



Notes on Style Webinar

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Official's Perspective by P3 International Problem Captain, Matt Lopez
Team Member's Perspective by former Omers, Helen Girod and Paisley Ramstead
Coach's Perspective by Katherine Loberg

What is Style & What are Officials Looking For?

In Odyssey of the Mind, Style is a little different than a dictionary's definition.

You typically see phrases like...

- Artistic quality of...
- A character's costume...
- How a certain object is used (in a costume or set piece)...
- Music, engineering, humor, script...

How do the Style Elements Work? There are 4 Style Elements that get scored (1-10 pts. each). The 5th one is tricky and will be the main focus. Each problem has 2 problem specific items, 2 free choice items and the Overall Effect.

Required Style Elements-be specific on your paperwork (name of the character or prop). Teams will have to revise their paperwork if it isn't specific.

Free Choice Elements-they CANNOT be items that are scored in the long-term scoring. They CAN be anything else. You might be able to use a different specific aspect of something scored in the long-term (such as the artistic quality of...) But have a backup item ready in case the officials say you cannot use that item. Know the backstory of the items you list (who came up with the idea, how the team made it) so the team can share that information with the judges after the performance.

Overall Effect-All 4 elements should be connected and tied together with a unifying thread. They shouldn't be random picks. They shouldn't be chosen at the last minute. These are as important as long-term elements. The judges will look at all 4 elements and consider how they enhance the presentation. Plan now for how the items will enhance the performance.

What to pick? Think about what the team members do well (artists, engineers, musicians, performers) and integrate those skills into the performance.

Paperwork-Be specific (which character, which costume). The officials don't want to have to guess and ask questions after about what you meant. Describe how the elements tie into each other, how the items have a common theme or line of thought.

During Q & A: Use the Clarification process for questions about required Style elements if you're not sure the item you want to choose will qualify. Read the definitions in the glossary of the Program Guide if a required element is prop, backdrop, etc. (Sometimes there are problem specific glossaries at the end of the problem descriptions). Officials want to see Style elements that work toward the team members' strengths.



Style from a Team Member's Perspective

Style is where you get to get weird & show off!

What skills do your team members have that you want to highlight? Are you artistic? Musical? Acrobatic? Theatrical? An engineer? Prove it! Even if you are doing a performance problem, if one team member likes working with robotics-use their talent.

Do any of your team members have weird or unusual talents? Plays an unusual instrument? Is an excellent juggler? Is bilingual? Don't be afraid to use a talent that might give your team an advantage against the competition. **What are you itching to try that you haven't attempted before?** At some point, you or one of your team members has said, "I've always wanted to..." Style is your opportunity to do it!

When to Start Thinking about Style? Immediately! When we start reading the problem as competitors, our minds immediately start churning out ideas. This can be disheartening when we get to the scored elements and realize that some of our ideas "don't work." **Every idea might work with Style!** Think about Style again after processing the long-term problem. Then again when a team member does something that makes you laugh. Then again when you're brainstorming ideas for your problem solution. Then again when you start writing the script and designing the props & costumes. **Don't wait until you're filling out the paperwork. Think about Style from the beginning.** What are the ideas that you really want to do but don't get scored in the LT problem? Don't be afraid to pivot with the items you first thought of using for Style. If you end up spending a long time on a costume and it turned out better than you originally thought, Style is a way to get more point for that item.

How Paisley's Team Came up with Style Style items were never chosen the same way twice. Sometimes they weren't even chosen for the same reason twice. A Dead Dumpster Fish costume was chosen when a teammate decided to incorporate balloon guts. It was scored first for use of materials, then at a later competition for appearance because of the audience reaction at the first competition. "We got higher points for appearance than use of materials." A backdrop was chosen early in the brainstorming stage. Eight cube boxes carefully attached with duct tape to create "an infinity cube" so it could display different scenes depending on how it was folded/unfolded. We wrote construction of our backdrop as the element, and got a lot of point because it was an engineered element and not performance. Helen agreed with the idea of changing the wording and focus of what to be scored on the form between competitions. That helped her team improve on points.

Style Checklist

- Are we SURE it isn't already being scored in the long-term problem requirements?
- Does it enhance the problem solution?
- Does it stand out? Is it visible in the performance?
- Is my team proud of it?
- Will we be excited to talk about this with the judges?



