Odyssey *in* 10 Weeks

NORCAL
Odyssey
of the **Mind**

Congratulations!

You're coaching an Odyssey of the Mind team!

Where do you begin?

New Long-Term Problems are released in their full form every year to coincide with the traditional academic school year. Usually, this means teams obtain access to the Long-Term problems by purchasing their membership from Odyssey HQ on the JOIN page at the HQ website in late August or early September.

Although the full problems are released at the beginning of the school year, the program is designed so that there is flexibility for teams to do what works best for them. Teams can choose their own timeline to be ready for competition season. Some programs in schools may start immediately in August or September and, as such, may seem like these teams have a head start.

Here's a little secret: **it doesn't matter when the team starts. What matters is that the work gets done and it is as creative as possible.**

There are many advantages to having a focused period of time:
- Students learn time management
- Work is focused and driven
- Works with busy schedules of coaches and students
- Inspired and engaged as a team
- Naturally encourages teamwork due to the sense of limited time

To help coordinators and coaches keep their team moving forward, The 10-Week Program, is a ten-week guide for coaches to help teams focus on important tasks. The 10 Week Program is based approximately on the amount of time a team would have if it began in winter for a mid-March competition, but remember it is merely a suggestion. The team should find what works best for them and their supporters.

10 Week Program

NORCAL
Odyssey of the Mind

Competition & Year Timeline

An overview of a season in NorCal Odyssey of the Mind.

Late April/Early May

Long-Term Problem Synopses Released by Oyssey HQ

August /September

Full Long-Term Problems Released
Tme to purchase Odyssey HQ
Membership to access problems online

September

Early Bird Teams start solving their Long-Term Problem

October

Coach Training

Nov. / Dec. /Jan.

Teams start solving the Long-Term Problem
Coaches Training
Register for Regional Qualifying Tournament

February

Volunteer Judge Training
Regional Qualifying Tournament Season

March

Regional Qualifying Tournament Season
NorCal State Tournament

April

Qualified teams advancing to WF are fundraising and prepping

WORLD FINALS - Late MAY

Week 1

Meet + begin with the end in mind

The fun part: the first learning moment for the team with respect to the Long-Term Problem and future life skills/success has to do with the technique called "Begin With the End in Mind." Here, this means focusing on the scoring of the Long-Term Problem, seeing where the points are, and then recognizing that this information should dictate everything about the next 10 weeks leading into competition. What does this mean? It's simple: teams do their best by getting points. Teams get points by doing what is indicated as important in the problem. Some elements are worth more points than others. Teams should focus on those high-point opportunities and prioritize accordingly. It is no surprise that the bulk of points in the Vehicular problem come from the car(s) or vehicle(s) in the problem and not so much from any theatricality that might be required.

While all other elements certainly demand and deserve attention, the best use of the team's limited time and resources would be better spent on the elements that will net them the highest number of points. This sort of focus on the evaluation is a super important life skill for professional evaluations and classroom projects, but, quite importantly, it also helps inspire the team's solution: creativity research shows that a constraint, like how points are distributed, tends to enhance creativity not minimize it. Once teams are clear on how points are going to be distributed in the problem it makes sense to re-read the problem and then to start thinking up potential solutions to review for the next week (Week #2).

Meeting goals and objectives

- Meet the team
    - Do an icebreaker or a Spontaneous problem to meet & learn strengths
- Make sure to collect contact information
- Write up a team contract to sign discussing commitment
- Determine a meeting schedule for the next 10 weeks
- Select a Long-Term Problem (if not already assigned)

Week 1: continued

Resources for the meeting

Spontaneous Problem
Team Contract Sample
What is Outside Assistance?
Student-Parent Agreement
Team area on Odyssey HQ
Long-term problems for the current season

Homework for meeting #2

- Encourage team members to re-read the problem again on their own and to come with some ideas for solutions for the next meeting

Topic of Meeting #2: BRAINSTORMING

Week 2
Brainstorming + style

You've probably heard the saying, "No idea is a bad idea." However, there is a way to run a brainstorming meeting that is more effective than many realize. First, introduce the team to the problem, encourage them to spend time individually developing solutions, then bring them together to share, making sure everyone gets even time. Then — here's the surprise one — send people away to let the ideas stew for a bit for an incubation period, before pulling the group together to settle upon an idea.

