

# **New Jersey Odyssey of the Mind**

*A Coach's Guide to Spontaneous*



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*To start, let's address the most important question...*

## What is Spontaneous?

The Spontaneous portion of the competition consists of your team “spontaneously” solving a short problem. Unlike the long-term portion of competition, teams will not know the problem until they enter the room and are ready to compete. Solving spontaneous problems teaches students to think on their feet. All spontaneous problems are TOP SECRET and cannot be discussed outside of the competition room. Because of this, **there are no spectators allowed for this portion of the competition.** Only the seven team members may enter the competition room and **only five of the seven will actually compete.**

## Types of Spontaneous Problems

There are three major categories of spontaneous problems:

1. Verbal – Team members sit in a circle and takes turns giving responses in order. In most verbal problems, the number of responses is limited; therefore, it is important to remind your team to focus on the quality of the responses they give.
2. Hands-On – Teams are asked to construct something (a self supporting tower, a bridge to connect two desks together, ect.), or to complete a task (move an object from point A to B without using their hands) using various objects (cups, string, pencils, toothpicks, ect.)
3. Verbal/Hands-On – May require team members to interact with some type of prop accompanied by a verbal response, or it may take place in two parts. The first part may require the team to write a story or construct an object, which they elaborate or comment on in the second part.

## How will my team be scored?

It depends. Different types of problems are scored differently. Typically, verbal problems are scored common answer vs. creative answer, with creative answers being worth more points. Hands-on problems usually have an objective component (the height of their tower or the number of pennies held)

and a subjective component that usually includes the creativity of the overall solution and a score for how well the team worked together. Verbal/hands-on problems usually also include creativity and teamwork scores along with scores for verbal responses (common vs. creative).

Every competition grouping (Division and Problem #) will receive the same Spontaneous problem and will be scored by the same judges. The highest raw score will automatically receive 100 points for the Spontaneous portion of the competition. Each subsequent team will receive a percentage of the 100 points based on how they scored compared to the highest scoring team.

## **Why should I practice Spontaneous?**

**“Spontaneity is a meticulously prepared art” – Oscar Wilde**

Even though your team members won't know the specific Spontaneous problem they will be assigned until the moment they step into the competition room, practicing Spontaneous problems throughout the year is extremely important. All problems of the same type have a similar set-up (phrasing, timing, ect.) and learning to listen to directions is KEY!

## **How do I practice?**

Working on “competition-style” problems is not the only way to practice Spontaneous. Practicing can be as informal or as formal as you want. The great thing about Spontaneous is it allows you to provide direct instruction and feedback. There is no such thing as outside assistance in Spontaneous! Other ways to practice Spontaneous include:

- Reading through problems together as a team and quizzing team members on the stated directions
- Completing brief one-liners before the start and end of each practice
- Turning components of your team's long-term problem into a spontaneous problem

## Example Problems (Judging Versions)

### Verbal Spontaneous Problem

**A.** This is a verbal problem. The five team members who will compete please step over to the competition area (indicate area). The others must sit quietly in these seats (indicate seats) and watch or leave the room. They cannot participate in any way."

**B. JUDGE READS TO TEAMS:** (Do not read material in parentheses.)

**(1)** You have 1 minute to think and 4 minutes to respond. You may ask the judges questions; however, time will continue. **You are not allowed talk to each other at any time.**

**(2)** You will receive 1 point for each common response and 5 points for each creative response.

**(3)** Each of you has 7 cards. **You will take turns in order. After you give a response, you will place one of your cards in the container** (*point to container*).

**(4)** Speak loudly and clearly. Once time begins, it will not be stopped.

**(5)** You should not repeat a response that has already been given, and you are not allowed to skip your turn. If one member of the team is stuck, the team is stuck.

**(6)** You will be finished when response time ends or when you have used all of your cards.

**(7) Your problem is to names things that have coats.**

*(Repeat items in boldface. Begin by saying, "I repeat.")*

### Hands-On Spontaneous Problem

**A.** This is a hands-on problem. The five team members who will compete please step over to the competition area (indicate area). The others must sit quietly in these seats (indicate seats) and watch or leave the room. They cannot participate in any way.

