



## Tip Tuesday #2

### Choosing a Problem & Parent Involvement

One of the first challenges facing your team is choosing a long-term (LT) problem to solve. If you are coaching a K-2 team, there is only one choice...the Primary problem. Your membership can have as many Primary teams as it wants. Grade 3 and up students choose from the 5 new problems offered each year. Your membership can have one team in each problem for each age division. So if your school/membership has another team in the same division as your team, you should communicate with the other coach(es) and/or ask the team to have a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice of problems. Your school/membership will need to purchase a second membership if 2 teams in the same age division are wanting to solve the same problem.

**More than the Synopses** After your membership is purchased, you can access the [Member Resources](#) on the Odyssey HQ website and download the full description of each problem. Scroll down to Member Login (not Team Login) and enter the Membership Number and Zip Code of the address used when purchasing the membership. Each problem has 4-7 pages of details describing each LT limitation/required element, the required Style elements, scoring for the LT elements, possible penalties, minimum dimensions of the competition site, and a glossary of specific *italicized* words. If you don't see the word in the problem's glossary, there is also a glossary at the end of the [Program Guide](#).

**What Sounds Like Fun?** To narrow down the choices, I only read Section A of each problem to the team and then ask the question, "What sounds like fun in this problem?" Team members may name elements that sound fun to solve or they may start sharing ideas that could be used in the team's solution. Once it's narrowed down to 2-3 problems, have the team members read the full problems for homework and come to the next meeting with their "sales pitch" or reasons for choosing the problem they like best. All problems will have elements that are challenging, that's why we call them problems. There is a greater sense of accomplishment overcoming those challenges.

**Combining Ideas** At the next meeting, after each team member gives their pitch for the problem they liked best, have them vote. You may want a ballot vote if you have team members that pressure others to vote with them. Remind the team members that didn't get their problem choice that the team has 2 Style elements that are the team's choice. You can use ideas that sounded fun in another problem in the team's solution and then possibly get points for the work on those ideas by choosing them for the team choice(s) of Style elements.



**Parent Involvement** This is another reminder that ALL IDEAS and work on the team's solution must be done by the team members only. Whenever there is homework to do before the next meeting, remind the team that they can't ask family members (or friends) for their ideas or thoughts. An adult could explain what something means and act like a dictionary or resource book, but they cannot give examples that might be used as ideas for the team solution. Tip Tuesday #1 went into more detail about talking to parents/guardians about Outside Assistance.

**Parent Help Needed** You do need parents to help the team throughout the Odyssey season. They CAN help by

- providing snack when it's their child's turn
- providing money or supplies if needed by the team
- collecting POSSIBLE building materials (cardboard, shipping wrap/materials, etc.)
- providing transportation to stores or other locations requested by the team
- practicing spontaneous as a family (just for fun)
- being an extra safety supervisor on build session meetings
- providing a lesson on how to use a tool or general performance tips (if asked)

**BIGGER Ways to Help the Team**

- providing the spontaneous problem at each team meeting
- hosting the team meetings at their house
- allowing team work and storage space in their garage
- transporting team supplies to and from the tournament(s)
- volunteering as the team's tournament judge or volunteer

**Beyond the First Meeting(s)** The best document available to coaches and teams is NorCal's [Odyssey in 10 Weeks Program](#) with Spont Problems and Resources for each week along your journey. Good luck! And remember to **HAVE FUN!**