This is also a good opportunity to teach students about the actual definition of creativity. According to researchers, a creative idea is one that is: 1) original, 2) unique, 3) useful, and 4) effective. Most people stop after original and unique, but it is particularly true in Odyssey that an idea must also be useful and effective. It is not enough to just be original — you must create something innovative **but also functional**. Something that is original or unique but neither useful nor effective is simply art. Thus, one useful thing to do as a coach throughout the Odyssey process is to ask the following series of questions: Is X original? Is X unique? Is X useful Does X get its job done? If the answer to all is, "Yes," then X is creative.

We like to tell you there's no one right way to do anything, as Odyssey truly believes in the power of divergent thinking. That said, there are methods we know to be better than others thanks to empirical tests and research. One such method to employ with your team members involves group brainstorming.

As the team begins brainstorming for its Long-Term Problem solution, it is also important to initiate a discussion about the Style Elements in its solution.

What is Style? Style is what makes your team's solution stand out when compared to the other teams. It is often connected to the storyline and/or theme of the team's solution. It might be a certain object or unique character that is referred to often in the solution. There is a well-written section about Style in Chapter 3 of the Program Guide that includes how to list items on the Style form for competition.

Always remember that anything already being scored in the Long-Term Problem cannot be re-listed as a Style item. In other words, you cannot ask to be scored twice for the same thing.

One last pro tip. You may want to end your meeting or take a mental break during the meeting by engaging the team in a Spontaneous problem.

Meeting goals and objectives

- Spontaneous problem team-building, verbal and hands-on
- What is creativity?
- Long-term solution brainstorming
- Do something fun as a team not related to the problem

HAVE FUN!

Week 2: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)
[Brainstorming – Story Elements](#)
[Team Building Resources](#)
[Bob's Top 10 Team–Building Activities](#)
[Long–term problems](#)

Homework for meeting #3

- Nothing has been set in stone yet; ideas are brewing. Encourage team members to incubate all ideas presented today, including Style proposals, and come back in Week #3 with a master plan for a solution.

- Remember, the focus varies by problem:
  - Vehicle teams should be dreaming up vehicle ideas;
  - Structural teams: balsa designs;
  - Classical teams: performances inspired by classical works.

For any problem, the team must start devising solutions because one will be chosen soon!

Problem-specific advice

The majority of the points — and, therefore, the focus — of each Long-Term Problem pertains to the theme of that problem. Thus, in the Vehicle problem, most of the points will have to do with the vehicle — its design, its function, its creativity, whether it completes tasks, etc. With that in mind, here are some problem-specific tips for Week #2.

Vehicle

This is the first time many students will have built a vehicle. Some years the problem requires the vehicle to carry a team member; other years the vehicles are much smaller. In any event, it is worthwhile to introduce teams to propulsion systems in general as early as possible. It is also important to remind them that this is where most of their points are, so while their skit should be good, the vehicle should be primo.

Classic

Classical, or "Classics," requires students to familiarize themselves with classic literature, artwork, history, or mythology. A good use of a Classical team's time in Week #2 is to assemble materials relevant to the year's theme, for example, Renaissance paintings, summaries of Shakespearean plays, and have the students learn about the classic works that will inspire their solution. This problem's points focus on the creative integration and interpretation of classical work, as well as on theatrics and performance, so it's also a good idea to start going over theater basics with teams.

Technical

The technical problem varies greatly year to year. Sometimes teams build a robot, other times they build backdrops that perform tasks, and other times they might be asked to create an automated assembly line. One thing is certain: the solution will involve engineering, and the bulk of the points will involve a technical device or process designed by the team. Thus, exposing these team members to simple machines, engineering principles, and other basic tech skills this early is smart.

Structure

Odyssey is also the first time many students have ever built balsa wood structures that will support weight. As such, it is a good idea to familiarize teams with architecture basics, as well as with balsa wood and the various types of glue. The Structural problem will require teams to build and test countless structures on their way to competition, so the sooner that gets started, the better. Be sure team members are very clear on what is and is not allowed for their structure per that year's problem requirements.

Drama

The Theatrical problem is exactly that: performance. Introduce teams to basic theater rules, acting tips, comedy, and examples of great plays and performances on YouTube or other video services. Ask your team what makes the works good.

Week 3

Narrowing down + style

Wow! It's only Week #3 and we are already narrowing down our problem solution? Yep. Gotta keep the team moving if we want to make sure all the work gets finished on time for competition (although please do keep in mind this timeline is more conservative; if your team starts in September you have a bit more time).