**B. JUDGE READS TO TEAMS:** (Do not read material in parentheses.)

**(1)** You have 6 minutes to discuss the problem, practice, and create your solution. The judge will warn you when 2 minutes, when 1 minute, and when 30 seconds remain. You are allowed to ask the judges questions, but time will continue.

**(2)** There are containers filled with pennies and materials to use to solve the problem. **Your problem is to build a tower to support as many pennies as possible.** Nothing else can be used. You are not allowed to use the containers in your solution. You are not allowed to damage anything marked with yellow tape.

**(3) A penny is considered supported if it touches only the materials, or other pennies that are supported by the tower.**

**(4)** You will be scored when time ends or when you ask to be scored.

**(5)** You will be scored as follows:

**(a)** You will receive 1 point for each penny supported by your tower.

**(b)** You will receive 2 points for each inch in height of your tower

**(c)** You will receive 1 to 15 points for the creativity of your solution.

**(d)** You will also receive 1 to 10 points for how well you work together.

*(Repeat items in boldface. Begin by saying, "I repeat.")*

## Verbal/Hands-On Spontaneous Problem

A. *"This is a verbal/hands-on problem. The five team members who will compete please step over to the competition area (indicate area). The others must sit quietly in these seats (indicate seats) and watch or leave the room. They cannot participate in any way."*

**B. JUDGE READS TO TEAM:** (Do not read material in parentheses.)

**(1)** You will have 1 minute to think and discuss the problem and 5 minutes to give responses. You are allowed to talk and ask the judges questions during think time; however, time will continue. **You are not allowed to talk to each other during response time.**

**(2)** You will receive 1 point for each common response and 5 points for each creative response.

**(3)** Each of you has seven cards. **You will take turns in order. After you give a response, you will place one of your cards in the container** (*point to container*).

**(4)** Speak loudly and clearly. Once time begins it will not be stopped.

**(5)** You should not repeat a response that has already been given, and you are not allowed to skip your turn. If one member of the team is stuck, the team is stuck.

**(6)** There are materials in front of you (*point to materials*). Nothing else can be used.

**(7)** You will be finished when response time ends or when you have used all of your cards.

**(8)** **Your problem is to tell a story while improvising with one or more of the items.**

**(9)** **The first team member will improvise with the materials and give a response to start the story, and then place a card in the container. The next team member will improvise and give a response that adds to the story, place a card in the container, and so on.**

*(Repeat items in boldface. Begin by saying, "I repeat.")*

## Top 7 Spontaneous Tips

1. Decide your five competitors beforehand
2. Enforce teamwork skills and sportsmanship
3. Encourage your team to listen carefully & ask questions
4. Practice speaking loudly and clearly
5. Don't waste time and elaborate unnecessarily
6. Remind your team to keep in mind who is judging them
7. IF IT DOESN'T SAY YOU CAN'T DO IT, YOU CAN DO IT!

## Spontaneous Sunday!



Each Sunday the NJ Odyssey of the Mind Facebook page will post a new Spontaneous problem. Like us and join in on the fun! Post your team's best answers, or share pictures of their creative hands-on solutions! The goal of Spontaneous Sunday is not only to serve as a problem resource, but to also act a forum for teams to share creative ideas!

## What to do on Competition Day

- ✓ Arrive at the designated Spontaneous area **15 minutes** prior to your assigned spontaneous competition time with your Spontaneous Pass (this will be among the papers you will receive at registration at the beginning of the day). Only one adult may accompany the team (either one coach or one parent).
- ✓ Follow the signs to the check-in desk.
- ✓ At the check-in desk you will exchange your Spontaneous Pass for a new pass that will correspond to your competition room.
- ✓ You and your team will be assigned a holding room where you will wait until it is time to compete.
- ✓ When it is time for your team to compete, a judge will come to your holding room to call your teams name and escort them to their competition room. At this time only the 7 team members may follow the official to the competition site. **Remember, there are no spectators for spontaneous!**
- ✓ You may wait for your team in the holding room while they compete. Problems can range from 5 – 15 minutes long.
- ✓ Following completion of their problem, the team will be escorted back to their holding room.