

# NEW JERSEY COACHES' TRAINING

This was created with the help of ideas, suggestions, comments, and feedback from many coaches, team members, alumni, judges, problem captains, and board members. Thank you to Odyssey of the Mind ® participants everywhere, for your enthusiasm, creativity, and willingness to take risks.

## COACHING DO'S

- ✓ Do teach your team the creative problem-solving process and use it throughout the problem solution.
- ✓ Do help your team to understand that winning is not the goal. The process of getting there is the important thing - not the competition.
- ✓ Do help your team to see and recognize the abilities of each team member and encourage team members to capitalize on the individual strengths of ALL.
- ✓ Do encourage growth through each new experience.
- ✓ Do help them get organized and realize the importance of maintaining a schedule and meeting deadlines.
- ✓ Do help them expand their minds, dig deeper, and come up with more creative ideas.
- ✓ Do practice the Spontaneous problems with the team often.
- ✓ Do try always to answer a question with a question.
- ✓ Do help them give and take constructive criticism of IDEAS but avoid insulting and insensitive personal remarks.
- ✓ Do be willing to admit you don't know everything and encourage your team to get help from others. (Be careful with this one because of outside assistance.)
- ✓ Do help them to learn how to evaluate their ideas and progress continually throughout each aspect of the problem solution.
- ✓ Do go over the score results with the team after a tournament to help the team improve in future tournaments.

- ✓ Do set a good example of adult behavior and by all means be a good role model for your team and others.
- ✓ Do be a quiet "guide on your side" and not a "sage on the stage".
- ✓ Do relax and enjoy seeing these young, creative minds at work!!!

## COACHING DO NOT'S

- ✓ Don't tell them how to solve the problem, but rather ask questions that help them think it through.
- ✓ Don't allow any criticism of teammate's personalities or physical attributes - no cutting remarks.
- ✓ Don't step in on their disagreements. Let them work it out as part of learning how to work on a team.
- ✓ Don't limit creativity by setting restrictions that are too tight or which reflect your own, perhaps limited, vision.
- ✓ Don't get disturbed when teams make mistakes along the way. This is part of the learning process.
- ✓ Don't allow them to be irresponsible. Help them realize that this hinders the entire team.
- ✓ Don't make them feel like they have failed if they don't win. Failing exists only when no attempt is made.
- ✓ Don't complain about other teams, coaches, or judges.
- ✓ Don't allow team to prepare a problem solution which knowingly goes against the intent of the Program or any of the requirements listed in the problem. READ, READ, AND REREAD THE PROBLEM AND THEN READ, READ, READ SOME MORE.
- ✓ Don't dispute a judge's ruling without explaining your concern with your team. Always be sure your dispute is valid and that the team wishes to carry it further.
- ✓ Don't get uptight. Relax and remember that the team members are the ones who have to solve the problem. You are the coach and are not supposed to produce the problem solutions.

## **OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE – YES OR NO?**

**As an experienced coach you are well aware of outside assistance. This is provided as a reminder.**

### **Outside Assistance – General Concept**

The Team **MUST** conceive, design, construct and perform their own ideas. The solution is the Team's design, its work, its performance and its score is the result.

The Team **IS RESPONSIBLE** for what they do, not the Coach.

The Coach is the **FACILITATOR**.

Outside Assistance is when someone helps to conceive, design, construct, or perform the Team's actual solution. Anyone can show Team members how to do a basic skill. Resource people and materials are excellent learning tools. However, someone else cannot give suggestions or work on the actual Team's solution.

If the team cannot design or construct its problem solutions without help, they need to think of another way to solve the problem (or claim the outside assistance rendered on their Outside Assistance Form).

It is important to remember that Odyssey of the Mind is an activity for students, not for coaches, and not for parents.

**NOVICE COACHES & EXPERIENCED COACHES – Hardest Part – LETTING THE TEAM DO IT THEMSELVES!**

**YES – THIS IS OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE – COACHES CANNOT:**

### **Regarding Conception and Design:**

- Verbalize your own ideas / solutions to the Team.
- Have parents / friends verbalize their ideas / solutions to the Team.
- Ask leading questions that cause the Team to think of "Your Ideas".
- Have a resource person instruct the Team on engineering techniques to specifically improve its unique solution.