The goal of Week #3 is to have the team present its final ideas for group discussion and consideration. Note: this is not the final product — it is more the specific direction the team intends to take. Now is a great time to remind the team what matters most: the scoring rubric. As teams present their solution proposals, it is worth asking them, "How does this map onto the point distribution for the problem?" Then, push teams to explain, in detail, how their solution maximizes the number of points possible within the problem.

Inevitably, team members will get very excited about an idea. For older students, this idea is usually the one that also nets the most points. For younger students, this is not always the case. As a coach, it is within your job description to ask the team whether their solution is as creative and **score-focused** as it can be. Ultimately, it is the team's decision which solution it pursues. Still, challenging them to think about how well their solution actually solves the problem and gets the points is important.

Once a team has settled on a solution direction, then it makes sense to talk about what Style the team wants to pursue. This is the team's unique flair or twist that will make them known as "the team that did X." The team that had a red theme; the team that did everything backward; the team that had a 'balance' theme... basically going above and beyond and doing something not specifically asked of the team in the Long-Term Problem. This tends to be a very fun, creative experience for teams, so encourage them to keep open minds as they propose their ideas for making a unique mark on their solution.

Meeting goals and objectives

- Spontaneous
  - Verbal
  - Verbal-hands on
- Final ideas: solution direction
- Vehicle, Technical, and Structure teams start research and/or prototypes based on final ideas
- Style

Week 3: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)
[Notes on Style Elements](#)
[Brainstorming Techniques](#)
[Team area on Odyssey HQ](#)

Homework for meeting #4

This may be the most important week for homework because teams are tasked with creating something that aligns with the agreed–upon direction for their solution.

- If a Classical team selects "Romeo and Juliet" as its inspiration, then next week we need to see scripts inspired by "Romeo and Juliet."
- If a Structure team opts for a certain type of structure, we need to see variations of those structures next week.

From Weeks #3 to #4, we go beyond ideas to tangible reality. The ideas should be something the team is passionate about because the team is going to pick a solution to pursue next week! Bring scripts, designs, and more!

Narrowing down by problem type

Keep in mind that the points are the focus!

The Narrowing Down process is similar across problem types. All teams must filter their many ideas down to just the few they believe will work best. From that narrowed-down list, one solution will emerge as the victor. However, this process varies slightly by problem.

One important lesson to instill in the students across all problems is that a joke loses its hilarity to you over time as you become super familiar with your skit, but when judges see it for the first time, the joke will be as funny to them as it was to your team the first time. Sometimes teams mistake fine tuning their solution for replacing elements that feel old. Those elements only feel old to the team because they are familiar.

So, for Week #3, the goal is to get the team on the same page about the direction of their solution. In Week #4, team members will bring tangible solutions that fall within that agreed-upon solution approach. The solutions brought in Week #4 can be changed or edited — they often will be — but the team has to move beyond thinking into doing.

Vehicle and Structural problems require testing, trial and error, and technical learning along the way. This is okay and expected. Still, the main idea still applies for Week #3: teams need to figure out a solution to pursue so that idea can be put to the test. Technical teams will often hit snags along the way, but this is part of the learning process.

Classical and Theatrical teams are less likely to run into surprise issues down the road, but the same spirit of discovery and testing can be applied in these problems. Just as a Structural team may start with an original idea and tweak their structure's design over time as they learn what works and what doesn't work, so, too, can a performance-based team try new jokes or new ways of staging a scene that might be better or more creative.

For Week #3, the goal is to get the team on the same page about the direction of their solution so that in Week #4, team members will bring tangible solutions that fall within that agreed-upon solution approach

Week 4

Idea selection + style

Getting into tangible solutions!
By Week #4 things are heating up as team members begin to introduce the first iterations of tangible solutions. As part of their homework from Week #3, team members should have started writing scripts or planning variations on their vehicles or structures.

The presentation and review of potential solutions is a time for excitement! At this point, all ideas are on the table and should be objectively evaluated by all team members. Everyone's feedback is important. However, it is important to guide the team toward the selection of one script.

This may involve choosing one script to work with or piecing together pieces of scripts to make a new, cohesive whole. Remember, while the idea for a theme or the words in a script may come from one team member, the entire team owns the solution. So, it is important for each member to feel that ownership by adding their unique perspectives to the scriptwriting process.

