Odyssey of the Mind®

The beyond the box experience.

Spontaneous Coaching Guide

Spontaneous Coaching Guide

The spontaneous portion of the competition can be intimidating, but with practice your team will gain confidence in their creative problem-solving abilities.

Be sure to check out the Program Guide and the Odyssey HQ website for more information.

An **INTRODUCTION** and **REMINDER**

Spontaneous Basics

What is Spontaneous?

- All 7 team members will enter a competition room, be given a problem, and solve that problem in a limited amount of time.
  - No Coach & No Audience – Just the team and the judges!
- This portion of the competition is worth up to 100 points.
- This is the “Top Secret” portion of the competition as teams will not know what problem they need to solve until they enter the competition room.

Types of Spontaneous Problems

- **Verbal**: A problem where teams give oral responses.
- **Verbal/Hands-On**: A verbal problem that will require the manipulation of or interaction with objects in solving the problem.
- **Hands-on**: A problem where teams are asked to build something, complete a task, manipulate objects and much more.

NOTE: Each team solves **one** spontaneous problem in competition, it will fall under one of these three categories.

Verbal Spontaneous Problems

- **Verbal**: A problem where teams give oral responses.

- Teams are asked to generate a list of responses to a question.
- Types of Verbal Spontaneous Problems include (but not limited to):
  - Generate a list of responses to an open-ended question
  - Include words from a list in each response
  - Describe an object or its potential uses
  - Say something about a photograph or drawing

Verbal Problem Responses

- Responses are scored on whether the judges feel they are **Common** or **Creative**.
  - **Common Responses** – Expected, incomplete, or unrelated responses
  - **Creative Responses** – Unexpected, unique, out-of-the-box, or humorous responses
- The team will be given a **limited number** of responses.
  - Responses are tracked by using **items** that are randomly scattered in front of the team to start the problem.
  - Response items could be tokens, plastic discs, poker chips, coins, etc.

Giving Verbal Responses

- Teams are often given **Think Time** and then a separate time to give responses.
- When a team member is ready to give a response: they will select an item, place it in a container, and give a response.
- Team members may respond in any order.
- Individual team members may give as many or as few responses as the team wishes.
- Teams should practice this procedure

An Example of a Verbal Problem

- Name things that bend.

- **Common Responses**: A rubber ruler; My elbow; A small twig.
- **A Creative Response**: A scenic road; My Dad's will when I beg for ice cream; My mind when I look at modern art.

What Makes a Response Creative?

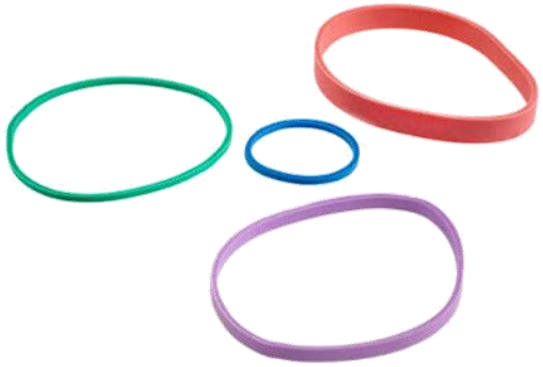
- Remember, creativity is the **subjective opinion** of the judge. Consider this when responding. Remember your audience!
- Examples of techniques that **may** enhance the response to make it more creative include (but are not limited to):
  - ✓ Use of rhyme or song.
  - ✓ Unexpected Connections - a different use, a famous character in a movie or play, using the same word with a different meaning, etc.
  - ✓ A funny or unusual twist to something common.
- **REMINDER:** To be creative, the response MUST relate back to the intent of the problem.

Verbal/Hands-On Spontaneous Problems

- **Verbal/Hands-On**: A verbal problem that will require the manipulation of or interaction with objects in solving the problem.

- Types of Verbal/Hands-On Spontaneous Problems include (but not limited to):
  - Manipulate an existing object and say something about the new creation
  - Use materials to create an object and describe the new creation
  - Work as a team to create something and tell a story about that creation

An Example of a Verbal/Hands-On Problem



- Each team member is given the above objects. The problem is to arrange the objects and say something about the design created.