### **Regarding Construction/Preparation/Practice:**

- Use a power tool on the Team's actual solution.
- Demonstrate a construction technique specifically on the Team's actual solution.
- Hold a Team member's hand while performing a task.
- Use prior year's props with a different Team makeup.
- Help work on the Team's solution (only actual Team member can do this).

- Help finish a prop due to lack of time (Team members know how to do it).
- Give “stage directions” – e.g. “You need to speak louder.” (A Team member should be the “Stage Director”.)
- Hold a dress rehearsal before “judge” who gives critical feedback to the Team.  
(A dress rehearsal is fine – it is the critical feedback that is not fine.)

**Regarding a Tournament:**

- Help the team with anything – costumes, hair, make-up.
- Plug electrical cord/equipment into a performance site outlet.
- Tell the Team where to place a prop.
- Prompt a “stuck” Team member.
- Help in any way during the Team’s performance.

**NO – THIS IS NOT OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE – COACHES CAN:**

**Regarding Conception and Design:**

- Help the Team to generally understand the rules.
- Explain the Long-Term problem to the Team (without specific solution hints).
- Conduct brainstorming sessions for both Long-Term and Spontaneous.
- Ask the Team questions to make sure its solution is well thought out.
- Give the Team “homework” assignments based on their ideas.
- Have a resource person instruct the Team on techniques such as: sewing, painting, acting photography, sawing, hammering, construction, engineering, etc.
- Present many construction options to the Team and let them choose.
- Watch films, videos, and live theater.

**Regarding Construction/Preparation/Practice:**

- Plug cords and electrical equipment into an outlet.
- Move equipment and materials for the Team.
- Demonstrate proper use of power tools and equipment on something other than the Team’s solution.
- Demonstrate construction techniques in general.
- Have the Team participate in a Basic Skills Workshop.
- Use leftover paint from prior year (different prop).
- Use prior year’s props with exactly the same Team makeup.
- Schedule practice sessions.
- Division I – Write out the Team’s forms (in the Team’s words).

- Help the Team to improve its Spontaneous skills.
- Evaluate Spontaneous practice sessions.
- Have the Team participate in a Spontaneous Workshop.

**Regarding the Tournament:**

- Help move the props to the Pre-Staging/Staging Area.
- Help the Team with props AFTER the performance is over.
- Help the Team “warm-up” for Spontaneous.
- Obtain the Team’s Long-Term scores after their performance.

## **CLARIFICATIONS?**

Problems are written to provide just enough guidance to solve the problem without limiting creativity. If the problem does not specify something that **CANNOT** be done, most likely it **CAN** be done. If a team questions the interpretation of a limitation for a problem, or it may be unsure that an aspect of its solution is allowed or meets the problem's requirements, then it may ask for a Problem Clarification. There are two types of clarifications:

1. A general clarification amends or further explains a problem's limitations. These can be found on the *Odyssey of the Mind* website (<http://www.odysseyofthemind.org>) as they are updated. All teams have access to these even if they did not request a clarification.
2. A team-specific clarification pertains to a particular team's solution. These are confidential and only sent to that team since teams must describe details of their solution to receive an accurate reply.

If the answer is not found, then the team may submit general questions electronically. Team-specific clarifications are submitted on the Problem Clarification Form. Remember, most answers you need about the basics of the program can be found in the Program Guide.

## **EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT ODYSSEY OF THE MIND, BUT DID NOT KNOW WHERE TO ASK...OR WHY IS THE PROGRAM GUIDE SO IMPORTANT?**

The Program Guide contains information regarding the rules for the solution of problems. This is the team's main reference guide for the rules of the competition. It is updated every year. Basically, the Program Guide explains: the three parts of the competition, membership and team members participation, scoring for each part of the competition, program rules (including, but not limited to, what constitutes outside assistance, material values, what's allowed or not during a presentation and reasons for disciplinary actions and penalties), Ranatra Fusca Creativity Award and OMER's Award, basic coaching guidelines, and copies of the competition forms (Style, Outside Assistance, Material Values Form, and Problem Clarification).