Be the audience! Try recording scenes the team is working on and see what they like — or don't — about the script.

Agreeing on a script is a critical step in giving the team the ability to start building and creating devices, structures, props, sets, costumes and more — the elements that come together to complete the solution. If team members are having trouble pinning down a script, try improvising a scene and recording it. What did they like about it? Change roles or move on to another scene.

During Week #4 it is also important for teams to start thinking about Style. Style should not be seen as an afterthought but as an essential piece of any solution. Style is the stuff that adds to the solution and that relates to the theme of the problem but is not required in the long-term scoring guidelines. You may want to have the team take another look at the two required elements in Section F. Has the team included these in their solution?

When thinking about Style, always ask why and how — for example, how does what we are creating enhance our solution? Try to get your team to start thinking about Style early in the process makes it more likely they will come up with truly unique and unusual ideas!

If the team has a theme, have them start working on their Membership Sign *(see requirements in the Program Guide)*. The membership sign tells the audience what team is performing and may be a required element of Style, or the team may choose to use it as a Free Choice if they put a lot of effort into it.

Meeting goals and objectives

- Spontaneous | Hands On
- Finalize the concept to build
- Re-read the problem
  - Point & Style focus
- Detail the problem – divide and conquer

Week 4: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)

[Teamwork – Working Through Difficulties](#)

[Volunteering As a Tournament Judge](#)

[How Parents Can Help](#)

[Team area on Odyssey HQ](#)

[Long–term problems](#)

Homework for meeting #5

By next week the group needs:
- An updated "final" script
- Tangible structures, vehicles, or technical devices (for those problems) for testing
- A list of materials to bring to create items needed for the solution
- A detailed schedule outlining which team member is creating what and by when.

It's time to start creating.

How to keep the peace

Odyssey of the Mind tends to attract a certain type of student: intelligent, successful, and capable of seeing an idea through from idea generation to execution. But, as we know, in the real world, our vision isn't always realized.

Selecting a solution to pursue can be tough, particularly for younger Omers who may not have experienced idea rejection. Still, this is an important part of the learning within Odyssey of the Mind. To help make that learning happen as gracefully as possible, here are a few tips:

Focus on scoring

Since the team will be judged on how well its solution meets the scoring requirements, the team should ultimately select the one solution that best addresses these scored components. Keeping that in mind, solution selection is not personal, it's practical. A team cannot win if its solution does not address the scored elements. Remind team members idea selection is not based on any team member's intelligence or creativity. The idea gets selected based on how well it achieves the scoring objective relative to the other ideas proposed.

Sparkling new ideas in each other

Team members have their own interests, strengths, and talents. Let each member play to their strengths. Your team member who is great with hands-on construction tasks should probably be spending more time building balsa structures or creating the backdrop instead of trying to draft funny jokes or song lyrics (although they are welcome to do so if they want). Listen to one another because something someone else says or suggests may spark a new idea in you, which is an important part of the Odyssey team experience.

It's a team effort

Although the central theme for the solution may stem from one team member's idea, the entire team owns the solution. Each solution has multiple components, and it is expected that every team member will contribute to making that selected solution the best it can be. Odyssey is a team sport. Sometimes you carry the team, other times you are carried by the team, but at all times the team is in this together.

We are one team — together

Keeping the team spirit alive and at the forefront is important in Odyssey. It takes everyone doing what he/she can to help the team win. Odyssey is a team sport. Odyssey is a team sport. Odyssey is a team...you get it.

Week 5

Creating the context + casting

And we're off! At this point, the team should be building its props, backdrops, and other elements required to solve its problem. A few things, like the membership sign, are required of all teams. This information can be found in the Program Guide online or in your membership packet. Everything else that is required of the team is listed in the problem itself. Encourage the team to re-read the problem over (and over and over) again as they work through ideas.

Creating the Context is the process of finishing all the pieces necessary to bring the solution to life. BUT —and this is a big but — keep in mind that creative does not necessarily mean the largest, the flashiest, or the sleekest. While teams should be as polished as possible by the time they compete, being creative in Odyssey of the Mind does not require having professional-looking materials. Quite the opposite, being creative means any elements used are employed in clever, unusual, and unique ways that get the job done.

The only stuff a team is required to have are the items required in their specific Long-Term Problem. But doing the bare minimum may not score well.

