, this may be more than one member at a time, or it may be one

member at a time. In either case, the team members may change; they do not have to be the same individuals throughout the entire performance.

Portray – To represent something or to act out a specific role.

Prop – An object held or used by a character in the performance. Props do not include items that are picked up only as part of a team's setup or to change the scene. Hand props are held by a character in the performance and larger stage props, such as a ladder or chair, are used by a character in the performance. For example, if a character answers a telephone and sits in a chair, the telephone and chair are props. A prop may also be a part of a costume. For example, if a character walks on stage holding a sword and uses it as part of the performance, the sword is a prop as well as part of that costume. Props do not include required vehicles, structures, devices, etc. that only operate and/or perform a function for required score.

Self-contained – every aspect of a required component is independent of anything external. For example, if a self-contained item must travel, all parts of the item will travel – unless AC power is specifically allowed in the problem's limitations. If a team uses AC power, the cord providing the energy is allowed to remain plugged in and does not need to move as part of the solution. The cord does not count towards score.

Set up – The time after judges say "Team Begin" that the team uses to set up props. It counts toward the 8-minute time limit. Teams can simultaneously perform while setting up props.

Song –music with lyrics. The music can be produced in any manner unless the problem states otherwise.

Stage set – All team-created materials that are on the competition site to create the environment/setting of a scene. Team members, costumes, and props are not part of the stage set. Anything picked up and used by a character during the performance is considered a prop, not part of the stage set. The team sign may be part of the stage set, but ONLY if it is not scored separately as a style element.

Travel – *The vehicle moving in a way to transport riders and/or objects from one location to another.*

Touch/touching – If a problem states that the team may not touch something, this means making contact with the item with the hand or another body part, whether covered or uncovered. For example, holding a ball in a gloved hand is still considered touching the ball. Or, if the team is not allowed to touch the floor in a certain area, a team member may not step onto a piece of paper on the floor in that area.

In spontaneous, a team may be required to use items to complete tasks. For example, it might have a broom, a stick, and a fishing pole to move a ball into a container without touching the ball. Because it is required to use the items to move the ball, the team may touch those items, which in turn touch the ball, and this is not considered touching the ball.

Working within an area – a team member must be touching entirely within the boundary but can break the plane without touching the competition site beyond that area.

Quick Guide to Resources

Application for membership — odysseyofthemind.com, *Join*

Association info — The State/Country Website odysseyofthemind.com, *Local contacts*

Books of practice problems — odysseyofthemind.com, *Shop*

Clarification for a Long-Term problem — odysseyofthemind.com, *Clarifications*

Copy of all general clarifications — odysseyofthemind.com, *Clarifications*

General Rules for all teams — Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide

Cost Form —Odysseyofthemind.com, *Member Resources*

Outside Assistance Form — Odysseyofthemind.com, *Member Resources*

Program info — odysseyofthemind.com

Style Form —Odysseyofthemind.com, *Member Resources*

Tournament registration info for your local competition— Your Regional or Association Director

Tournament site info — Your Regional or Association Director

World Finals — omworldfinals.com (Info. added on an ongoing basis.)

Other helpful information can be found at www.creativeopportunities.org