Responses are scored based on creativity

An Example of a 2-Part Verbal/Hands-On Problem

- Part 1: Use the above materials to create a monster.

  Scored on teamwork and creative use of the materials.

- Part 2: Tell why you would not be scared of the monster.

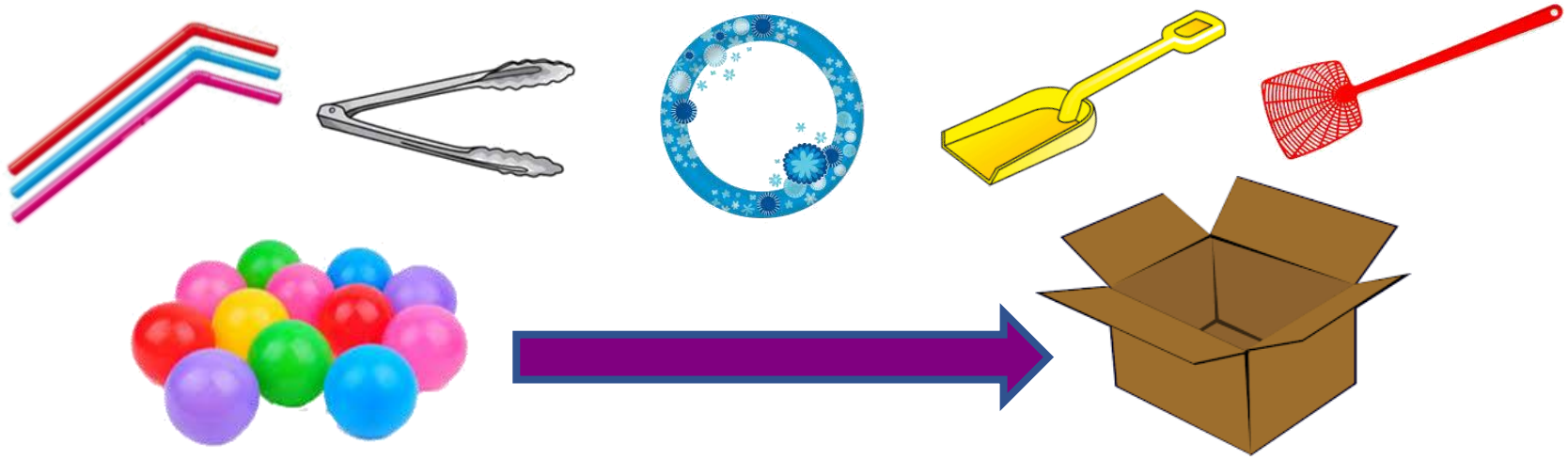
  Scored based on creativity of each response.

Hands-On Spontaneous Problems

- **Hands-on**: A problem where teams are asked to build something, complete a task, manipulate objects and much more.

- Types of Hands-On Spontaneous Problems include (but not limited to):
  - Build a structure to support scoring items
  - Use materials to move scoring items to designated areas
  - Use materials to connect scoring areas
  - Complete a list of tasks from outside a given area
  - *The possibilities are endless!!!*
- 1-Part and 2-Part Problems
  - *LISTEN CAREFULLY!!!*

An Example of a Hands-On Problem



- Use the materials to move as many balls as possible into the box. You are not allowed to touch the balls or the box and must remain outside a taped area.

Scored on how many balls are in the box, teamwork, and creative use of the materials

An Example of a 2-Part Hands-On Problem

- Part 1: Use the materials to build a structure that will support the cup as high as possible.

  Scored on height of the structure, teamwork and creative use of the materials.

- Part 2: Add as many marbles as possible to the cup.

  Scored based on how many marbles are added.

Things to Know for ALL Types of Problems

- **Team Copy:** Team members will be given a written copy of the problem to follow along as the judge reads the problem out loud.

- **Listen Carefully:** Every spontaneous problem is unique in some way. Be sure to listen for the details.