**THEREFORE, YOUR PROGRAM GUIDE IS SOMETHING TO REFER TO OFTEN. USE IT!**



## **TOURNAMENT ETIQUETTE**

Tournament time is very exciting. Teams have worked very hard to come to a competition. Anxiety, joy, and pride are feelings teams and spectators bring with them. They also represent their schools or sponsors so it is important to remember a few rules of tournament etiquette.

### **GENERAL BEHAVIOR:**

All team members represent their school or sponsor and should behave in a manner that reflects well on their school or sponsor. This includes the behavior of spectators representing teams.

### **HOLDING AREAS:**

Teams need to use their holding area for their props, sets, costumes, and other things. They also need to understand that each team is given a set amount of space for this. There also needs to be space available for other teams, spectators, and officials to be able to pass through the holding areas. Teams also need to understand that they should not report to the staging area until their time or use hallways or space that are not their assigned holding area. This will allow for the comfortable movement of everyone.

### **CAFETERIA AREAS:**

Cafeteria tables are not the property of teams. Teams should not put stuff down on cafeteria tables in order to hold them for their teams or spectators. No cafeteria would be big enough to have assigned tables for each team. In the spirit of Odyssey of the Mind we need to share them. Cafeteria tables are for eating lunch and when the cafeteria is not busy for a resting place. Encouraging spectators to find other places to eat also helps with the use of the cafeteria so that all teams have a chance to have a place to sit down and eat. Some teams have only a small window of time to use the cafeteria. Everyone needs to be mindful of that.

### **ENTIRE TOURNAMENT SITE:**

We have been very fortunate to be able to have schools that allow us to use their facilities. In the spirit of Odyssey of the Mind, it is assumed that all teams and spectators will respect the school property. This includes placing all trash in any of the provided trash containers and treating all school property with respect.

### **FINAL NOTE:**

Officials do not want to give teams penalties but if necessary penalties could be given. Always refer to the Program Guide for the general penalties that pertain to all problems at the tournaments.

## **COACH'S REMINDERS OF THINGS TO DO:**

1. Register for Odyssey membership (if not already done).
2. Provide team members and parents all dates and locations for competitions.
3. Register team for Qualifying Meet.
4. Pass out to team members: any forms for or about competition program, permission slips (if required) and any other forms as needed when needed.
5. Recruit and register judges...don't forget to let them know of the date commitments and training (once they are registered you need to give them a copy of the problem they are judging)...keep in touch with them and make sure they are fulfilling their responsibility to be trained and to show up at tournament(s) to judge. You should register all your judges for your team yourself. Attached you will find a form that you can use to get information about your judges to assist you in registering them.
6. Have a team member check the website periodically for updates and information such as problem clarifications.

of course...HAVE FUN!!!

## **REGISTRATION INFORMATION TO GATHER ABOUT JUDGES BEFORE REGISTERING THEM**

NAME:

HOME ADDRESS:

HOME PHONE NUMBER OR CELL PHONE NUMBER:

HOME E-MAIL ADDRESS:

HAVE THEY JUDGED BEFORE?

IF SO, HOW MANY YEARS?

PROBLEMS INTERESTED IN JUDGING...1<sup>ST</sup> TWO CHOICES

Notes:

1. You will also be providing your membership number along with problem number.
2. This is not a registration form. Use it to gather the information you will need in order to register your judges. (Reminder: It is the coach's job to register their judges.)

## **AN IMPORTANT WORD ABOUT COMMUNICATION:**

- During the year, we are available to, and will, answer everyone's questions: coaches, team members, coordinators, administrators, parents, relatives, etc.
- We will answer general questions of all on the day of a tournament.
- Questions specifically related to any aspect of a team's solution presented at the competition can only be asked by the **trained** coach.
- The decision of the judges and the results of the competition stand once the tournament is completed.
- Only the **trained** coach will receive a response if there is a question to be asked after the tournament. Inquiries by anyone else, e.g. team members, administrators, parents, etc. will not receive a response.
- Please make all of this clear to everyone associated with your team.

## **WANT TO INCREASE “CREATIVITY” ON YOUR TEAM?**

Listed below are some great books you can read:

*Drive* by Daniel Pink

*InGenius* by Tina

*How Children Succeed* by Paul Tough

*The Myths of Creativity* by David Burkus

*Creativity Inc.* by Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace

*Pure Genius* by Don Wettrick

*Teach Like a Pirate* by Dave Burgess