Encourage your team to think of ways to use ordinary materials in unexpected ways — for example constructing a costume out of recycled plastic spoons. The point? Teams should learn the lesson that more is not always better, and that flashy stuff doesn't always equate to being creative.

Encourage teams to think outside the box with respect to how they can deliver what the problem asks them to deliver in a novel, innovative way. This is a good time to revisit where the points are and how (and on what) the team will be judged.

Finally, the team will want to assign roles by this week so people can start learning their lines and figuring out their respective contributions during the solution's presentation. For some, this will be acting. For others, this will be operating the vehicle or technical device. For others, this might mean backstage work; for structure teams, this might mean placing weights on the testing board. For many, this might be some combination of the above. The team decides, but as the coach, encourage the team to remember that they are a team and everyone can help in their own way.

Meeting goals and objectives

- Spontaneous
  - Verbal
  - Verbal-hands on
- Create
- Build
- Assign roles
- Re-read problem
- Team build - Have FUN!

Week 5: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)

[Coach Resources](#)

[Spontaneous Practice](#)

[Team area on Odyssey HQ](#)

[Long-term problems](#)

Homework for meeting #6

- Encourage team members to re-read the problem again on their own
- Memorize lines.
- Finish the list of items to be built/created per the team's agreed-upon timeline.

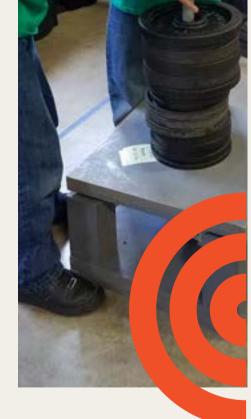**Be ready to run through your solution next week in its entirety!**

Testing and tuning

Creating often isn't at it's best the first time... the second time... OR...

By this week, Vehicle, Technical, and Structural teams should be testing components like the vehicle(s), the technical item(s), and the structure(s), respectively. Once the team starts finding success with these components, encourage them to figure out if they can make them better. Challenge them to think about tweaks to their design that would make it more creative (remember: more original, more unique, more useful, and more effective).

Unfortunately, the reality is that devices may not function as designed during competition. Cars go off course, balsa structures shrink and expand depending on the humidity. Some of these factors can be accounted for with really clever solutions, but some things (like the weather) are out of the team's control. Your goal as a coach is to make sure the team continues refining these solutions until it gets to a point where it is satisfied with the solution's ability to attain maximum points while also working effectively.

If you are coaching a Classical or Drama team, don't think that their solution is free from improvement — or testing and tuning. Quite the opposite: performance-based teams should try new jokes, new dances, new staging, new blocking movements, and more. While you, as a coach, cannot tell the team what is or is not funny or what music is or is not good, the team can perform for parents or friends and get organic feedback from laughs and general audience reaction. This is the same technique employed by comedy clubs and stand-up comedians. As long as the audience isn't suggesting what teams should do, this is okay!

Part of Odyssey of the Mind involves encouraging teams to see their solution as an evolving work in progress that can be enhanced. At some point, the team will commit to the final version for competition, but until then, encourage them to challenge themselves to be even better than they already are. This keeps things interesting.

Calculated risk-taking is good, but a device that doesn't work or a clever structure that doesn't hold weight isn't going to score well at the competition.

Week 6

Creating the context + editing

Okay, coach. You're about a month away from competition at this point, so how's the team doing? Are they on their way to being a 1st-place team? Are they a little behind schedule? Are you realizing that you have no way of knowing either thing?
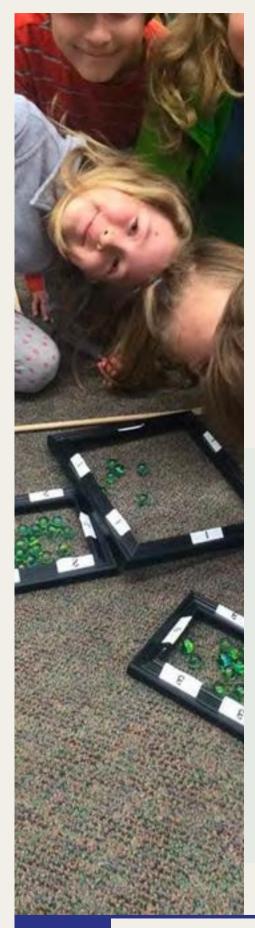
Relax. If you're following our timeline, you're probably doing fine. However, Week #6 is the point where everything needs to be coming together, and the team's focus needs to be on completing and perfecting their solution, not on generating ideas or shifting gears to another idea altogether.