- **Questions:** Team members may ask the judges questions regarding problem understanding or time remaining
  - Questions must be asked after the judge finishes reading the problem and time has begun
  - Judges will answer what they can without providing or hindering a solution
  - Time will continue

Teamwork

- Working well together **enhances** team solutions and often helps lead to success.
- Some spontaneous problems specifically award points for teamwork.
- Team members **are allowed** to talk to each other during spontaneous unless the problem states otherwise.
- More information on “Teaching Teamwork” in the Program Guide.

Tips for Practice

Tips for Verbal Problems:

- Remind the team to **listen** carefully as every problem has its own set of requirements. For example:
  - ✓ Are team members allowed to talk to each other?
  - ✓ Are there 2 parts to the response?
- Practice using “think time” and wait for the judge to say “begin” before giving responses to be prepared for competition.
- Team members should **actively listen** to each other’s responses. This provides opportunity to build on a previous response *(creative)* and avoids repeating the same or similar response *(common).*

Tips for Hands-On Problems

- Be sure team members understand the scoring elements.
- Take note of any rules regarding boundary lines, touching items, retrieving dropped materials, etc.
- Be aware of time remaining. Some problems have time warnings built in. Team members may ask for “time remaining.”

Tips for All Problems

- If the problem allows, team members **should** talk to each other to develop a team strategy.
  - Do NOT whisper! Hearing the discussion can often help judges when scoring teamwork and creativity.

- Practice time management! Your team should allow itself time to think, ask questions, discuss, and solve the problem.
  - Set a countdown timer during practice and warn the team when 2 minutes and 1 minute remain.

Tips for All Problems

- If you don't understand, **ASK!!!** The judges want teams to be successful.
  - Judges **WILL** answer questions related to the process of solving the problem but cannot answer a question that is specific to a solution. For example:

➢ **Your problem is:** Make a chain as long as possible and connect it to the wall.

Team Member: "Does it need to connect to the wall?"

Judge: "Yes"

OR

Team Member: "Do I need to attach it with the clay?"

Judge: "That is a team decision."

Role of The Coach

Schedule Practice

- Practice builds confidence and reduces intimidation!
- Include Spontaneous practice as part of your regular OM team meeting.
- Bring in outside judges.
- For more practice, some school districts, regions, and associations hold spontaneous workshops. Check with your local OM association.

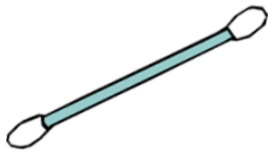
Practice Brainstorming!

- Start a group discussion about a topic with the goal to generate as many ideas as possible with the following guidelines:
  - ALL responses are accepted: Common, Creative, Outrageous.
  - No limits on time or ideas – be ridiculous!
  - Try piggy backing: Allow one response to lead to another, and another, etc.
  - Use a warmup technique – jump around, yell, say “go team!”
  - No criticism or judgement.

- Check the program guide section about teaching creativity and brainstorming

Brainstorming for Hands-On and Verbal/Hands-On

- During practice, give the team everyday objects to experiment with.



- How many ways can you put these same objects together for: height? Length? Strength?
- What other purpose could they serve? (Cup could be a hat)
- Improvise with them and say what you are doing. (Hold cup to your ear and say, “I’m listening for creative responses!”)

Provide a Variety of Problems

- Because teams don't know what type of problem they will get in competition, practice all types of problems.
- Create variety by changing one thing about a problem you do have. In verbal problems, change the objective, or turn it into an opposite. Or in Hands-On, change the materials or one thing that is scored. For example:

How are a cat and a lion ~~different~~ the same?

Common: They both have fur.

Creative: They are both kings of their houses.

Have a Team Discussion:

- Once you have completed your practice problem, discuss the team's solution.
  - ✓What was the intent of the problem?
  - ✓Did your solution meet the intent?
  - ✓What went well?
  - ✓What could you have done differently to be more successful?

Suggestion: Try repeating a problem you have used before and discuss the different solutions…What worked better and why?

What's the Hardest Part of Coaching?

Staying Quiet!

- Team members need to be allowed to figure things out on their own…Individually and as a team.
- Ask the team questions, show them items, and allow them to explore until they figure it out! It's all part of the learning process.

Remember…

Practice, Practice, PRACTICE!!!

Thank you for coaching an OM team!

We appreciate everything you do to help your team be successful, not only in Odyssey but also in life!