Paperwork Tips

- **Draft your paperwork early.** Ideas may change, but don't wait until the day before competition
- **Be Precise with Your Wording.** Someone who knows nothing about your solution should be able to identify what you want them to judge by what you write. You don't want the judges having to wait until after the performance to find out what you meant.
- **Ensure NO OVERLAP in scoring.** You will be asked to choose something else and redo your paperwork right before your performance if something on your form is being scored by the LT judges. Have a backup (3rd Free Choice item) ready to use if you are choosing a very specific part of something being scored in the LT scoring.

During Q & A Be careful about choosing a really broad element (like the time period or theme) it may be considered part of Overall Creativity or Overall Quality points given by the LT judges. Making items look realistic could help earn more points, but there are a lot of abstract artists that do well, so it's not a sure/necessary way to earn more points. Items can be repurposed the following year, if the team member that made the item is still on the team (i.e. a shower curtain used for a backdrop could be repainted with a new backdrop scene). You can make things live during the performance (a drawing or painting). When the teams select style elements has varied from year to year. Some years they were known from the beginning of the season. Other years some idea came up midyear or ended up becoming a bigger part of the performance later in the season, so the team changed their paperwork. If you're having fun and are excited about what you created, the judges (and audience) will join in on that fun and excitement. You can see teams perform previous problems on YouTube or even Odyssey HQ World Finals Virtual performances. But be careful, if the idea is coming from something another team has already done, judges might not score it as high as an idea that the team thought of on their own. Coaches-don't worry if the team decides to change their style elements as they work through the season. Many teams change their style elements from one tournament to the next. Focus on the good, focus on what the team strengths are. If something doesn't look as good as you hoped, perhaps focus on the use of materials rather than appearance. You don't have to be artistic, you can focus on the engineering / how it was built.



Style from a Coach's Perspective

Finding the “YOU”nique! Style is what YOU as a team have put into the performance that is unique from everyone else.

How can coaches help the team? You are the light SWITCH not the BULB. Help them learn how to turn on their creative electricity. But it is their job to decide what to do with that creative electricity.

- **Ask open ended questions.** The more questions you ask, the more excited and specific that start to get about their solution.
- **Take them on field trips.** If artwork is required, go to a museum and look at the different styles of art.
- **Practice spontaneous.** Have a spontaneous problem at every practice. It's one of the ways to turn on that creative electricity. The team will start to see each other's strengths. Hands on are the best. Find your engineers. Give them the freedom to experiment with the materials.
- **Try to avoid saying “NO.”** If team member suggests an outrageous idea, ask, “what would you build that out of?” If they suggest something that is against the general rules like burning something-it's okay to say no.
- Once theme is decided, lasso back to it. Sometimes the team has an amazing idea right from the start but they get tired of it later in the season, ask, “How does this fit with your theme of...” But remember it is okay for teams to move on/morph into new ideas.

When should a team think about Style? Now!!!

As they brainstorm, figure out what things ignite passion and creativity in your kids.

- Art
- Writing (puns, rhyme, poetry)
- Music
- Dance
- Mechanics
- Recycled trash

Often, that which they are passionate or excited about becomes the unique aspect of their solution. Bring them back to that concept when they feel stuck or confused. If their strength is art, but you see them slapping paint on their prop or backdrop. Ask questions. Is this really your most amazing work? How is this going to tie into your performance? Let it be THEIR team style. Redirect when necessary. Boys will often find their way to potty humor. If it's getting vulgar, present the scenario: so you giving your performance and your grandmother is in the audience, would she be proud of you? Would she be thrilled with that and think it's hilarious? Or how would their teacher score that? See the program guide under unsportsmanlike conduct.

What Can Be Style? Examples shown and explained. A costume made of candy wrappers to be worn by the rapper character in a candy animal world. A Hogwarts theme sign made of t-shirt



string to support the team's take on Charlotte's Web. A recreation of Da Vinci's Last Supper made from paint chips to support the team's chip theme. Another team's use of plastic spoons and forks to make a dragon inspired the team to use those items more creatively the following year. Often left out of style are Non-tangible items (dance, music, writing, humor). If you get post-it notes from judges after your first performance and the comments are about something NOT on your Style form, you can change what you have scored at the next tournament. Example-changing form to the humor of (a particular) character because of comments on how funny he was.