While the team continues to finish building all its props, sets, and backdrops, your job as coach is to make sure they don't get off track and start chasing shiny objects. This is particularly important when teams start thinking their work isn't as funny, isn't as cool, isn't as [fill in the blank] as they originally thought.

As I mentioned before, one of the challenges of working with the same solution over a period of weeks is that teams grow tired of their own ideas. Remind them that those ideas will still be fresh to the judges when they see it the first time and to keep focus.

Another skill to teach in Week #6 is the importance of editing. Teams should have their performance down to 8 minutes with a little wiggle room to spare to avoid being forced to stop or receiving an over-time penalty. Teams should take a step back at this point, look at their solution, and ask themselves, "What purpose or function does each element of our solution serve with respect to scoring?" Are there needless items that add nothing to the story and aren't scored? Basically, the goal here is for the team to clean up its solution so that the extra fluff that adds no value is removed leaving only the critical parts and required elements to shine even brighter.

Meeting goals and objectives

- Spontaneous
  - Verbal
  - Verbal-hands on
  - Hands-on
- Completion of tasks
- Refine
- Evaluate and edit

Week 6: continued

Spontaneous Problem

Teamwork – Working Through Difficulties

Team area on Odyssey HQ

Long-term problems

Homework for meeting #7

This is it. Next week will start a series of meetings where the team runs their solution over and over again, which means that everything the team needs — costumes, props, technical devices, the membership sign — must be finished and ready to go for next week.

As such, the group's homework is to finish any of these tasks that are still not finished otherwise they won't be ready to start the run of rehearsals that begins in Week #7.

Things you'll learn after years of Odyssey

Like any activity, a lot of the learning in Odyssey of the Mind comes by simply doing the program. The longer you do it, the more you learn.

Now, you have an advantage because we have shared some tips that can take teams and coaches years to figure out — like focusing obsessively on the scoring rubric, for example. Still, there are some other, problem-specific tips you would only know after years of competing. So, here we go....

Vehicle

Teams that do well in the Vehicular problem tend to come up with clever propulsion systems. Yes, a lot of the points in the Vehicular problem depend on the vehicle doing certain tasks, but there are always points dedicated to the creativity of the vehicle's design and functioning. Encourage your teams to really think outside the box when it comes to movement, propulsion, and how to power their vehicle.

Technical

Some teams build robots and write the code that makes the robots function. Other teams have extremely elaborate systems composed of simple machines. Others take something common and make it their own. Teams that do well in the Technical problem tend to build complex devices that also integrate seamlessly into their performance. The more perfected the intricate system can be, the better.

Classic

A great Classical team will be stellar performers. Teams often think that choosing an obscure piece of classic art or literature makes them more creative, but the best teams tend to be those that choose well-known works and then use them in extremely creative ways. Solutions that incorporate music, choreography, and other styles of performance even when those are not required tend to do well here. Same goes for humor.

Structure

A certain type of Omer does the Structural problem and sticks with it. Indeed, most Division III and IV teams doing the Structural problem have done it their entire life. That said, teams figure out ideal structure designs and do variations on these as the problems require. The latest Structural problems, realizing this, have incorporated new elements that make it harder for these ringers to repeat a structure with only slight modifications.

Drama

Like the Classical teams, Theatrical teams should be solid performers who integrate music, humor, and other styles into their solution. Sometimes teams that integrate a technical element, like a team-created music instrument or coding that makes interesting sound effects, get extra attention forgoing above and beyond expectations. So long as a team gets those elements scored, this is rather good idea.

Week 7

Review scoring + rehearsal

All right, we're in the final stretch now! The end is in sight! Starting at Week #7, the team should expect to run their solution as many times as possible during each rehearsal. The team should look at a printed copy of their scoring rubric and may even want to consider scoring themselves on their Long-Term solution and Style. This will help the team improve on all ideas in this final phase.

Run your solution as many times as possible!

