

# Things I wish I'd known the first time:

1) **All teams, even experienced teams have trouble heading to the finish line in any organized fashion. Yours is not the only team who looks like they'll never get it together in time.**

Here are a couple of tools to help:

Make a calendar. Show meeting times. Have the team set goals to have done by certain dates.

Use a completion bar graph to help them understand how much more needs to be done.

See attached examples

2) **Not all work has to be done in team meetings.** Team members can take responsibility to get things done at home in-between meetings. One word of caution, though. Be sure their parents understand the concept of "no outside assistance" so that they don't "help" more than they should. There is a handout attached which may help you explain it to the parents better.

3) **Some districts/teams have team t-shirts at the State Meet.** If you are from a new district or are the only team from your district, you may want to have your team (and coaches) in matching t-shirts. First, it's easier to find them in a crowd and second it builds team spirit. (Some examples are attached.)

While having a team shirt is optional, this can be a wonderful job to assign a creative parent. YOU don't need one more thing on your plate. There are lots of ways to make this happen and it doesn't have to be professionally done. The first year we had team shirts, our art teacher instructed the kids how to screen print, each student brought in a shirt and printed their own. Some teams keep it extra simple, get plain colored t-shirts and take a permanent marker to transform it into a team shirt. Be creative!

4) **Don't wait for the whole team to be there to run spontaneous. Do a couple of verbals and a hands-on every time you get together.** Have one of your parents help you with getting the hands-on ready. I've included these in the body of the e-mail so you can just click on them but here they are for future reference:

Virginia Odyssey of the Mind: <http://va.odysseyofthemind.org/weekproblemarchive.html>

Northeast Pennsylvania Odyssey of the Mind: <http://nepaootm.com/spontaneous/>

Tennessee Odyssey of the Mind: <http://tnodyssey.org/spontaneous-problems/>

Florida Odyssey of the Mind: <http://floridaodysseyofthemind.org/cc/spontaneous.php>

Georgia Odyssey of the Mind: <http://www.georgiaodyssey.org/spontaneous-problems/>

The National Odyssey of the Mind site:

[http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/practice/default\\_cat.php?ld=2](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/practice/default_cat.php?ld=2)

Let them try a problem the way it's written, then discuss it, offer your suggestions (because the outside assistance rule doesn't apply to Spontaneous) and then have them try it again. The second run through is when they learn the most.

5) **When you begin to rehearse, videotape the performance and let the team members critique themselves.** Since you can't say things like, "Your back was to the audience". "We can't hear a word you're saying.", "You need to enunciate more." "Wouldn't it be better if you made bigger hand gestures?"

Let the videotape show them all those things and then you can ask questions like, "What did you like about your performance?" "What would you like to change?" "If this were the real performance, do you think the judges will be able to hear and/or understand everyone?" If the answer was "no", then ask, "What do you think you could do about it.?"

I'll never forget the year my middle school team had a boy who could not remember his lines or cues. After many rehearsals, we videotaped and he had a serious case of stage fright so when I asked what we could do about it, he came up with the idea of changing to a non-speaking role. He redesigned his costume and became a "tree" for all subsequent performances ..... and a very good tree, I might add. His costume was so delightful that the team chose it for one of their style categories and everybody was happy.

6) **Forms, forms, forms!!!** (See the Program Guide for specific information. It's available on the national web site for you to download. Go to [odysseyofthemind.com](http://odysseyofthemind.com) and you'll find it at the bottom of the home page.)

Outside assistance form must be signed by everyone who was on the team roster, even if they've quit. Get their signature ahead of time so you won't be dealing with this at the last minute.

Cost form may have a spreadsheet attached rather than handwriting the whole thing. This helps with adding or subtracting items (only things used in the final performance need to be on the list) and to keep a running total. Primary teams and Division I teams can have help preparing this but Division II and III teams must produce it themselves. You can, however, teach them how to set it up and use a spreadsheet. (See the Program Guide for items with assigned value, how to group some items and what is considered trash.)

Clarifications - if you've asked for and received a clarification, you must bring the paper you received with you as part of your paperwork. Remember, clarification question deadline is February 15th.

Style Form - is the most difficult to fill out. **BE SURE** to read and reread the part in the Program Guide about filling this out. I usually read the section on defining style categories aloud to my team so that they can make better choices in wording. Do not leave this form for the last minute or you'll be struggling.

Team Required List - most problems also ask for a list of information to help the judges know specifically what to look for during the performance. Be sure your team prepares this according to your specific directions. Requirements are usually found just before the list of points in your Long Term directions.

Be prepared: Be sure you know how many forms you'll need and bring extras. (More about this later.)

7) **Team sign** - specific requirements are located (P.44-45) in the "Penalty" section of the Program Guide. Every team needs a team sign with at least the membership name and membership number number. (If you are a Team A or Team B, that will have to be included, too.) Problem and division can be included if you want but are not required. Some problems have additional team sign requirements or are to be scored in the Style section. Be sure to check both the Program Guide and your specific problem.

OK...that's enough for this week. Hope some of it helps and again, if you have questions, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

Torrey Joy  
207-294-1054 (text or call 7am-9pm any day)  
Coaches' Coordinator  
Maine Adventures in Creativity - board member