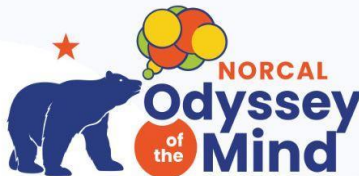
Style is the TEAM's Decision. It may change over time. You get a bird's eye view of watching it change. Use THEIR words on the Style form (Coaches in Div. I can be the scribe on forms). Ask questions about what specific aspect they want the judges to score about the item chosen. Let THEIR passion drive the choices. Even when you disagree. Example-a kid won the Creativity Award at World Finals for using armpit farts. She could play songs on her armpit. Enjoy the journey with them. It should be "YOU"nique.

Closing Comments The best tool in the coach's toolbox is asking open ended questions. Kid's view of the world is different than adults. Style is your team's flavor. This is who we are! This is what we like to do! Let them share with the world what that flavor is. Fill out that paperwork completely and with detail so the judges don't miss a thing!

Biggest Takeaways

- **Start Now**-Style contributes to the entire solution. It should not be addressed as you are filling out the paperwork just before the tournament.
- **Brainstorming**-Find the team's own flavor. Remember to brainstorm for Style as you are brainstorming for Long-Term. Use post-its. Move them around by asking the team, which ideas go together?
- **Style Evolves**-Allow things to grow and evolve. It's always changing. Teams can change their style elements from one tournament to the next.
- **Creativity**-Your team has its own creativity to share. There are no limitations on Style! They can be as creative as they want to and do exactly what they want to...without having to meet requirements in order to be scored.
- **Interests & Passions**-Each team member brings something special to the team. Find what their talents and interests are.
- **HAVE FUN!!!**-When the team has fun, the judges and all of us have fun with you.

Team Challenge: What is your team's super power that we all need to experience? That is what Style is all about.



During Q & A Coaches-try your hardest not to ask leading questions, do not try to get the team to say or pick a certain thing. Anything you think there is one correct answer to is most likely a leading question. General questions are: How would that work? What part of this do you want the judges to score? Give them multiple choices of things that could be scored about that object. There are [good questions to ask](#) in the Creative Journey Tools folder of the SoCal website. If team is stuck on choosing a free choice item, ask them, what is something extra you worked hard on that is not being scored? If there are only two characters getting scored in LT, is there another character that stands out and you want to get scored? Remember to have a backup style element (if you're choosing a different aspect of something scored in LT). New coaches who feel overwhelmed and feel like we're speaking a different language, relax. Katherine spent 7 of the 9 years trying to help the team figure out the team's style last minute. The 2 years when the team had a plan/theme from the beginning happened to be the years the team did the best with their Style. But if it isn't coming together at the beginning, don't panic. Just see what happens as the team progresses. Finding the best way to fill out the style form-what is the strongest part of this element? What part of this do you really want to be scored? If you want every aspect of a character scored (their appearance, costume, performance, humor, use of materials) you can simple write (that) character. Or you can choose a more specific part for judges to focus on. Don't be afraid to change the focus between competitions. The team can even be specific about which part of the costume they want scored. If they worked really hard on the hat of the cowboy costume, creative use of materials in the cowboy hat would be better than saying the appearance of the cowboy character.

Final comments The Style judges are going to score what you write down. They will make you choose something else if it's already being scored by LT judges. If you say the cowboy character, they will look at all aspects of that character. If you say creative use of materials in the cowboy hat, they will look carefully at just the hat. You can change things about your Style form between competitions. You can even make changes to the LT performance to try and improve scores in specific areas. There are helpful resources on the NorCal and SoCal websites under Member Resources-[Resources for Coaches](#) and [Resources for Teams](#). Reach out to your local directors if you have any questions. If they can't answer them, they'll find someone who can.

To view the recording of this webinar and see the pictures of style elements shown by presenters, click [HERE](#).

Note Taker's Tip on Writing the Paragraph on the Style Form.

Have the team start with a statement (or two) about their overall theme or storyline of their performance. In one or two sentences, what is your performance about?

Then write one or two sentences about each of the 4 items listed and how they tie into that theme or storyline.