Meeting goals and objectives

- Spontaneous
  - Verbal
  - Verbal-hands on
  - Hands-on
- Fine-tune
- Run throughs
- Last touches on Style elements
- Re-visit problem scoring elements

Week 7: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)

[Team area on Odyssey HQ](#)

[Long-term problems](#)

Homework for meeting #8

- Encourage team members to re-read the problem again on their own to make sure all elements have been met
- Complete final touch-ups
- Get final repairs ready for meeting #8
- Start a rough draft of all paperwork for team fine-tuning

Paperwork is an essential part of your team's solution.

Week 8
Paperwork + rehearsing

Each Long-Term Problem tells teams 1) the specific paperwork they need to have ready on the day of competition, and 2) the number of copies of each form they need at each level of competition. Coaches of Division I teams can help the team write answers, but the wording has to come from the kids.

Teams in all other divisions must complete their own paperwork. For specific information on how to do the paperwork, refer to the Program Guide.

Pro tip: bring several copies of the paperwork!

Meeting goals and objectives

Bring at least four copies of all paperwork to the tournament.

- Spontaneous
  - Verbal
  - Verbal-hands on
  - Hands-on
- Rehearse
- Last touches
- Paperwork

Week 8: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)

[Getting Ready for the Tournament](#)

[Team area on Odyssey HQ](#)

[Long-term problems](#)

Homework for meeting #9

- Encourage team members to have fun with performing
- Paperwork completed
- Plan for competition travel and day
- Final touches

Keep having fun!

Week 9

Fine tuning + rehearsing

This is it. The final week of practice before the final dress rehearsal. At this point, teams should be so ready that they could compete right now if they had to. Week #9 is the final week to make any last-minute adjustments or minor changes in preparation for the competition. From this point on, the solution will be the solution they are taking to the first tournament.

Believe it or not, you've pretty much made it, coach! Bravo!

Meeting goals and objectives

- Spontaneous
  - Verbal
  - Verbal-hands on
  - Hands-on
- Run throughs
- Final last-minute adjustments
- Final paperwork adjustments

Week 9: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)

[Team area on Odyssey HQ](#)

[Long–term problems](#)

[NorCal Odyssey Website](#)

Homework for meeting #10

- Encourage team members
- They are READY!
- Pack that repair kit.

You are ready!

Week 10

Final dress rehearsal

This is the calm before the storm. In just one week's time, your team will be performing its solution in front of judges. If you followed the 10-Week Method, you and your team should be ready.

There's one final thing we have not yet discussed: the judge questions.

First, don't panic: judge questions are informal. There is no specific Q&A the judges use to engage teams on the day of competition. After the team is finished performing and receives applause, the judges will approach the team and ask them questions about their solution. The questions vary from team to team but all serve one very simple purpose: to help the judges better understand the team's creative process, the insight behind it, and the technical workings of the solution's many parts.

As the team's coach, it is ok for you to practice this judge question experience with the team and to encourage them to practice with one another. The goal of your team's answers is to draw judges' attention to the scored elements of the problem and to explain the logic behind its choices. At World Finals, teams who have been around for a while will actually lead judges to specific items from their solution to make sure those judges know what it

is, why it's creative, and why it deserves as many points as possible. There's no need to be that aggressive. The judges know what they are looking for. It is the team's job to highlight the scored elements and let the judges guide the conversation after the performance.

Keep the team in positive spirits, remind them of how much they have accomplished in their time together, and reinforce the spirit of camaraderie and collaboration so central to Odyssey of the Mind. There are few things worse than watching team members yell at each other or be angry with one another at a competition. Competition can be stressful: people are nervous, parents are parents, devices are unpredictable, other teams unveil surprising, innovative ideas, and more. Keeping the team focused on how much they have learned, the new skills they have gained, and the pride they should have in their particular solution to the problem fits within what we know is helpful from active learning research. Remind them that if they win, they get to celebrate! And, if they lose, they have learned a lot, will see lots of inspirational solutions from winning teams, and will come back stronger next year!

Meeting goals and objectives

- Watch it come together!
- Don't panic when nothing works perfectly… completely normal before tournament.

Week 10: continued

Resources for the meeting

[Spontaneous Problem](#)

[Team area on Odyssey HQ](#)

[NorCal Odyssey Website](#)

[Tournament Information](#)

Homework for tournament day

- Pack Up
- Double check that all is packed
- Double check repair supplies and kit

Week 10: packing up

By now the team likely knows its solution well. Still, it might be worth encouraging the team to create a Packing Up list so that they remember everything they need to bring in the excitement and nervousness that surrounds the week before competition.

In addition to all the items essential to the team's Long-Term Problem solution, it is important that the team remembers to bring several completed copies of its paperwork for the judges. Everything should be packed in a safe, secure way to ensure that nothing breaks or gets lost in transit from the team's practice area to the competition site.

On the morning of competition, get everything out and find a safe spot for it in the host school (there are usually signs posted for this) where the team can check the status of all its props and backdrops. Be sure never to leave these items unattended, and remind parents they cannot fix anything or prep anything for the team. Parents can help carry items to and fro, but anything more could count as Outside Assistance that would result in a penalty.

Tournament Day

A typical competition day schedule in NorCal Odyssey of the Mind

Early Morning | Have a great breakfast with your team! Dream of your solution going perfectly the night before!

8:00 am | Tournament Check-in Desk Opens - Let us know you're here!

8:30 am | Merchandise Opens: Stop by the merchandise table

9:00 am – 2:00 pm | Competition: Go catch a team's Long-Term Problem solution
- Be sure to see how other teams solved your same Long-Term Problem
- Check out the other types of Long-Term Problems, too
- Go support your school's/district's/community's other teams

Sometime Between 9:00 am – 2:00 pm | YOUR ASSIGNED LONG-TERM COMPETITION TIME
- Let the Staging Area judge(s) for your problem know you're there
- Show up about 15-20 minutes before you are scheduled to compete
- Don't be late! The team won't start early, but they'll start on time!

Sometime Between 9:00 am – 2:00 pm | YOUR ASSIGNED SPONTANEOUS COMPETITION TIME
- Let the Spontaneous Check-In judge(s) know you're there
- Show up about 15-20 minutes before you are scheduled to compete
- Don't be late! The team won't start early, but they'll start on time!
- Sorry, coach: at some point, you'll have to leave the team in the trusted hands of the Spontaneous judges (it's a good time for you to relax)
- Remember: teams may NOT share their Spontaneous problem with anyone (this includes you, coach – but it's for their benefit! We don't want a leak!)

Around 4:00 pm | The Awards Ceremony

NOTE: Given the importance of keeping the team together and focused on the day of competition, it is usually wise to let parents and team members know that, on the day of competition, you are in charge and that team members need to stick with you (not mom and dad). It's okay if parents are around for support, but part of that support means supporting the coach and their goal of keeping the team on task.

NORCAL

Odyssey of the Mind

2023–2024

Season at a Glance | Key Dates

September

9/30 – COACH TRAINING*
LIVE Webinar | 10:30 am–12 pm
Coach training is offered through self-paced online modules and coach-directed webinars.

October

10/11 – COACH TRAINING
LIVE Webinar | 7–8:30 pm
10/21 – COACH TRAINING
LIVE Webinar | 10:30 am–12 pm

10/14 – Primary Coach Webinar
10:30–11:30 am

November

11/8 – Spontaneous Webinar
7–8 pm

11/4 – COACH TRAINING
LIVE Webinar | 10:30 am–12 pm
11/15 – COACH TRAINING
LIVE Webinar | 7–8:30 pm

11/27 – Qualifying Tournament Registration OPENS

December

12/6 – COACH TRAINING
LIVE Webinar | 7–8:30 pm

12/13 – Team Perspective Webinar
7–8 pm

12/9 at TBA – Spont Day 1
12/16 at TBA – Spont Day 2

12/31 – Qualifying Tournament Registration CLOSES

January 2024

1/17 – Tournament Day Webinar
7–8 pm

Self-paced online judge training modules*

Judge Training Webinar
Date TBD

February

2/3, 7:00 am
2024 Regional Qualifying
Tournament #1 | Location TBD

2/10, 7:00 am
2024 Regional Qualifying
Tournament #2 | Location TBD

March

3/9, 7:00 am
2024 NorCal State Association
Tournament | Location TBD

April

Qualified teams advancing to World Finals are fundraising and prepping

WORLD FINALS: May 21 – May 24, 2024 | Iowa State University

WF date tentative, subject to change.
*Coaches must attend ONE LIVE coach training. Judges MUST attend judge training.

Support Team Members

The awesome volunteers here to support the teams

Bruce Mackinlay
Association Director

Jessica Fusca
Teams Director

Bob Lipman
Team Coordinator

PJ Dodgson
Team Coordinator

Amanda Souza-Reid
Team Coordinator

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